

The Consultancy Home Counties Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

25–27 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders, managers and staff have worked assiduously since the previous inspection to ensure that the identified weaknesses have been eradicated from their provision.
- Leaders have a passionate and realistic vision which transforms the lives of young people, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, by enabling most learners to progress into employment or further training at a higher level.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their customer service qualifications has risen over the last three years and is now high.
- A high proportion of learners had limited success at school or failed to attend. However, most attend their lessons well, make good progress, achieve qualifications and stay to complete their course.
- Leaders and staff ensure that learners continue to develop their personal and social skills while on work placements which are matched to learners' interests and career aspirations.
- Leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment which is now good. Consequently, most learners make good progress.
- Tutors have high expectations of their learners. They provide effective feedback that enables learners to improve the standard of their work.
- Learners are well behaved, respectful and polite. They improve their confidence and self-esteem, and develop resilience to deal with life's challenges.
- Learners say they are safe and are safe when attending their classes and work placements. They demonstrate a good understanding of diversity, mutual respect for and tolerance of others and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Not enough learners achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics at level 2.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Consultancy Home Counties Ltd (TCHC) is an independent training provider based in Watford, with training centres in Cambridge, Clacton-on-Sea and Thurrock and subcontracted provision in Basildon and Norwich. TCHC offers study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19, primarily in customer service, to prepare them for employment or further study across a variety of employment sectors. All learners are on study programmes at level 1.
- TCHC currently has around 37 learners, many of whom have had a poor experience at school or in a few cases did not attend school. Learners travel from across the East of England region to attend TCHC training centres and a high proportion are from disadvantaged backgrounds or care leavers.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers need to monitor effectively and take action to ensure that male learners achieve their qualifications at the same rate as females and those learners with additional learning needs perform on a par with their peers.
- Improve rapidly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of English and mathematics level 2 courses so that learners improve their skills and make better and more rapid progress.
- Tutors should ensure that learners are able to check and correct their own spelling mistakes in their written work in order for them to make more rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and staff have worked diligently since the previous inspection and eradicated the key areas for improvement. Managers communicate their high expectations effectively to staff and learners. Restorative improvement interventions by managers have been successful and led to improved outcomes for learners and have raised the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and managers have a strong vision to transform the lives of young people, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, by providing them with purposeful and effective pathways into employment or further training at a higher level. Since the previous inspection, they have focused their attention successfully on ensuring that learners gain personal and social skills valued by employers.
- Leaders and managers develop the curriculum offer well in response to local skills shortages and priorities by motivating young people from disadvantaged backgrounds back into education and/or employment. Staff ensure that each learner has a bespoke study programme that meets their abilities and supports the achievement of their aspirations and goals. Leaders, managers and tutors place a high priority on helping young people to improve their English and mathematics skills, particularly their spoken communication skills in relation to customer service practice.
- Managers' partnerships are strong and beneficial to learners. Managers work very well with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and employers to increase opportunities for learners to gain work experience, further training or apprenticeships.
- Managers work effectively with subcontractors and as a consequence, learners make good progress. Collaborative quality assurance arrangements ensure that learners with subcontractors make good progress and complete their programmes.
- Leaders, managers and tutors collect and utilise useful data that provides them with a good oversight of learners' starting points, in-year progress, achievement and progress into employment or further training. Leaders and managers share good data which provides detailed and effective information about learners and whether they are on target to achieve. Managers and tutors use this comprehensive information efficiently to ensure that beneficial support is provided to those falling behind. For example, managers provide transport to enable learners to attend their work placements.
- Leaders and managers put in place improvement actions required to address key areas of weakness well. They have a good focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners. Effective self-assessment processes are well developed and underpinned by a very comprehensive quality improvement plan which contains detailed actions and responsibilities, along with expected completion timescales. Managers do not remove actions from the quality improvement plan once they are complete, deciding instead to focus on ensuring that improvements are sustained.
- Leaders and managers have taken effective actions to improve learners' attendance, which is now consistently high, for example, by providing breakfast clubs and healthy lunches that motivate learners to attend frequently. Leaders and managers monitor closely the participation of different groups of learners and particularly ensure that those

from disadvantaged backgrounds and care leavers participate fully in all aspects of their programmes.

The governance of the provider

- No formal governance arrangements are in place at TCHC. Board directors, the managing director and the quality director maintain an effective and strong operational role and overview of the provision. They conduct rigorous monthly quality reviews with delivery centre managers and subcontractors. Managers and tutors are held to account for the performance of their area of responsibility on a regular basis.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers have ensured that appropriate policies and procedures are in place which cover all aspects of safe practice concerning learners' safety. Records and updates of Disclosure and Barring Service checks are up to date and safer recruitment processes are an integral part of the staff recruitment procedure.
- Managers and staff deal promptly and effectively with any safeguarding referrals. The designated officer has established good working relationships with external agencies, including local authority social care services, to ensure that concerns are worked through to resolution and learners and their families receive the support they need.
- All staff have completed 'Prevent' duty training and implemented actions in order to identify and protect young people from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Learners report that they feel safe at the training centre and while on work placement. Staff contact employers routinely to ensure that learners are attending their work placements and to confirm they are not missing education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Managers and tutors are suitably qualified and experienced. Since the previous inspection managers have focused effectively on improving tutors' teaching practice. Tutors have participated in extensive training sessions focusing on topics including safeguarding, 'Prevent' duty and working with challenging learners. Consequently, they set very high expectations of their learners and as a result the large majority of learners make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Tutors use their experience and knowledge well to plan effective learning which learners enjoy and which provides the majority of them with useful customer service and English and mathematics skills. Tutors are skilful in checking learning through effective questioning to encourage learners' deeper thinking and understanding. Tutors use good resources, including peer support and learners' own work, to maintain learners' interest. As a result, almost all learners are engaged and motivated to achieve their potential.
- Leaders have provided a good range of well-presented resources which support learning well. Specialist resources are carefully matched to learners' preferred ways of learning. Learners make good use of laptops to support research activities, for example when

researching logos to illustrate a range of businesses. However, internet connectivity is not consistently good and on a few occasions slows learners' progress.

- Managers and tutors collate very comprehensive records of learners' starting points and prior attainment. Learners make good progress from their starting points on their customer service qualifications and English and mathematics at entry and level 1, because tutors deploy a broad range of approaches to meet learners' needs well. Tutors and learners are clear about the progress learners make and any additional support they may need. Tutors ensure that most-able learners complete additional extension activities to take them to the next level of learning.
- Tutors assess learners' progress within lessons routinely to ensure that all learners consolidate their learning. Tutors ensure that the large majority of learners know what they do well and what they need to do improve their performance. However, although feedback is effective in guiding learners on what to do to improve written drafts, tutors do not sufficiently encourage learners on how to check and correct their own spelling mistakes in their written work.
- Tutors enable the large majority of learners to improve their speaking, listening and written English skills effectively. Learners are encouraged to read aloud in lessons, take notes and extend their vocabulary and customer service communication skills. As a consequence, learners are able to use paragraphing, lower and upper case letters and punctuation correctly and become more effective communicators with different audiences, using persuasive language effectively.
- Tutors promote mathematics well in lessons, which helps learners gain skills in relation to their chosen career aspiration and ensures that they understand the importance of improving these skills. For example, learners are able to decipher and improve their knowledge of 2D and 3D shapes in the use of maps and calculate weights accurately to ensure safe manual handling techniques.
- Classrooms and break out areas are suitable and accessible, with bright and well-equipped training areas and well-presented wall displays which celebrate learners' work and achievement. Tutors ensure that learners' achievements are celebrated successfully through 'learner of the week nominations', awards and celebrations of learners' success. Consequently, learners improve their confidence levels and take pride in their work.
- Almost all learners attend their training centre for purposeful self-study and independent learning; tutors monitor their work effectively and set work is marked appropriately, making clear what learners do well and what they need to do to improve their understanding. However, tutors do not ensure that learners know how to check their own spelling and use of punctuation or improve the structure of their written English.
- Learners have a good understanding of the tasks set for them; targets for learning are appropriate and focus well on enabling learners to make good progress in developing their personal and social skills to meet their individual learning goals. Learners are aware of their targets and discuss confidently any difficulties in achieving their goals. Consequently, learners overcome significant barriers to learning and apply new skills and knowledge well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Most learners are motivated to learn and take pride in their work and achievements. The large majority of learners attend regularly and arrive for their lessons in plenty of time. This is a significant achievement for a high proportion of learners, who have had previous poor experiences of education. Learners are highly satisfied and enjoy their learning activities, such as learning in small groups in a collaborative and supportive way, and being treated with respect as adults.
- A high proportion of learners complete purposeful work experience which enables them to participate in discussions and communicate with a wider cross-section of society. Learners enjoy and value their work placements. Employment engagement officers ensure that work placements match learners' interests, aspirations and skills well.
- Tutors set challenging learning targets for learners on placement. In conjunction with employers, staff review targets regularly to ensure that learners maximise learning opportunities. Most learners produce work to a high standard and participate well in lessons and while on work placement. However, in a few instances targets set on placements are too generic and tutors are unable to measure them against learning outcomes; as a consequence a few learners make slower progress than expected.
- Learners benefit from highly effective and frequent impartial information, advice and guidance which aid them to understand their career aspirations and make more informed decisions on their intended work and/or learning options on completion of their programmes. Consequently, a large majority of learners continue with their chosen studies at a higher level or gain employment.
- Tutors work diligently and sensitively with new learners to instil the importance of good attendance and the value it has to employers. However, a few learners' personal and social barriers impact adversely on attendance rates with a number of learners travelling very long distances to the centres.
- Tutors challenge successfully poor behaviour. As a result, learners are well behaved, polite and respectful towards staff and their peers. Learners improve their confidence, self-esteem and ability to engage with new people in a variety of contexts, such as in workplaces. They increase their sense of self-worth and develop resilience to life's challenges. Many learners adopt effective techniques to deal with mental health issues, self-harming and other personal problems.
- Staff provide learners with very good pastoral support. Learners value highly the level of care and support they receive, for example their free lunches with healthy food and drinks; refunds of the cost of train tickets to get to their lessons or work placements; and effective one-to-one discussions on personal issues, such as mental and physical health and domestic issues.
- Learners know how to keep themselves safe from the risk of extremism and radicalisation, and gain a good understanding of life in modern Britain because tutors promote these issues well. For example, in an English lesson learners were enthused to prepare good-quality and interesting presentations of challenging topical issues such as freedom of speech, bullying at school and whether prisoners are treated too favourably while in prison.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Almost all learners have had limited success in, or a poor experience of, previous education. Leaders, managers and staff motivate successfully almost all learners to attend, study and complete their programmes. The proportion of learners who achieve their customer service qualifications has increased over the last three years and since the previous inspection and is now high. Leaders and staff have continued to ensure that standards of teaching, learning and assessment improve and, as a consequence, most current learners are making good progress.
- Leaders' data indicates that a high proportion of learners in 2016/17 achieved their qualifications in customer service and qualifications at entry and level 1 in English and mathematics.
- A large majority of learners make good progress with improving their written and spoken English skills relative to their starting points and, often, low prior attainment. Almost all learners achieve their English qualifications at entry level, while a large majority do so at level 1. However, too few learners achieve their English qualification at level 2.
- Almost all learners achieve their mathematics qualifications at entry level. However, only a minority of a very small cohort of learners achieve their mathematics qualifications at levels 1 and 2.
- The large majority of learners at entry level and level 1 make good progress in their studies. They are aware of what they need to do to improve their understanding of the requirements of good customer service and the role good English and mathematics skills play in their quest for employment. However, too few learners achieve their English and mathematics qualifications at a higher level.
- Tutors ensure that learners are prepared well for jobs and/or further training on completion of their programmes. A large majority of learners go on to further study or work, many in roles closely associated with their original career aspirations.
- Almost all learners increase their self-esteem, confidence levels and resilience. However, leaders have not taken effective action to close the achievement gap between female and male learners or those with an identified learning need.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59189
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	109
Principal/CEO	Mrs Rose Lavin
Telephone number	01923 698444
Website	www.tchc.net

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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	34	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
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 and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	ITEC Learning							
	ACE Action Community Enterprise							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of quality, 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

Steve Hunsley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector

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