

# PeoplePlus Group Limited

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

27–30 June 2017

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- A high proportion of adult learners and apprentices progress to employment.
- Adults on employability courses and those undertaking English and mathematics functional skills qualifications achieve well.
- Leaders and managers have managed successfully a period of significant change to establish the PeoplePlus group from three separate companies. As a result, outcomes for learners and apprentices have continued to improve.
- Leaders and managers work very well with regional and local partners such as employers, Jobcentre Plus and subcontractors to provide high-quality training that fulfils the specific needs and priorities of their respective regions.
- Senior leaders and managers work very well with many national employers to develop a curriculum that enables learners and apprentices to gain the skills they need for sustainable employment.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Tutor/assessors have high expectations of their learners and apprentices and inspire them to be successful in their learning.
- Tutors enable adult learners to develop quickly the employability and practical skills required to progress successfully to employment or further learning.
- Apprentices benefit from tutor/assessors' vocational experience and effective support that helps them to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours to secure their future employment.
- Despite rapid improvement in the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications within the time allocated, not enough apprentices complete their courses on time.
- A small minority of tutors do not correct errors in learners' written work consistently well enough and provide feedback to help them improve their work further.
- In a few cases, learners make slow progress in sessions due to technical difficulties with information technology resources.
- A small minority of adult learners and apprentices do not have a sufficiently well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the threat of radicalisation and extremism.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- PeoplePlus Group Limited is a national independent learning provider owned by Staffline Group Plc that delivers adult education and apprenticeship programmes, including to apprenticeship-levy employers. Staffline Group already owned Elpis Training, and acquired Avanta in May 2014 and A4E in April 2015. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) granted approval in February 2016 to combine the three providers into one single operation and confirm the change of name to the PeoplePlus Group.
- PeoplePlus Group supports around 8,600 adult learners across a range of locations nationally. Subcontracted partners work with around 25% of these learners. Over 2,000 apprentices develop their skills primarily at employer locations, with a blend of group and residential delivery. The provider has begun to deliver the new apprenticeship standards with national employers. Subcontracted partners deliver around 30% of the apprenticeship provision.

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

- Leaders and managers should;
  - ensure that tutor/assessors use the new online tracking and monitoring system effectively so that they closely monitor apprentices' progress and help them to progress well and complete on time
  - ensure that tutor/assessors, including in subcontracted provision, apply the provider's marking policy, and consistently check and correct English and mathematical errors, so that learners know what they need to do to improve their skills in these subjects
  - ensure that learners and apprentices receive consistently helpful and supportive feedback to improve their practice and skills
  - ensure that tutor/assessors understand fully the 'Prevent' duty and feel confident to challenge and deepen learners' and apprentices' understanding of the potential threats from extremist behaviour and radicalisation
  - where appropriate, ensure that learners and apprentices have quick and easy access to information technology (IT) resources and facilities that are operational and fit for purpose.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Following the merger of three predecessor businesses in 2016, leaders and managers have skilfully managed a period of significant transition and change, to establish the new PeoplePlus group and to ensure the delivery of high-quality provision across the organisation. Staff are strongly committed to the corporate aims to develop a well-trained, reliable national workforce, creating opportunities and jobs in the employability, skills and justice sectors.
- Managers receive detailed, timely, accurate and reliable management information. They use this data well to help monitor and review progress and performance, and assist them in achieving their demanding team objectives.
- Staff are well qualified and have a good level of knowledge, skills and industrial experience. As a result, the organisation is successfully achieving its business objectives. Performance management processes are effective. Despite recent significant structural change, staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and objectives. They receive clear guidance, encouragement and support from their managers, enabling them to work well, with confidence and assurance.
- Staff have good access to a high-quality and relevant programme of professional development. Managers use feedback from performance review meetings and learning observations well to help identify key priorities for training. As a result, they choose training activities that help teachers and tutor/assessors to maintain and improve the quality of their teaching, training and assessment.
- Managers and tutor/assessors have a very good knowledge of the regions in which they work. They liaise closely and effectively with local partners such as employers, Jobcentre Plus and subcontractors, to deliver high-quality employability training and apprenticeships that fulfil the specific needs and priorities of the respective regions.
- Most classroom accommodation is of a high standard, fit for purpose, spacious and, where needed, suitably equipped with appropriate computers and software. As a result, learners and apprentices successfully develop the necessary skills for their future careers. For example, there are a few particularly high-quality specialist facilities, such as a casino room in Birmingham to train prospective croupiers. However, a small minority of classrooms are stuffy and cramped, and too often learners have trouble logging on to computers or accessing the internet.
- Quality assurance and quality improvement processes are well developed and appropriately self-critical. Managers accurately identify the relative strengths and weaknesses within the organisation. They use performance data, feedback from learners and employers, and information gathered from lesson observations well to review standards and identify potential actions to raise the quality of provision. They then carefully monitor and review the impact and effectiveness of improvement initiatives. As a result, achievement rates and progression to employment continue to improve, as well as

levels of learner and employer satisfaction.

- Leaders manage subcontracted provision well. They have extremely thorough quality assurance, vetting and due diligence procedures in place, which they use effectively to ensure that any existing or potential subcontractor is able to meet the organisational expectations and standards. As a result, there is no significant variation in the quality of education and training between direct and subcontracted provision.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that meets the needs of learners and apprentices well. The curriculum fulfils the requirements of employers and helps to address local, regional and national employment gaps. In particular, managers have successfully implemented arrangements for the new apprenticeship standards.
- Leaders use subcontracting arrangements selectively and effectively so they can deliver provision in other subject areas and regions, which helps to address specific local needs. As a result, a high proportion of adults who are developing their employability skills successfully find a job. In addition, most apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and understanding, which helps them to make good progress with their employers and significantly improve their longer-term job and promotion prospects.
- The majority of staff promote learners' understanding of British values and equality and diversity well. In a few situations, staff have been slower to develop the confidence and insight to raise learners' understanding of the 'Prevent' duty. Managers recognise and acknowledge this as an area where they need to arrange further staff development, to provide greater knowledge and confidence to staff and enable them to promote 'Prevent' more thoroughly to learners.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Governance arrangements are effective. The board provides effective strategic oversight and scrutiny of the work of the skills division within the provider. The board mainly comprises senior executives within the PeoplePlus group. While the group lacks any significant external independence, the membership enables the work of the skills division to be linked closely to wider organisational planning, business objectives, quality standards and expectations of the group.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff place a high priority on promoting the safety and welfare of learners and apprentices who clearly demonstrate safe working practices at work. Adult learners and apprentices report that they feel safe in learning.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and fit for purpose. Managers carry out suitable pre-employment checks on staff. Staff receive appropriate training so that they know what action to take if they feel learners might be at risk from radicalisation or demonstrate possible signs of abuse. Staff provide clear guidance and support to learners on what to do if they feel at risk of any bullying, harassment or intimidation, or if they wish to refer any safeguarding issue.
- The designated safeguarding officer maintains detailed records of any concerns and takes suitable action to address any issues promptly and thoroughly. They maintain close and

effective links where necessary, with employers, subcontractors and other external organisations involved in helping to promote the safety and welfare of learners.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders, managers and tutor/assessors have high expectations of their learners and apprentices and inspire them to be successful in their learning. Managers and tutors work together closely with external agencies to ensure that adults feel able to attend employability training. Tutors quickly develop highly effective relationships with learners and help them to overcome personal and social barriers to learning, enabling them to progress into sustainable employment. Apprentices benefit from employers and tutor/assessors' very high expectations, ensuring that they develop the specific skills necessary to secure future employment.
- The assessment of learners' and apprentices' starting points, including their prior learning, vocational experience, English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills, is effective. As a result, tutor/assessors have a good understanding of learners' and apprentices' individual needs and ensure that they progress on to the most appropriate course, at the right level, and receive appropriate additional support, where necessary.
- Tutor/assessors, with extensive knowledge of their vocational areas, plan learning and assessment well and use a wide variety of learning methods to engage learners and apprentices. For example, tutor/assessors use video clips effectively, including within one-to-one teaching sessions, to demonstrate concepts. In addition, the workbooks that adult learners use develop their understanding in carefully structured steps, enabling them to work independently outside of the classroom.
- Tutor/assessors coordinate apprentices' learning to their work role well to ensure that the training they receive is relevant and helps them to acquire valuable workplace skills. Additional training provided to employers, for example in leadership and team-building skills, enhances apprentices' programmes considerably. As a result, employers value highly their apprentices' contributions in the workplace and give them additional responsibility at work, which improves their confidence levels further. For example, a level 2 business administration apprentice has been promoted to a position of senior accounts administrator and a level 3 customer service apprentice is managing a multi-million pound client account.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from tutor/assessors' good use of a range of questioning techniques to prompt, probe and check understanding and encourage them to reflect on their prior learning. As a result, learners' and apprentices' understanding is reinforced and deepened.
- Tutor/assessors ensure that on-going assessment for the large majority of apprentices is frequent and reliable. Progress reviews and feedback of assessed work are effective in helping apprentices to improve. Most apprentices have a clear understanding of the progress they have made and what they need to do to improve further. Learners on short employability skills courses take many short assessments and receive immediate feedback. Consequently, the vast majority of learners maintain their interest, build confidence in their abilities and complete their course.

- A small minority of tutor/assessors do not consistently use strategies to ensure that adult learners and apprentices reinforce their learning. For example, these tutors do not routinely highlight how learners can improve their work in learners' workbooks and check whether learners understand what they need to do to improve or develop their skills further.
- As a result of difficulties in accessing IT resources in a minority of lessons, adult learners are not able to make the progress expected. For example, in an otherwise effective induction session, poor IT access hampered learning. A small minority of learners seeking employment make very slow progress in developing skills in searching for jobs online due to problems with logging onto laptops and accessing the internet.
- Tutor/assessors promote learners' and apprentices' awareness of equality and diversity effectively in teaching and learning. For example, apprentices' understanding of the implications of the equality and diversity legislation is developed well by tutor/assessors, who help them to understand that companies have to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled clients and to provide services in a manner that is free from bias.
- Tutors develop learners' skills in English, information technology and mathematics well, resulting in a very high proportion developing the skills necessary for their work roles and passing examinations in these subjects. However, tutors do not consistently correct learners' written work. As a result, a small minority of learners' written work contains too many spelling and grammatical errors.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

- Learners on employability programmes develop a good range of skills in writing, using information technology, problem-solving, interacting well with each other and interview techniques. As a result, many are confident in their ability to secure a job.
- Most programmes provide a variety of activities in the classroom to develop learners' work-related skills such as time-keeping, team-working and communication. Practical activities, such as forklift training, prepare learners well to work in specific industries, such as catering, security, warehousing and healthcare.
- At induction, tutor/assessors quickly establish a good relationship with learners and create a purposeful yet relaxed environment which puts unemployed adults at their ease and allows them to gain the skills and confidence swiftly to make good progress.
- The majority of learners on short employability courses have been unemployed for over 12 months. The high-quality training helps these learners to develop quickly the communication and interpersonal skills to be ready for employment by the end of the course.
- Learners are polite, listen to each other well and respect the views of others. In one employability session, learners demonstrated their communication skills by giving confident presentations, listening carefully and answering questions. In another, they improved their communication skills by role-playing interviews. As a result of these activities, the majority of learners develop a positive attitude towards achieving full-time employment.
- On the employability programmes, learners who are close to the minimum requirements

to access the programme receive support in passing English and/or mathematics tests to access the course. Learners who require more substantial English and mathematics support or training are referred to appropriate substantial courses at other providers.

- Apprentices take pride in the work that they produce, which is often of a high standard. They are keen to learn and often make a good contribution to their organisations.
- The employability training places a great emphasis on attendance and punctuality; learners' high attendance demonstrates that they are being well prepared for the demands of work.
- At induction, apprentices and learners cover safeguarding, British values and the risks of radicalisation and extremism well. However, although all tutor/assessors have had recent training on these issues, their confidence and ability in reinforcing these topics within lessons and reviews vary considerably. As a result, apprentices' and learners' understanding of British values and their awareness of extremism and radicalisation are not consistently good.
- The apprenticeship and adult provision place a high emphasis on health and safety within the workplace.
- Apprentices and learners benefit from good information, advice and guidance. Employability programmes have good links with local Jobcentre Plus managers. Learners gain a clear overview of the routes available from employability courses. They also receive an individual interview with a member of staff. As a result, of those securing employment, the significant majority of learners progress to careers that they chose at the start of the course. If learners are not successful in gaining employment at the end of the course, managers will signpost them to other training or employment. Apprentices are clear about progression opportunities, and are well motivated to achieve their qualifications and progress in their employment or further study.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- The achievement rates of short employability and work-related learning courses for adults are high. Adults attend courses for between three and six weeks. Nearly 70% of adults take level 1 and 2 certificate-level, work-related qualifications, while the remainder take level 1 award-level work-related courses. The achievement of the large majority of adult learners who take certificate-level qualifications is high and well above national rates. However, those studying at award level achieve less well and are at about the national rate. These qualifications prepare learners well to enter into careers in the security, health and logistics industries.
- Leaders and managers have successfully tackled previously low rates of apprenticeship achievement and have taken action that has resulted in the rapid improvement in the proportion of apprentices achieving their courses within planned timeframes. Current in-year data indicates that the proportion of apprentices who achieve within planned timeframes has improved and is now slightly above the low national rate. However, too few apprentices complete their courses on time.
- Tutors use the information about learners' English and mathematics skills at the start of the course very well, resulting in the significant majority of learners achieving their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at the appropriate level.



- Learners and apprentices benefit from a wide variety of additional qualifications and courses that help them to develop the employability skills to secure full-time employment. For example, learners interested in pursuing careers in security are able to achieve a door supervisor certificate and the appropriate licences to enable them to undertake their work.
- Learners and apprentices develop good work-related skills and make at least the progress expected of them. For example, customer service apprentices develop very effective communication skills that help them to understand fully customer requirements and to provide a high-quality service. Employers value and benefit from the work-related skills that apprentices and learners develop.
- As a result of the high-quality support, information and guidance learners receive during their course, a high proportion of adult learners progress successfully into the employment of their choice. Learners, who receive additional training in security, forklift truck driving and warehousing, progress to employment more successfully than their peers. The vast majority of apprentices who complete their course progress into employment or further learning.
- In the previous year, there were significant achievement gaps between different groups of learners and apprentices. Managers identified the particular groups that did not perform well and implemented a range of actions that have resulted in their improvement.

## Types of provision

### Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- At the time of inspection, 1,283 adult learners were on short employability courses. The large majority of learners progress from these short courses to vocational programmes and gain qualifications in warehousing and storage, customer services, hospitality and catering, construction and security.
- Managers work very effectively with Jobcentre Plus to offer courses to meet local employment needs and skills shortages. As a result, the majority of learners make good progress into employment. For example, managers work closely with a range of large employers to identify suitable candidates and provide training for their vacancies. This includes bus driver training for learners seeking roles with a national bus company and forklift truck driver training for warehouse and distribution employers.
- Managers and tutors have high expectations of learners. Almost all learners enjoy learning, are respectful of each other, arrive on time and develop the behaviours necessary for re-engaging with learning. Tutors know their learners well and provide support and flexible training activities to maintain good attendance. Learners with care responsibilities or health issues receive the appropriate support and, if necessary, are signposted to specialist organisations.
- Learners develop their confidence and communication skills very well. Tutors' expertise in vocational areas enables learners to aspire to and develop their work-related skills such as dealing with complaints and solving problems. Learners benefit from well-planned, job-related activities and consequently improve their practical skills. As a result, they are able



to work more effectively with customers, team members and managers in the workplace. On security courses, learners demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of effective communication in dealing with challenging customers and reporting incidents concisely and with confidence.

- The vast majority of tutors provide very effective verbal feedback to learners to enable them to improve further. They use questions very effectively to draw out learners' prior knowledge, and to prompt them and check their understanding. However, a few tutors do not give learners sufficient time to think about and respond to questions. Consequently, in these sessions, learners do not sufficiently demonstrate and check their understanding.
- The correction of spelling and grammar errors is not consistently good. Written feedback on a small number of learners' work is not helpful enough to guide improvement. Consequently, learners in these lessons disengage in activities and do not progress as well as they might.
- Tutors provide good information and guidance, and assess the starting points of learners well. The detailed induction and assessment process ensures that learners undertake the correct courses at the right level. Learners who require additional support attend additional English and mathematics sessions or are signposted to other providers to gain more confidence before returning to the programme.
- Tutors promote health and safety in the workplace very effectively. Learners are aware of good working practices, the importance of personal protective equipment and the risks of cyber bullying. Displays throughout buildings reinforce the importance of health and safety and personal responsibility. Learners feel safe.
- Tutors ensure that learners access very effective work experience or work-related activities to prepare them for employment. Learners on a professional cookery course operate a lunchtime café at a centre, providing meals for up to 50 people, four days a week. They plan meals, order and manage stocks, prepare food, serve, handle money and clean up at the end of service, gaining invaluable experience of a busy working environment. Most of these learners progress into employment and benefit greatly from being able to cook nutritious and cost-effective meals at home.
- Learners demonstrate a good understanding of equality, diversity and British values. The majority of tutor/assessors use topical or vocational activities effectively to promote respect and cultural diversity, and to challenge learners' understanding. For example, small groups planned presentations on the restriction of travel between countries and the London riots. Learners were respectful of each other, listened and voiced opinions, building their confidence and improving their English skills. However, in a very small minority of sessions, tutors do not explore these skills effectively.
- Tutors routinely raise learners' awareness of issues associated with extremism and radicalisation effectively at induction. However, a small minority of tutors are less confident in reinforcing and checking learners' understanding throughout the course.

## Apprenticeships

**Good**

- The provider has 1,400 apprentices. Of these, 190 are aged 16 to 18, 240 are aged 19 to 23 and 966 are aged over 24. Apprentices study on a range of intermediate and advanced

apprenticeship frameworks, including business and administration, health and social care, construction, retail and leisure. The provision meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.

- Leaders and managers develop apprenticeship programmes that meet local and economic priorities, where necessary working with a range of subcontractors to ensure that apprentices can access learning in a location and vocational area that best meets their needs.
- Employers work closely with the provider and value highly the extent to which the design and delivery of apprenticeship programmes align apprentices' learning, skills and behaviours with their business needs and priorities. For example, a new partnership with a major international company has involved considerable joint planning and development to innovate learning programmes.
- Tutor/assessors' assessment practice is good. Tutor/assessors make best use of apprentices' job roles when planning their assessments. As a result, apprentices are able to apply new learning to their employers' business activities. For example, in one session, an apprentice applied their recent learning in relation to effective health and safety practice and correctly stated that, when making decisions about cost savings, health and safety considerations were more important than budgetary concerns.
- Most tutor/assessors develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills well in learning sessions and during feedback. For example, tutor/assessors encourage apprentices to use dictionaries in sessions to improve their understanding and spelling of complex words. However, in a small minority of sessions, tutors do not routinely check apprentices' understanding of specific technical terms to ensure their effective use in the workplace.
- Apprentices' portfolios are mostly comprehensive, well-structured and provide a clear and effective record of learning and of progress. Tutor/assessors' feedback is mostly detailed and gives apprentices a clear indication of what they need to do improve. Most tutor/assessors use the new online learning record/portfolio well to record apprentices' progress accurately and give timely feedback. Apprentices value highly the feedback they receive; however, for a small minority of apprentices, their feedback is not prompt enough or sufficiently detailed to help them make the progress of which they are capable and to complete their qualifications within planned timeframes.
- Tutor/assessors are expert and professional and have high expectations of apprentices. Highly effective working relationships between tutor/assessors and apprentices ensure that apprentices develop the skills and behaviours at the standard expected by their employers. Tutor/assessors regularly collect apprentices' and employers' feedback and use this effectively to develop and improve learning programmes. As a result, an increasing proportion of apprentices complete their qualifications in the time allocated.
- Tutor/assessors provide highly effective support for apprentices to ensure that they have every chance of achieving their potential. Managers and tutor/assessors monitor closely apprentices who have personal or welfare problems which are potential barriers to learning and ensure that they receive individualised support to help them to progress and achieve their qualification. For example, apprentices receive additional financial support for specific work activities or in preparation for job interviews.
- Tutor/assessors use apprentices' individual learning plans and progress reviews well to monitor apprentices' progress. Tutor/assessors set apprentices specific and challenging

short-, medium- and long-term targets that help them to focus well on their progress and achievement. Apprentices and employers value highly the review process, and as a result, the majority of apprentices make good progress.

- Apprentices receive timely and comprehensive information, advice and guidance, which provides them with clear progression options for their future careers. Apprentices use the information well and progress successfully to sustained employment or further study.
- Most tutor/assessors and apprentices have a basic understanding of 'Prevent' and British values. However, tutor/assessors do not sufficiently reinforce or extend apprentices' understanding as it relates to their work role. As a result, too many apprentices do not have a sufficiently well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the threat of radicalisation and extremism.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	59173
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	9,500
Director	Ben Hansford
Telephone number	07407 733396
Website	www.peopleplus.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+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	446	-	333	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	104	465	30	421			77	
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:	Back to Work Training Vista Training NCT – Northern Construction Training Learning Curve Group Peach Orator Phoenix Training Ltd							

## 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

Richard Deane, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
William Baidoe-Ansah	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Nelson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Howard Browes	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector

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