

T2 Business Solutions

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

6–9 June 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Apprenticeships	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

- Outstanding employability provision on study programmes leads to a very high proportion of learners moving on to apprenticeships, further training and employment.
- Most learners and apprentices acquire excellent personal and employment skills and make good progress in English and mathematics; they move on successfully to employment, increased responsibility, or higher-level apprenticeships.
- The large majority of learners and apprentices benefit from good vocational training and thorough assessment practices.
- Trainers and assessors make good use of high-quality learning resources to develop all learners' skills and knowledge.
- Learners and apprentices have good access to very high-quality placements with employers, and good-quality employer training, and most apprentices are able to gain additional qualifications as a result.
- Trainers and assessors are particularly good at giving learners and apprentices personalised support to overcome most barriers to learning.
- Learners and apprentices receive very good information, advice and guidance which ensures they are placed on appropriate courses.
- Learners and apprentices apply their understanding of equality and diversity well in the workplace.
- Leaders and managers have successfully ensured that the curriculum continues to reflect regional and national priorities and meets the differing needs of learners, apprentices and employers.
- Senior leaders and managers have successfully introduced new systems, quality improvement practice and staff development programmes which are starting to have a beneficial impact on improving the quality of programmes.
- Senior leaders have rectified the critical weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements identified at the previous inspection.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are mostly good, but in some parts of the country a small minority of learners are working and achieving at lower levels than they are capable of.
- Managers do not analyse the available data which would allow them to make overall judgements about quality.

Full report

Information about the provider

- T2 Business Solutions (T2B) was founded in 1996. It offers a range of apprenticeships predominantly in the health and social care sector, and a comparatively small study programme and traineeships provision. The company has grown substantially since the previous inspection and it now holds a national contract to provide apprenticeships and employability training across England and Wales. At the time of the previous inspection, the company provided training primarily in South West England and Wales. Its headquarters are now in Cardiff. The provision in Wales was out of scope for this inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers should share existing best practice to improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment in order to raise standards across all regions and types of provision.
- Leaders and managers should collate and analyse all available data so that they can make accurate judgements about the quality of the provision at national, regional and local levels and set specific, measurable targets for improvement.
- Managers should monitor the progress of all apprentices more closely to increase the number who complete within their planned timescales, and reduce further the number who leave early.
- Managers and staff should work with employers and workplace supervisors to encourage their greater participation in the planning and review of apprentices' programmes and progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- T2B's senior leaders have successfully directed and managed further substantial increases in the number of apprentices since the previous inspection, and appointed a large number of additional assessors and support staff.
- Senior leaders are closely involved in the day-to-day running of the business and understand well its strengths and areas for improvement. Their business planning is realistic and ambitious, informed well by a thorough knowledge and understanding of the key opportunities in, and current challenges of, employment in the health and social care sector.
- Senior leaders have carefully planned, and are implementing well, appropriate new systems for managing their business and the recruitment, progress and outcomes of their learners. They have introduced new quality, audit and review practices to develop the quality of this now very large national training provision. Leaders have been careful to introduce new systems progressively in order to maintain stability in business operations and support for learners. The impact of these developments on improving learners' outcomes is largely good, but they remain work in progress.
- New senior managers with specialist expertise have been appointed and are actively implementing comprehensive quality improvement arrangements across the provision. Most teaching, learning and assessment practice is good, although less effective practice exists in a few regions. Inspectors' assessments of the quality of teaching and learning corresponded closely, in most cases, to assessments by T2B's quality assurance team.
- Managers have carefully selected new assessor staff from the care sector for their aptitude, experience and specialist working knowledge; around two thirds of these have been appointed during the past 18 months. New staff receive a comprehensive induction and extensive ongoing professional support from quality assurance staff. This includes regular one-to-one supervision and observations of practice with constructive and developmental feedback that improves assessors' professional practice. T2B staff have very good access to continuous professional development and training generally.
- During 2015/16, a large number of apprentices left their programmes early, leading to some very low achievement rates. T2B's leaders devised a comprehensive action plan to improve apprentice retention and achievement, which managers and staff are implementing systematically. In the current contract year so far, T2B's data indicates that apprentices' achievement rates are improving, often substantially and to above national rates.
- Managers have successfully reduced the number of visits by assessors being cancelled by apprentices each month. The level of initial cancellations is still high but managers have ensured that around 85% of assessor/apprentice visits are rebooked and completed during each month.
- T2B's team of account managers works in close partnership with around 8,000 employers nationally, most of which are small and medium-sized businesses. Employers speak very highly about the reliability and flexibility of T2B's training and assessor staff, and the quality of the training they provide. Assessors provide employers with useful summary

feedback on apprentices' progress following their visits but employers' direct involvement in shaping apprentices' learning programmes is otherwise minimal.

- Senior leaders do not have a clear and accurate summary of national, regional and local data on their learners' progress, or any overall variance in the quality of provision in different areas because the available data is not yet routinely collated for higher analysis. A new, online 'e-portfolio' system designed to provide this data is still in development.
- Through their self-assessment process, managers identify areas for improvement well. However, their most recent self-assessment report is too descriptive and repetitive, and includes improvement actions which are not specific, measurable and tightly time-bound. Similarly, managers do not provide specific quantitative or qualitative targets for improvement actions in their quality improvement plan against which progress can be gauged.

The governance of the provider

- T2B's board meets monthly and members' attendance is good. Board membership includes external representatives alongside the company directors, who support managers well and hold them to account.
- The board is informed well through clear and timely performance reports, for example about T2B's business and improvement plans, which include clear and realistic judgements about progress and challenges.
- The board's perspective on the overall quality of provision is restricted by the lack of summary data available to senior leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders have rectified the critical weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements identified at the previous inspection through a very strong focus on improving recruitment practice, staff training and developing new learning resources. Managers review and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding practice each month.
- Most learners have a good understanding of T2B's safeguarding and reporting arrangements. Assessors are mostly adept at introducing sector-related and more general safeguarding, 'Prevent' duty and equality and diversity themes during apprentices' reviews, and subsequent discussions are frequently searching.
- Disclosure and Barring Service checks are completed for the vast majority of staff before they start work at T2B. Those who are not cleared by their starting date are mentored until their checks are complete.
- The safeguarding team provides an exemplary range of online and print resources for learners, employers and staff to promote and illustrate aspects of safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty, equality and diversity and British values.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and training staff have good vocational knowledge and expertise, which they draw on skilfully to make learning highly interesting and relevant. As a result, apprentices develop their understanding and skills through practical examples in their workplaces. Learners on study programmes and traineeships develop good work-related skills through work experience. Staff develop learners' skills in English and mathematics well through their vocational training.
- On study programmes and traineeships, teachers and trainers ensure that learners follow individual programmes that meet their diverse needs very well. Learners receive extra support and individual coaching sessions, and attend work experience which reflects their individual personal goals. Apprentices choose individual learning programmes carefully which allow them to develop the skills that they need in their workplaces and for their future development.
- The large majority of trainers make good use of questioning techniques which challenge learners to think more deeply. For example, a trainer encouraged an apprentice on a higher-level programme to question their research proposal in more depth, which enabled the learner to make improvements that they had not originally considered. However, not all assessors and trainers provide sufficient challenge for apprentices; as a result, a small minority of learners do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- Trainers make good use of digital technology and a good range of other quality learning resources to support the effective development of learners' knowledge and understanding. For example, apprentices make good use of a helpful online learning programme to develop their skills in mathematics, which they use in taught sessions and at home.
- Managers liaise closely with trainers to identify and provide the most appropriate individual support for learners. For example, managers modified the learning materials of a learner with a visual impairment so that they complemented the specialist computer software he was using. On study programmes and traineeships, learners are able to benefit from individual specialist help and advice from a local drug treatment centre. Additional support enables most learners to achieve as well as they can, although a very small minority of apprentices with particular barriers to their learning have not had effective individual support for dyslexia, which is slowing their progress.
- Assessors review learners' progress frequently and make sure they understand what they need to do to achieve their individual targets. Their assessment practice is fair, reliable, frequent and appropriately varied in approach to maintain all learners' interest and involvement. Assessors ensure that apprentices prepare well for formal assessments; for example, apprentices provided well-considered responses to questioning on the duty of care.
- Assessors make good use of electronic portfolios to upload learners' work and to monitor learners' overall progress. Learners benefit from clear and helpful verbal and written feedback on their assessed work which identifies how they can improve its overall standard and identifies key errors in their spelling and punctuation. However, a small minority of assessors do not give enough guidance to apprentices on how to improve their writing skills.

- Learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of matters relating to equality and diversity at all stages of their learning programmes. For example, apprentices explore ethical and moral dilemmas that they may face when working in residential care settings. Apprentices demonstrate a good level of respect for all staff and for each other in the workplace; apprentices respect clients' dignity and treat them with compassion.
- Teachers' and trainers' teaching, learning and assessment practice for apprentices is not consistently good across the country, with training and assessment practice stronger across the southern regions, but less consistent in the Midlands. Leaders and managers acknowledge that they need to ensure that best practice in teaching, learning and assessment is shared much more widely with teachers and trainers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Most learners and apprentices develop good attitudes to their learning, become increasingly self-motivated, keen to acquire new knowledge and skills and make good progress. Apprentices take pride in their career choice and regard the work they do for their employers and the community as valuable. Apprentices become more confident in their work roles.
- Study programme learners have very good access to effective work experience, which allows them to develop and implement their employment skills and gain valuable knowledge of the world of work. As a result, they develop their skills and knowledge very effectively. Learners receive effective guidance on how to apply for apprenticeships, jobs and further study. Traineeship learners value the work placement opportunities which are an integral part of their programme, and many move quickly into apprenticeships or further education.
- Learners on study programmes and traineeships attend well and are punctual. Teachers and trainers follow up any non-attendance quickly. Apprentices recognise that attendance and punctuality are essential job skills. They complete a reflective learning diary which shows the time they spend in on- and off-the-job training, along with their gains in skills and knowledge and the impact on their job role.
- The standards of apprentices' workplace skills and written work are high; their standards of client care are generally good and in some cases very good. Employers value the positive contribution apprentices make to their care settings and staff teams.
- Most learners develop useful numeracy, English language and writing skills as part of completing course work. Teachers and trainers pay good attention to correcting learners' spelling and grammatical mistakes, and practising number skills linked to workplace scenarios. Learners use online learning materials, quizzes and tests well to extend their knowledge further. As a result, learners and a large majority of apprentices are making good progress in mathematics and English skills development, often at a higher level than their course requires. A few assessors do not encourage apprentices to practise their mathematical and English skills during training sessions and when at work. Consequently, a small minority of apprentices are not developing these skills quickly enough.
- Careers guidance is helpful in allowing all learners to make informed choices about their next steps in employment and education. As a result, progression rates to the next levels of training or apprenticeship are high, and with significant numbers moving into

management positions or on to nursing degrees.

- Health and safety are prioritised highly and strongly promoted. Learners and apprentices feel safe and demonstrate very high levels of safe working practices. They are fully aware of how to report any concerns that they may have about possible safety risks to themselves or to others. Apprentices understand fully their employers' and sectors' expectations for 'whistleblowing'.
- Trainers and assessors use current affairs well to generate meaningful discussions which help learners and apprentices become well aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and how to stay safe. Learners and apprentices receive helpful government guidance through T2B newsletters and emails keeping them well informed on how to protect clients, particularly those who may be vulnerable or impressionable. However, a small minority of advanced and higher-level apprentices have only superficial knowledge and understanding of these themes because the discussions they have had do not relate to the apprentices personally or to their workplaces.
- Learners receive additional training and qualifications from their employers, increasing their employability and range of specialist care skills. For example, they have opportunities for further study ranging from first aid and dispensing medication courses through to highly specialist dementia and end-of-life care.
- A significant minority of learners undertake voluntary work within the health and social care sectors and the community. This work includes fund-raising for healthcare charities, volunteering with police services, using their specialist skills through the NHS to support people seeking to overcome drug addiction, or acting as interpreters. Through these roles learners make strong and demonstrable contributions to modern Britain.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that all supervisors or employers participate fully in apprentices' training. Not all involve themselves sufficiently in progress reviews, the planning of training, assessment and target-setting. As a result, their apprentices are not yet reaching their full potential or making the progress they could.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners and apprentices value and enjoy their studies and make good progress. Intermediate and advanced apprentices achieve well. T2B data indicates improved achievement rates in the current year compared with a significant drop in the previous year. However, despite an improving picture, too many apprentices are still leaving their course early without completing the full framework. Over recent years, study programme and traineeship learners, some of whom have low starting points, have been making excellent progress and achieving very well in their main qualifications.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills, as well as broader qualities such as reliability and increased self-confidence. These newly acquired skills support them in becoming valued team members in busy health and social care settings from early on in their course. Learners make rapid progress in developing their care skills, with many showing significant improvements from their starting point in a very short space of time. A significant minority of apprentices mentor and help new apprentices in the workplace.
- Learners and apprentices develop their skills to meet exacting sector standards. In many cases, the level of skills gained exceeds the requirements of their qualifications; this is

particularly the case in health and social care programmes. High numbers of learners and apprentices complete additional training and achieve further qualifications which relate well to their individual career aims. These courses cover a range of topics such as dementia, end-of-life care, and drug abuse. All apprentices are very well prepared for their next step in their chosen industry, with a majority progressing to increased responsibility or promotion, and a small minority to higher education.

- Learners on study programmes have achieved well in their English and mathematics qualifications in recent years. This year, apprentices are making much better progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills, with a significant minority working at higher levels than their course demands. Most are developing better skills in English, particularly speaking and listening, and are encouraged to develop numeracy skills alongside their workplace skills. A few learners who have a GCSE grade D in mathematics or English at the start of their course have not taken the opportunity to improve their grades.
- The achievement of learners with identified disabilities or learning needs is broadly the same as their peers. Female learners and adults achieve better than male learners and younger learners; however, these gaps in achievement are closing. Learners from certain ethnic groups have been underachieving in comparison to their peers on the apprenticeship but the gap has narrowed markedly during this academic year.
- Managers and staff know the destinations for most study programme and traineeship learners who completed their course in the last academic year. The vast majority of these learners progressed into employment or an apprenticeship. In the same period, almost all apprentices who completed their apprenticeship remained in full-time employment, and many gained additional responsibilities.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- T2B offers an outstanding intensive study programme to learners aged 16 to 19 on a roll-on, roll-off basis. Thirty-four learners are currently following employability programmes at T2B's Bristol Academy at levels 1 and 2.
- A comprehensive induction process, including an extended summer engagement programme, ensures that learners are on the right programme to meet their particular needs. The summer engagement programme includes careers guidance, help with preparing curriculum vitae (CV) and applications, team-building, sporting activities and opportunities to make new friends.
- Teachers have a very detailed understanding of their learners and use this information effectively in lesson planning to ensure that individual needs are met. As a result, learners are receiving particularly insightful help to enable them to make excellent progress.
- The vast majority of learners benefit from relevant and valuable work experience or employment-related activities; these opportunities support their learning and personal goals, and help the large majority to progress successfully to an apprenticeship, employment or further education. Managers use their extensive links with employers particularly well to provide learners with highly individualised placements that meet the needs of learners and employers.

- Learning plans are highly individualised to meet the particular needs of learners. For example, teachers reduce hours for learners with specific disabilities and provide individualised sessions for learners who need extra help. Teachers place strong emphasis on the development of learners' English, mathematical and digital skills in order to prepare learners well for a wide range of employment sectors. Learners achieve well in their functional skills qualifications in these subjects. Additional training is also provided to meet specific employment sector needs. For example, construction learners gain their safety cards allowing them to work on construction sites.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are mostly outstanding, and as a result learners make rapid progress on their courses. Teachers provide constructive feedback on learners' practical and written assignments which improves the quality of their work; as a result, learners grow in confidence. Teachers are highly knowledgeable, experienced and enthusiastic. Learners value these attributes and are positive about how much their tutors inspire them. Teachers set very high expectations during lessons, and learners understand what they need to do to achieve them.
- Teachers mark learners' work in detail and clearly indicate where spelling and grammatical errors have been made. Skilful advice and techniques such as the use of dictionaries and proof-reading ensure that learners' written work is of a good standard in most cases.
- Activities in mathematics lessons are often taught using the context of the workplace and real life to make them more relevant to learners. For example, a successful activity about calculating time was based on a construction site scenario; another involved calculating area based on how many carpet tiles were needed to carpet a room.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of activities which develop their employability skills well. Learners with very low starting points in particular find these beneficial in developing their confidence and self-esteem. For example, learners take part in a programme of industry visits, undergo mock interviews held in the workplace, hear visiting speakers from industry and the uniformed services and practise CV writing and presentation skills.
- Teachers make good use of learners' own experiences. For example, during sessions on interview techniques, learners were encouraged to describe their own experience of interviews and share learning points with the group.
- Teachers develop teamworking and presentation skills well in lessons, with activities that entail learners working in small groups. For example, in lessons covering online safety, teams of learners discussed the dangers of communicating using different media platforms and then nominated individual learners to report the findings of the team to the whole group.
- Learners feel safe and well cared for at the Bristol Academy and while on work placement. Learners have a very good understanding of how to stay safe when working online. Staff make good use of external agencies to support learners at risk of dropping out, and to help them make progress. For example, staff from the Bristol Drugs Project attend regularly to support groups and individuals with drug misuse or addiction problems.

Apprenticeships

Good

- T2B provides apprenticeships predominantly for the health and social care sectors. A small number of learners follow apprenticeships in business administration and customer service. Currently 7,288 apprentices are in training, of whom 2,945 are on intermediate and 3,234 on advanced apprenticeships. A further 1,109 are on higher apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the principles and requirements of apprenticeships are fully met. They have introduced effective new initiatives and improvements to assure the quality of provision; these changes are starting to have a positive impact on the quality of assessment in particular. As a consequence, staff are able to identify apprentices who need extra support, and the large majority are currently making good progress.
- The great majority of apprentices who complete their course remain in employment, and progress to advanced apprenticeships. A significant minority who gain promotion to senior job roles go on to higher apprenticeships. However, too many apprentices who start a course drop out of their training programme early without achieving the full framework.
- Staff have high aspirations for apprentices and encourage them to work towards higher qualifications, including those in English and mathematics. Most apprentices make substantial progress in developing skills in English and mathematics that are highly relevant to their work.
- Assessors engage with apprentices well. They develop a good mutual rapport which supports apprentices' learning. Apprentices value their training programmes; they are motivated to complete their planned actions and make progress in their careers. They enjoy their learning, and most exceed their own initial expectations of what they can achieve.
- Assessment practice is very thorough and builds on apprentices' previous attainment well. Assessors make good use of digital technologies to capture evidence of apprentices' competencies. They make good use of quality learning resources including worksheets, case studies and online information. Learners are inspired to learn and are skilfully directed by assessors to further resources or helpful websites.
- Assessors have good experience of health and social care practice and of a wide range of care settings, and use their knowledge well to explain best practice. Assessors help apprentices make accurate choices of optional training, matching opportunities to career goals, skills gaps or interests. Assessors use professional discussions well to help apprentices reflect on their practice and extend their knowledge and understanding of their subjects.
- Assessors visit apprentices at least monthly and give good personalised support; as a result, most apprentices are prepared well for assessment and make good progress especially in improving their English skills. The majority of apprentices benefit from clear and helpful verbal and written feedback so that they are clear about what they do well and what they need to do to improve their skills further.
- Employers speak highly of the quality of the training and the reliability of T2B assessor staff; they greatly value the skills apprentices acquire during the course which contribute well to their businesses. For example, apprentices become skilled in person-centred care, and understand the values of social care well. Higher-level apprentices grow in confidence as managers and learn how to have successful and insightful conversations with their staff on matters relating to individual performance.

- Assessors communicate well with employers and give very detailed feedback on apprentices' progress after reviews have taken place. However, employers are not regularly involved in planning learning that would be helpful for apprentices to complete, or in the coordination of on- and off-the-job training. On-the-job learning is recorded, but employers frequently are not involved in reinforcing that learning because they have too little awareness of the units apprentices are taking.
- Care values, including the promotion of equality and diversity, are integrated well throughout the training. Apprentices are thoughtful and clearly demonstrate the respect they have for clients, whom they treat with dignity.
- The large majority of assessors check understanding through skilful use of questioning; this results in a good level of challenge for apprentices. Apprentices think carefully about their knowledge and its implications for their own practice. Higher-level apprentices in particular can relate theory to practice effectively and make improvements in their care settings. A few assessors do not use open or probing questioning sufficiently well to test or extend learners' knowledge.
- Assessors are flexible in arranging visits to see apprentices when they are on shifts and make good use of on-the-job training opportunities for assessment purposes. They provide extra individual help if apprentices fall behind and adapt assessment methods to meet individual apprentices' needs. However, too many assessment visits are initially cancelled by apprentices, but T2B managers and assessors are having some success in ensuring that most sessions are rebooked.
- The large majority of assessors set clear and time-specific learning targets for apprentices that include the development of literacy and numeracy skills. A small minority of the targets set lack urgency and are focused on the completion of units rather than the acquisition of job skills and personal development.
- A small minority of apprentices with particular barriers to learning, such as dyslexia and anxiety, are not progressing as quickly as they are capable of doing. A small minority of teaching and training staff are not sufficiently experienced in working with apprentices with dyslexia.
- Assessors' practice in the correction of spelling and grammar is not yet consistent; a small minority do not pay sufficient attention to correcting spelling and grammar errors or give sufficient detailed written feedback to apprentices on their written work. As a result, a small minority of apprentices continue to make the same errors and are not aware of what they need to do to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58820
Type of provider	Independent training provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	10,200
Principal/CEO	Mr Robert Marr
Telephone number	029 2079 9133
Website	www.t2business.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	30	-	4	-		152	-	57
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	238	2707	74	3160	-	1109		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	38		9		47			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	None							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	None							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

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

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