

Community Training Services Limited trading as CTS Training

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

21–24 February 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too few learners make the progress of which they are capable due to insufficient planning for learning that is based on the identified individual needs of learners.
- Too few learners on study programmes enjoy the benefits of well-planned work-related activity or experience.
- Leaders do not have a coherent strategy to drive improvements in English and mathematics across the company for staff and learners.
- Management of apprenticeship programmes is weak. Too few apprentices make good progress.
- Parents, carers and employers do not routinely receive the information that they need to support learners to make good progress.

The provider has the following strengths

- Adult learners and those on study programmes are supported well by their tutors to overcome multiple barriers and enjoy participating in learning.
- Good links with external agencies and partners ensure that provision meets local and regional needs, particularly by improving learners' employment prospects.
- Recent improvements to the quality of provision have resulted in significant improvements in achievement and progression for learners on study programmes and adult learners.
- Learners feel safe. They develop the resilience to be able to recognise risks to their own and others' safety and well-being, and know to whom they should report any concerns.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Based in Sheffield and Rotherham, Community Training Services Limited trading as CTS Training (CTS) was established in 1999 and has developed to become a specialist training organisation, concentrating on provision for young learners and adults who have significant barriers to employment. CTS is funded by the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency. A new chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed in 2016. At the time of the inspection, CTS had given notice to the Skills Funding Agency to end the contract for apprenticeships.
- The November 2016 unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over in South Yorkshire was 6.6%, compared with 4.8% in the UK and 5.6% for Yorkshire and Humber. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is 5% in Sheffield and 3% in Rotherham, compared with the national figure of 8.7%.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all tutors understand how to use information about the needs of each learner in order to plan learning activities that support them to make good progress.
- Support tutors to be confident to enable learners to reach their full potential by continuing to share good practice and enabling them to develop teaching and learning strategies that challenge learners to extend and deepen their understanding.
- Improve arrangements for work-related activity and work experience to provide a varied and rich programme of experiences that further develops all learners' employment skills.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to improve the English and mathematical skills of staff and learners.
- Help all tutors to identify English errors in written work so that learners understand how to improve their accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar in order to improve their employability skills.
- Regularly communicate with parents, carers and employers, from the start of a learner's programme, so that they understand how to support learners and apprentices to make good progress and succeed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Weak management of the apprenticeship programme, during a period of rapid expansion in 2015, resulted in large numbers of apprentices being enrolled inappropriately onto programmes, particularly in health and social care. Large numbers of apprentices made slow or no progress and many withdrew from the programme. Staff turnover was high, compounding the situation further. Communication between managers at CTS and employers was weak.
- Having identified the serious management issues, the chair of the board took decisive remedial action, including making changes to the senior leadership team. A new CEO was appointed early in 2016 and was charged to investigate the full extent of the situation and implement a recovery plan for the apprenticeship programme. While many improvements have been implemented, they have not yet had sufficient impact on improving apprentices' achievement. CTS has now given notice to end the apprenticeship contract with learners transferring to other providers shortly after the inspection.
- The management of English and mathematics support for learners requires improvement, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. A minority of staff lack sufficient skills themselves to demonstrate good practice to their learners and to develop their learners' skills effectively. CTS has a marking policy to provide learners with written feedback and corrections of their work that will help them to improve their skills, but too often staff do not implement it. Staff teaching GCSE courses in English and mathematics often lack the confidence and competence to do so. Recent initiatives to tackle this are starting to have a positive impact.
- Professional development for tutors does not focus strongly enough on developing tutors' skills to challenge all learners fully, or to ensure that learners' individual needs are met within mixed-ability groups. Too many tutors are not sufficiently skilled in challenging learners to achieve their full potential and become more independent learners. Managers who observe teaching, learning and assessment identify accurately the teaching strategies that tutors need to improve, but professional development does not include training to improve them.
- CTS manages its two subcontractors who deliver study programmes very effectively and maintains frequent communication with them. Bi-monthly partnership meetings are informative and valued by subcontractors. Managers set clear and challenging performance targets that are reviewed frequently. Both subcontractors are performing well and have high qualification achievement rates and progression rates for their learners. Through its subcontractors, CTS recruits disadvantaged learners in Doncaster who do not wish to attend other types of provider and, in Sheffield, meets the needs of learners who want to work in hairdressing or beauty therapy.

- Leaders and managers now carefully monitor progress towards achieving clear business goals that are linked directly to the quality of teaching and learning, learners' achievement and progression, and feedback from stakeholders. Staff were involved in setting and reviewing these goals and support them fully. As a result, the achievement of learners on study programmes and adult programmes is improving significantly, and more apprentices have completed their programmes, although managers recognise the need for further improvements, particularly in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The management of staff performance is supportive and is now based on accurate and pertinent management information on learners' progress and achievements. Individual staff are increasingly held accountable for their learners' retention, achievements and progress, with improvements now evident in outcomes for adults and learners on study programmes. Managers hold monthly individual meetings with tutors and assessors to discuss their caseloads and the progress of each of their learners.
- Leaders and managers have good links with external agencies, including the local enterprise partnership, to ensure that the provision meets local and regional priorities. Close collaboration and communication with Jobcentre Plus ensure that adult programmes meet their requirements. For example, in Rotherham, CTS actively recruits groups of Romanian and Slovakian learners who are not engaged in learning.
- Self-assessment is based on a rigorous and critical analysis of performance. Leaders and managers examine evidence from a wide range of sources including the views of learners and subcontractors. The report is broadly accurate and in agreement with many of the findings of the inspection. However, the report does not identify the weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment that still affect adversely the progress of too many learners.

The governance of the provider

- The chair of the board provides the strategic direction oversight for CTS with the CEO implementing the strategy. The chair and previous managing director were too slow to identify and resolve the weaknesses in the management of the apprenticeship programme.
- Recent changes, including a new CEO, have resulted in a decision to end the delivery of apprenticeships and are having a positive impact on learners' achievements on adult and study programmes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff, including designated safeguarding officers at each centre and at the subcontractors, have had appropriate training for their roles and are well informed about issues such as online safety and child sexual exploitation. Appropriate checks on their suitability to work with young and vulnerable people have been carried out.
- Staff and learners understand the system for reporting safeguarding concerns clearly. Concerns are centrally logged, appropriately dealt with and monitored closely by senior managers. Good links with external agencies are used well to investigate concerns and support learners. Learners feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe.

- Staff benefit from extensive staff training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and promote these well to learners. Staff in the learning centres promote learners' awareness of the values of life and work in Britain well. However, assessors do not extend apprentices' understanding and knowledge well enough of safeguarding, values related to living and working in Britain, and the risks of radicalisation and extremism during reviews and assessments.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Tutors do not use the information they have about the individual needs of learners well enough to plan learning activities that ensure that all learners make the progress of which they are capable. They do not routinely set clear targets designed to help learners improve their skills. Too few tutors, other than those teaching on discrete English and mathematics courses, use the information about learners' prior attainment in these subjects to improve learners' skills in English and mathematics.
- Learners in classroom-based provision are supported well by their tutors to overcome their multiple barriers to participating in learning. For example, staff have relevant training in supporting learners with mental health issues and, as a result, are able to support them promptly in lessons and ensure that they get appropriate help. Suitable learning materials, for example handouts printed on coloured paper, are used to help learners with specific learning difficulties.
- Tutors do not provide learners with sufficiently detailed and memorable assessment of their English skills to help them improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Although learners receive clear verbal feedback from their tutors in lessons, and complete worksheet exercises, too often they do not remember what they have been told, and repeat the same errors in future work. Tutors do not explain the rules for grammar and spelling well enough. Consequently, learners are not able to apply what they learn to their wider writing activities so that they can improve these skills further in each piece of work.
- Learners in classroom-based provision enjoy the welcoming and supportive environment created by staff and most stay on their programmes. An increasing number achieve their qualifications and gain confidence to progress to further training or employment.
- Staff in the learning centres produce lively and useful information, including wall displays, to promote learners' awareness of the values of life and work in Britain. In study programme and adult learning sessions, learners show that they understand the need to tolerate diverse views and cultures, and are mostly respectful of each other and each other's views. However, in a small minority of study programme sessions, low-level disruption sometimes interrupts learning.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Learners take part in useful sessions to help them to understand workplace bullying and harassment, such as giving people tasks that they have not been trained to do and inappropriate flirtation. However, this guidance is not produced in a learner-friendly format to reinforce their understanding.

- Tutors and assessors do not communicate sufficiently with the parents, carers and employers of all learners so that they are aware of learners' progress. However, when learners' behaviour, attendance or progress indicate that they may be at risk of failing in their learning, or are in need of specific help to overcome problems, staff involve parents and carers promptly, and use their good links with support agencies to help to address the issues.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Too few learners benefit from work placement opportunities and very few have benefited from input from employers or external agencies to develop their understanding of the world of employment. Although most current learners on study programmes have some work-related activity or experience planned for them, too many learners are not yet aware of this.
- Too many apprentices do not have the opportunity to improve their skills and contribute to their employer's business. A minority of successful apprentices improve their skills at work, with some taking on additional responsibilities and duties. For example, a management apprentice carried out a data project to ensure data accuracy and confidentiality at work.
- Most learners' attendance is good. Attendance is monitored closely and is improving, although it is still low in a small minority of sessions. Most learners on classroom-based provision understand the importance of punctuality and attendance for their future working lives. Targets for improving attendance are set with learners who are not attending well, using positive engagement plans. These are monitored well, particularly for learners who are identified as being at risk of not achieving.
- Most adult learners have high aspirations for their future, often after long periods of unemployment, and are enthusiastic about being back in education. They have clear plans and goals that are supported by effective initial and ongoing advice, guidance and support. Too often, learners on study programmes, who do not have clear career plans, do not know how they can gain advice to prepare for their next steps beyond CTS.
- Learners develop useful work-preparation skills such as curriculum vitae (CV) writing and interview practice. In information and communication technology (ICT) sessions, all learners produce an accurate and presentable CV as part of their familiarisation work with word-processing packages. Similarly, during practice using the internet, tutors use job vacancy sites to develop learners' search skills.
- Learners feel safe and know what to do should they have any concerns about their own safety or that of others. They develop the resilience to be able to recognise risks and report them to an appropriate person, and are confident that action will be taken.
- Most learners are aware of the potential for radicalisation and dangers of extremism. They know whom they should approach if they have concerns. Although coverage in induction is very brief, these topics are raised on a regular basis through discussions and reinforced by effective wall displays.
- The majority of learners have a good understanding of their responsibilities and understand what is needed to be a good citizen. They interact appropriately with each other and with staff.

- Standards of learners' work in ICT and employability are high and above that required for examination success, but this is not the case in a few other subjects.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of apprentices who complete their frameworks successfully is low, but improving, particularly in health and social care. Apprentices in business administration and management achieve well. Until recently, too many apprentices left their programme before completing their qualifications and many others made slow progress.
- Too many learners make insufficient progress from their starting points and their success often depends on which individual tutors, assessors or employers they work with. Some do make good and rapid progress against challenging targets, but too many make slow progress and do not have appropriately challenging targets.
- Learners on courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) make slow progress in improving their skills in speaking and writing. Reinforcement of language skills in many sessions is poor with too many examples of incorrect use of English not being corrected.
- First-time pass rates for functional skills examinations in mathematics and English are high.
- The proportion of learners on study programmes and adult learners who achieve their qualifications has improved this year. Achievement rates for learners who have started and completed their programmes in the current academic year are now above those of similar providers.
- Progression to further education or training for learners on study programmes is much improved, although still low. The numbers of learners who are not engaged in education or training on completion of their programme have fallen significantly.
- A high proportion of adult learners succeed in gaining employment on completion of their time at CTS or return to take higher-level qualifications.
- Managers have effectively addressed gaps in achievement so that most groups of learners achieve as well as others, especially males and females and learners from different backgrounds.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- CTS provides study programmes to 264 learners at sites in Sheffield and Rotherham, with smaller numbers attending programmes at one of the two subcontractors. The large majority of learners follow programmes designed to improve their employability skills and mathematics and English, with a minority on hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes. Learners can join a study programme at CTS at frequent points in the year.

- Not enough teaching and learning is sufficiently well planned to enable all learners to progress quickly. Information on the individual needs of each learner is not used effectively by too many tutors. In some sessions, all learners work on the same tasks despite being at different levels. In a minority of sessions where tutors plan effectively to meet individual needs, learners make good progress towards achieving units and qualifications.
- Learners do not receive enough support to improve their mathematics skills quickly enough. Too many handouts have mathematical mistakes on them. Tutors do not always check their own work on boards in the classrooms so learners see inaccurate examples. Learners are not always given enough help on how to prepare for their examinations in mathematics.
- Too few learners benefit from planned work experience or work-related activity outside the classroom. The majority do undertake high-quality enrichment activities and work skills sessions that help to develop basic employment skills including attendance and working with others. Where they have difficulties with these, learners are supported well on a personal plan with clear targets for improvement. Parents and carers are involved in supporting the learners where this is appropriate.
- Most learners attend regularly and are punctual. Standards of behaviour around the centres and in classrooms are generally good. In a small minority of lessons, learning is occasionally interrupted by poor behaviour or the late arrival of some learners. Tutors do not always challenge this effectively or promptly.
- Support for learners is good. Staff work closely with a range of specialist agencies where needed. Learners value the support that helps them to overcome considerable barriers to learning. They particularly value the support for personal and social issues, including finding somewhere to live and addressing drugs misuse. This has a positive impact on their lives. Many learners now enjoy learning, often for the very first time in their lives.
- Managers have taken effective action to improve the achievement of learners on study programmes. Many more learners now achieve well and progress to further study or employment.
- The standard of learners' work across the provision meets the requirements of the qualifications and is often high, particularly in English and work skills.
- Effective feedback ensures that most learners know how to improve their work and make better progress. Tutors often encourage learners to evaluate their own work and that of each other so that it reinforces what they have learned.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Adult learners, referred from Jobcentre Plus, attend short mandatory programmes to improve their employability, English and mathematics skills. Currently, 123 adults attend CTS with many progressing to employment or returning to the next level of qualification.

- Too many learners make insufficient progress in the development of their English skills. On discrete English programmes, a minority of learners are not challenged sufficiently to develop their skills quickly enough. In ESOL lessons, learners do not extend sufficiently their spoken language skills through practice of pronunciation, and spelling errors in their written work are not always corrected to enable them to develop their written English skills.
- Tutors do not monitor learners' progress well enough. Targets set with learners at the outset of their programme are often too broad to enable measurement of progress. Too many mid and end-of-course reviews do not take place to enable learners to understand their progress. Too few learners have subject-based targets which measure the progress they are making, celebrate small steps of success and build their confidence.
- Assessment practice requires improvement. Too much of learners' written work is not assessed thoroughly in mathematics, English and ESOL. Work often contains inaccuracies so that learners do not have a proper foundation on which to progress. Where written comments are used as feedback for improvement, they often do not contain sufficient information to enable the learner to perform better.
- Learning in ESOL sessions is not sufficiently individualised. Although ESOL learners have clear qualification goals, both in terms of level and the specific aspect of language development, whether reading, writing or speaking and listening, too frequently the planned learning does not take this into account. For example, in one lesson all learners practised for an examination in reading when many learners were due to take examinations in other aspects. In another lesson, all learners completed the same worksheets regardless of level.
- Staff work collaboratively with local partners to ensure that the provision is relevant to employers' and wider community needs. Regular strategic meetings with Jobcentre Plus managers provide a sound basis for planning programmes of learning. Breakfast meetings with Jobcentre Plus staff supply job coaches with valuable information which helps them to give effective information, advice and guidance to learners. Partnership working with local Work Programme providers enables clients on these programmes to join the specialist courses available at CTS.
- Flexible access to courses meets the needs of learners well. The great majority of the courses can be joined at any time so learners can start their studies within a few days of recommendation by Jobcentre Plus staff. This maintains the momentum for learning and ensures that learners receive the necessary skills for employment without delay.
- Effective initial advice and guidance, and thorough assessment of learners' prior attainment, ensure that the great majority of learners are placed on the level of course most suited to their needs.
- Learners make good progress in developing ICT and employability skills. In these subjects, learners make good progress in lessons which leads to very good achievement in external qualifications. Standards of work in these subjects are high.
- Staff have a thorough understanding of individual learners' needs and provide good individual support for learning. Staff understand well the personal and social barriers to learning which many learners have, and work sensitively to help learners overcome them. Learners speak very highly of this individual support, which builds their self-belief and gives them confidence to succeed.

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

- CTS currently has 432 apprentices. All are currently being transferred to alternative providers. Advanced apprenticeships account for around half of all apprentices, with almost all the remaining apprentices working at intermediate level. Most apprentices follow programmes in health and social care. The remaining apprentices follow programmes in business and administration, management, children and young people's workforce, cleaning and environmental support services, food and beverage services, customer service, and supporting teaching and learning in schools.
- Too few apprentices in 2015/16 successfully completed their qualification within the planned timescale. The progress of current apprentices is improving, with significant improvements in achievement but, for too many, progress is still too slow. While staffing stability is improving, a high number of apprentices did not get the support that they required to achieve in the planned time.
- Managers now make better use of existing management information to develop a suite of reports that more readily identify the progress of each apprentice. Regular performance management reports, and meetings with assessors to hold them to account and give clear feedback for improvements, are in place. However, the impact is yet to be fully realised.
- Too few employers are involved in progress reviews and are therefore not fully aware of the progress that apprentices make or need to make towards their qualifications. A small minority of employers speak highly of the skill development of apprentices and the positive contributions that they make in the workplace. A few management apprentices have taken on additional responsibilities, with support, from the start of their employment because of their enthusiasm and learning at work.
- Assessors do not provide consistently helpful feedback to apprentices to enable them to develop their skills and knowledge. They fail to articulate clearly what apprentices need to do to improve their work. On too many occasions, they accept mediocre standards of work as opposed to challenging learners to produce work of a higher calibre. Too often, assessors do not identify appropriately spelling and grammatical errors in apprentices' portfolios to reinforce more positive practice and improve their writing.
- Targets set by assessors are insufficiently demanding, detailed or specific, and do not identify the knowledge and skills development that apprentices need to make. Consequently, current learners make slow progress and those who are most able are not challenged enough.
- Assessors do not check regularly or extend apprentices' understanding and knowledge of safeguarding, values related to living and working in Britain, and the risks of radicalisation and extremism during reviews and assessments.
- Apprentices feel safe in the workplace and adopt safe working practices such as, for example, when operating manual handling equipment. They understand how to recognise signs of abuse and are sensitive to the health, safety and welfare needs of children and older people in their care.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51259
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,901
CEO	Michelle Manson
Telephone number	01142 765 920
Website	http://ctstraining.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	258	120	6	3	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	37	178	36	156	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Engage Training and Development The Studio Academy							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the CEO as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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