

# East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire)

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

20–23 June 2017

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Assessors do not ensure that all apprentices develop their knowledge and understanding in line with their potential.
- Assessors, training advisers and employers do not collaborate sufficiently to review apprentices' development, or to set challenging targets that lead to them making rapid progress.
- Assessors do not mark apprentices' written work quickly enough, and do not provide clear feedback that helps them to understand how they can improve.
- Managers do not do enough to assure the quality of subcontracted provision.
- Managers did not secure replacement assessors quickly enough following the departure of several experienced members of staff; this has significantly slowed the progress of many apprentices.
- Staff do not provide information, advice and guidance that helps learners and apprentices to plan for their next steps in learning or employment.
- Learners and apprentices do not develop their understanding of safeguarding themes or British values well enough.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Current learners on 16 to 19 study programmes make good progress, develop their practical skills well, and improve their English and mathematics skills.
- Learners' and apprentices' attendance is high, and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- The large majority of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes participate in relevant and purposeful work experience that helps them to develop their skills.
- Managers have begun to take appropriate actions to resolve many of the weaknesses in apprenticeship provision.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- East Midlands Chamber is the second largest chamber of commerce in the country, with a membership in excess of 4,000 businesses across the region. It has its head office in Chesterfield and operates from a further seven offices. It currently provides training for a total of 259 apprentices in health and social care, building and construction, information technology (IT) for users, warehousing and distribution, accountancy, business administration, and business management, both directly and through a range of subcontractors. It also provides 16 to 19 study programmes for 102 learners through two subcontractors.
- The East Midlands has slightly lower unemployment than England as a whole. A smaller proportion of people work in managerial and technical roles, and a slightly higher proportion work in manufacturing, compared to the country as a whole. A smaller proportion of the population is qualified to level 4 or above than in the rest of England.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all assessors have high expectations of what apprentices can achieve, and that they challenge them to meet demanding targets, challenging timescales, and, where appropriate, to produce work that extends them beyond the minimum requirements of their apprenticeship.
- Ensure that assessors mark apprentices' work within a reasonable timescale and provide detailed feedback that helps apprentices to understand what they have done well, how they can improve the content of their work and the quality of their writing, and how they might extend their learning further.
- Increase the extent to which employers are involved in reviewing apprentices' progress so that they know how well their apprentices are doing, and what skills they need to develop further and practise in the workplace.
- Train all relevant staff so that they can further develop learners' and apprentices' understanding of British values and safeguarding. Ensure that staff incorporate these themes more frequently within lessons and progress reviews.
- Arrange to provide high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance for all learners and apprentices.
- Implement a clear framework for assuring the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment provided by subcontractors that complements existing funding compliance processes.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The East Midlands Chamber's senior leadership team, including its governors, has undergone significant change over the past two years. Senior managers appointed during this period have started to raise expectations relating to the progress that learners and apprentices should make. They have begun to introduce well-thought-out new procedures to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, their actions have not yet had sufficient impact on improving outcomes.
- Managers did not act swiftly enough to prevent the departure of several members of staff from substantially affecting the progress of apprentices. A review of East Midlands Chamber's staffing structure in the summer of 2016 resulted in several redundancies, followed later that year by the departure of several highly qualified assessors. Subsequently, a number of apprentices did not have an assessor, and made little progress for several months. Recently appointed assessors have successfully tackled the backlog of apprentices whose end dates have passed, and helped most of them to achieve their qualifications. However, it is too soon to assess the full impact of these efforts on the progress of the many remaining apprentices who have fallen behind in their studies.
- Arrangements for monitoring the quality of subcontracted provision focus too much on compliance with funding rules and not enough on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers recognise this, and have begun to implement procedures to quality assure the work of the two main subcontractors. However, it is too early to assess the full impact of these arrangements.
- The 2015/16 self-assessment report, written by managers who have since left the organisation, bears little resemblance to the provision seen during the inspection. Current managers have not updated it. The report does not capture the views of stakeholders. The new management team is devising an inclusive and rigorous self-assessment process, but preparation of the 2016/17 report has not yet begun.
- Managers do not have sufficiently accurate and reliable data on the progress, achievements and destinations of learners and apprentices. They are unable to assess accurately the quality of provision, monitor organisational performance sufficiently, or focus their improvement actions effectively.
- Managers have not yet developed a range of programmes that focuses on strategic regional priorities, or on filling gaps in the regional labour market. Senior leaders and managers acknowledge that they have developed provision largely in response to the emerging demands of their members, rather than through careful analysis of labour market information. They are currently working on a more coherent curriculum strategy that better reflects the needs of the regions they work in.
- Managers have not placed sufficient importance on the promotion of equality and diversity. As a result, tutors and assessors do not do enough to develop learners' and apprentices' understanding of these themes. However, inspectors found no evidence of discrimination against any groups of learners.
- Managers have developed appropriate performance management arrangements for

assessors. They make effective use of the results of observations of teaching, learning and assessment to identify weaknesses, and provide further training and development for assessors.

## **The governance of the provider**

- Since the last inspection, governance arrangements have been strengthened. A committee of East Midlands Chamber's main board now provides oversight of the training provision.
- Current board members are well qualified and experienced. Between them, they have many years' experience of successfully running businesses and commercial ventures. However, the board currently lacks sufficient expertise in the management and delivery of high-quality, work-based learning programmes.
- Board members receive accessible management reports on many aspects of performance. This has resulted in improved scrutiny of the organisation's performance. East Midlands Chamber's managers are now much more accountable to the board for the impact of their actions on the quality of provision. However, it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of the board in its current form.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers place a high priority on ensuring that learners and apprentices are safe. The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding. The safeguarding lead has established effective practices for safeguarding learners and apprentices. Managers investigate and deal with safeguarding concerns promptly and appropriately. Learners know to whom they should speak if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.
- Managers make appropriate background checks on all staff whose roles warrant it. Managers ensure that tutors, training advisers and assessors receive appropriate training, including in how to keep learners safe from radicalisation.
- Staff do not yet ensure that all learners understand a broad range of safeguarding themes well enough. Exploration of these topics takes place when learners and apprentices start their programmes. However, staff do not reinforce them at sufficiently frequent intervals, and many learners and apprentices only have a vague recollection of the issues.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- Due to a re-organisation of staffing, and a subsequent lack of assessors, many apprentices have experienced a lack of support that has slowed their progress. Although the appointment of new assessors has largely resolved this problem, apprentices still do not receive feedback on their completed work quickly enough. One group of apprentices had not had their work assessed for three months, and they feel frustrated that they are not able to improve and progress as they would like to.
- Assessors do not make enough use of the information they have about individual

apprentices to plan learning. They often set generic learning targets, and this limits apprentices' progress and skills development.

- Assessors do not routinely extend apprentices' English and mathematics skills beyond the minimum requirements of their qualifications. Assessors do not do enough to help apprentices to understand better how to apply English and mathematical skills within the workplace.
- Assessors' use of questioning does not help apprentices develop their vocational knowledge well enough, or challenge them to demonstrate their deeper understanding of topics. For example, when assessing a business administration apprentice's document-archiving skills, the assessor checked that they had completed tasks to the required standard, but did not ask them why they did certain things, how they could do them better or what the impact would be of not completing tasks to the required standard.
- Most tutors and assessors do not integrate equality and diversity topics well enough within teaching, learning and assessment. A recently introduced programme of 'hot topics' is beginning to help assessors to discuss relevant themes with apprentices, but it is yet to have a significant impact. On occasion, however, staff incorporate these topics into lessons well. For example, a tutor helped learners to understand the possible effects of fasting. As a result, these learners supported others who were observing Ramadan by helping them with tasks.
- Assessors focus too much on gathering evidence for the completion of units, rather than supporting apprentices to learn new skills. When they do provide teaching and training, for example in off-the-job training sessions, they develop apprentices' practical skills well. However, when teaching theoretical subjects, they use a limited range of methods that often fail to inspire apprentices to develop their understanding further.
- Most learners on study programmes recognise the importance of English and mathematics skills. Tutors effectively show them how to apply English and mathematics within their chosen occupational area. Tutors identify common spelling and grammatical mistakes in written work, and learners improve their writing skills over time. However, tutors rarely identify punctuation errors, and learners make little progress in this area as a result.
- In 16 to 19 study programmes, tutors make good use of information on learners' prior attainment to plan lessons. They tailor activities to suit individual learners, which enables these learners to develop their skills well. Tutors quickly identify any additional help that learners need, and promptly offer wide-ranging support that helps them to overcome any difficulties they may experience. The support they receive helps these learners to make good progress.
- Tutors for study programmes use a wide range of teaching methods that engage and motivate learners, the vast majority of whom make good progress as a result. Tutors frequently check learners' understanding of topics. They provide good written and verbal feedback that learners value and use to improve subsequent work.
- Tutors set highly appropriate learning targets for study programme learners. These targets are individualised, and focus on how learners can develop their skills. This helps them to focus their efforts in the right areas. Tutors frequently review progress against these targets. Consequently, learners know how well they are doing and what they need

to do to improve their skills further.

- Learners and apprentices benefit from good learning environments and resources that tutors and assessors use well to help them to improve their practical skills and prepare well for employment or further learning. For example, study programme learners train in well-equipped workshops with industry-standard equipment that they practise their skills on confidently.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Learners and apprentices do not develop a clear understanding of British values. Although tutors and assessors introduce these topics to learners and apprentices at the start of their programmes, they do not reinforce them at sufficiently frequent intervals. As a result, many learners are unable to recall what these values are and how they relate to their life and work. Although tutors help learners on 16 to 19 study programmes to understand a few diversity themes, this aspect of their learning requires further development to be good. Assessors do not do enough to help apprentices understand how these topics relate to their work.
- Learners and apprentices do not receive enough guidance on the full range of their potential next steps in learning and employment. Although staff provide clear advice on the provider's range of programmes, they do not give sufficient help to identify potential further and higher education routes, or broader career opportunities. Although training advisers discuss these themes during progress reviews, their advice is not well informed or helpful.
- Apprentices and learners do not develop their understanding of safeguarding themes well enough. Most have only a basic knowledge of the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism, and many have only a limited understanding of how to protect themselves and others from those who would bully, groom or abuse them. Apprentices who work in occupational areas where safeguarding is a key element of their learning, such as education, and health and social care, do not develop their expertise to a professional standard.
- The large majority of learners following study programmes participate in appropriate, purposeful work experience. These experiences help them develop their vocational and interpersonal skills, and their understanding of the demands of the workplace. Although tutors help learners to develop further the practical skills they acquire in the workplace, they do not record what learners did on work experience or help learners to reflect on the wider benefits of their placement.
- Apprentices develop their practical skills well, both on and off the job. Apprentices report that their employers often consider their learning needs when assigning tasks to them so that they can develop and apply recently acquired skills in work situations. However, assessors are less successful in developing apprentices' theoretical knowledge in training sessions.
- Learners and apprentices grow in confidence as they develop their practical skills. They describe with obvious pride the skills and knowledge they have developed, such as using different bonding methods in bricklaying. Many learners taking study programmes come from challenging backgrounds, and it is evident that their programmes have given them

belief in their own ability to be successful.

- Staff respond promptly and effectively on the rare occasions when the well-being or safety of learners and apprentices is at risk, either as a result of their work and studies, or in their personal lives. Learners feel safe and know to whom they should report concerns about their own well-being or that of others.
- Learners taking 16 to 19 study programmes attend well and their behaviour is exemplary. This is especially impressive in the 16 to 19 provision, where many of the learners have had poor previous experiences of education and require a good deal of personal support. Apprentices attend off-the-job training sessions regularly and they too have excellent attitudes to learning.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has declined in the current academic year from its previously high level, and is now around the relatively low national rate. Only just over a half of apprentices due to finish in the year to date have completed their qualifications within the agreed timescale. This is principally because the achievement rate of advanced apprentices has dropped sharply.
- Assessors do not always establish sufficiently high expectations for all apprentices, including the most able, based on their abilities and prior attainment. In too many cases, staff do not motivate or support apprentices to make progress as quickly as they are able, or to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the minimum requirements of their qualifications.
- Apprentices rarely produce written work that exceeds the minimum expectations of their industry or their qualifications. Despite the ability of many apprentices to produce work of a higher standard, assessors do not do enough to encourage them to do so.
- The proportion of 16- to 18-year-old trainees who achieved their qualifications or progressed into further learning, apprenticeships or employment with training, was very low in 2015/16. Because of this, managers took the decision to terminate contracts with the partners who taught these learners.
- Almost all apprentices who successfully complete their qualifications secure permanent jobs with their employer. However, managers at East Midlands Chamber do not capture more detailed information about their destinations, and therefore do not know what effect the apprenticeship has on the overall career direction of apprentices. They do not know, for example, how many apprentices progress to higher-level qualifications, or gain promotion or additional responsibilities at work. As study programme provision is new, it is too early to judge how successfully learners progress to higher-level studies or employment.
- Current learners aged 16 to 18 who take study programmes with two new subcontractors enjoy their programmes and make good progress. The large majority of these young people are on course to achieve a range of qualifications in motor vehicle maintenance, construction trades, and media. The majority have already passed functional skills



qualifications in English and mathematics.

- Current apprentices develop and apply good practical skills. Most speak positively about their learning experiences. They can explain how they have developed and what they have learned as a result of their studies.
- There are currently no significant gaps in the progress or achievement of particular groups of learners. In 2015/16, a far higher proportion of female apprentices than males achieved on time. However, this gap is not evident among current apprentices. The low achievement rate in 2015/16 for apprentices aged 24 and over was due to difficulties with a single employer with which East Midlands Chamber no longer works.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- East Midlands Chamber has just over 100 learners enrolled on study programmes with two subcontractors. They do not provide any programmes directly. The principal subcontractor offers a range of vocational programmes in construction trades, and transportation operations and maintenance, from level 1 through to level 3. A very small number of learners follow programmes in creative media with another subcontractor.
- Staff work with learners to develop personalised study programmes that match their prior attainment and aspirations. All programmes include a main vocational learning aim, work experience or appropriate work-related learning, and English and mathematics where this is appropriate. The requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes are met.
- Tutors use the information they have on learners' prior attainment to plan lessons that include a range of activities that match the needs and abilities of all learners. Where learners have particular gaps in their knowledge or skills, tutors provide appropriate help.
- The vast majority of learners undertake work experience as part of their study programme. For example, motor vehicle learners work in local garages, carrying out routine car maintenance, and creative media learners support commercial contracts with local media outlets that provide services for a national television network provider. Learners work purposefully in their placements and develop practical skills and other important personal attributes and employability skills, such as the ability to communicate confidently with customers.
- The small minority of learners who are not ready for work experience participate in useful work-related activities that help prepare them for external placements. For example, a group of construction learners undertook repairs on an adjacent unit on the industrial estate where they learn.
- Learners' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Their attendance and punctuality are good. Many construction learners undertake projects that contribute to their local community, such as an improvement project on an RSPCA property, and maintenance work at a local residential home for the elderly.
- Learners produce practical work that is of a good standard. Assessment feedback makes good use of praise, and in most cases, tutors provide clear guidance to learners about



how to improve.

- Staff do not do enough to ensure that learners receive a good range of impartial advice that helps them to make appropriate choices for their next steps in education or employment. Learners spoken with during the inspection had made choices based on the advice of friends and family with little understanding of the alternatives available to them.
- Staff do not revisit or reinforce learning about British values throughout learners' programmes. Although staff provide learners with an introduction to these topics when they start their studies, and provide numerous wall displays on these themes, learners develop only a limited understanding. Similarly, staff discuss safeguarding themes with learners, including those related to radicalisation and extremism at the very beginning of programmes; although learners know to whom to report concerns, they have only a basic understanding of the things they should look out for.

## Apprenticeships

## Requires improvement

- East Midlands Chamber currently provides training for 259 apprentices in health and social care, building and construction, IT for users, warehousing and distribution, accountancy, business administration, and business management. Many apprentices, particularly in health and social care, building and construction, and accountancy, receive training and support from subcontractor staff.
- The proportion of apprentices who have achieved their qualifications, and the proportion who have done so within agreed timescales, has fallen in the current year. However, these proportions remain in line with national rates. One reason for this decline is that managers did not secure replacement or temporary staff quickly enough following the departure of several assessors. As a result, a number of apprentices have experienced prolonged periods without an assessor, which effectively halted their progress.
- East Midlands Chamber staff do not communicate well enough with employers to ensure that all those involved with each apprentice understand all aspects of their progress. As a result, assessors do not set learning targets that closely match employers' needs. Targets are often generic and focus on the completion of qualification units rather than the skills that apprentices need to develop further. They are seldom challenging enough, and this limits apprentices' development.
- Assessors often do not mark written work quickly enough, with several apprentices speaking of delays of several months before assessors returned their work. When their work is marked, assessors' feedback often lacks the detail needed for apprentices to understand how they can improve. It seldom includes guidance on how apprentices can improve their writing, and apprentices' written work rarely exceeds the minimum standard required for them to achieve their qualifications.
- Assessors do not do enough to help apprentices to develop their understanding of a range of topics that will help them make sense of the world around them, expectations at work, and equality legislation. Apprentices' understanding of diversity themes and of British values remains limited.
- Assessors do not do enough to help apprentices understand how to apply their English and mathematical skills in the workplace, and this limits the extent to which apprentices

develop their knowledge of these subjects. However, apprentices who need to develop their English and mathematical skills to pass functional skills qualifications do so. Assessors help apprentices to develop a range of other study and employability skills, such as those required for problem-solving and academic research.

- Apprentices are safe within learning environments and at work. They know to whom they should report any concerns. However, assessors do not yet do enough to help them develop a sound understanding of safeguarding themes, including the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff provide information, advice and guidance related to the programmes provided by East Midlands Chamber. However, they do not provide detailed, impartial advice and guidance on the whole range of other study and employment options available to apprentices.
- Apprentices develop good practical skills. Current assessors use their relevant extensive vocational knowledge and experience to plan sessions that engage apprentices well. They make frequent links between learning and workplace practice and make good use of high-quality facilities and learning resources. However, assessors are less successful in developing apprentices' theoretical knowledge.
- Employers value the contribution that apprentices make to their businesses and the vast majority of apprentices remain in permanent jobs at the end of their programmes. However, managers do not have further details of what happens to apprentices once they complete their programme and therefore are unable to judge the effectiveness of the programmes they are offering.
- Programmes fully meet the requirements of an apprenticeship. However, in a minority of vocational areas where apprentices do not attend provider premises for training, staff do not record off-the-job training activity well enough to inform learners' progress.
- Apprentices attend well, enjoy their learning, are courteous, respectful and behave well in provider and work settings.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	50116
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	565
Principal/CEO	Scott Knowles
Telephone number	01246 212519
Website	<a href="http://www.emc-dnl.co.uk">www.emc-dnl.co.uk</a>

## 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+
	65	-	35	-	2	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	68	84	39	58	1	9		
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:	Premier Care Tameside College Babington Business College Chesterfield College Chameleon Construction REAL Education							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vocational training programme manager, 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

Russ Henry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jai Sharda	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jonny Wright	Ofsted Inspector
Bev Cross	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence Took	Ofsted Inspector

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