

First City Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

12–14 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Leaders and managers have failed to make the improvements identified at the previous inspection.
- Too many learners make slow progress and are too far behind in their learning. Leaders' actions to increase learners' progress have been largely unsuccessful, particularly for apprentices.
- Trainers do not provide learning activities which help apprentices improve their skills or gain their qualifications.
- Apprentices do not receive sufficient training away from their workplace and as a result they make slow progress towards completing their apprenticeships and improving their skills.
- Leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the training their learners receive as they do not have effective systems in place to evaluate this.
- Managers do not know how well different groups or levels of learners are making progress or achieving their qualifications.
- Apprentices do not receive effective support to develop their English and/or mathematical skills quickly enough; as a result, too few achieve their functional skills qualifications.
- Senior leaders and managers have failed to ensure that the risks to learners of radicalisation and extremism are properly considered and combatted.

The provider has the following strengths

- Level 5 higher apprenticeships in management of health and social care are well managed; these higher apprentices develop valuable skills and knowledge that they apply in the workplace.
- Trainers have produced training materials for adult learners which are clear, easily understood and capture well the important principles of working in the care sector.

Full report

Information about the provider

- First City Training (FCT) is part of the First Training Group which is a large health and social care provider and recruitment company based in the South West. Both FCT and First Training Group share the same managing director. FCT, which was formed in 2004, is a small learning provider which specialises in health and social care training and has centres in Swindon, Salisbury and Bournemouth. It provides apprenticeships and short courses, predominantly for adult learners. Almost all learners are over the age of 18.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 217 learners on funded programmes. Just under half of these learners were health and social care apprentices, with the remainder following short specialist courses. Two thirds of apprentices were taking advanced apprenticeships, just under a third were following intermediate apprenticeships, and a small number were on higher-level apprenticeships.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Immediately implement the 'Prevent' duty so that the risks to learners of radicalisation and extremism are properly considered and that all learners are aware of these risks and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Urgently review the progress of current learners and take steps to help those who are behind on their programmes to catch up, in particular:
 - provide learners with better teaching to improve their professional, English and mathematical skills, and to enable them to complete their work to a higher standard
 - ensure that employers support their apprentices by attending regular reviews of their progress and providing them with time during working hours to meet assessors and complete tasks relating to their apprenticeship
 - set targets based on high expectations to motivate each learner to achieve the best they can, and to monitor learners' progress towards these targets effectively.
- Implement an effective system to provide accurate and reliable information to senior managers on the progress and achievement of each learner and groups of learners. Use this information to make identified improvements rapidly.
- Set up effective systems for self-assessment and continuous improvement and to use these to monitor the impact of planned actions to improve the quality of training and outcomes for learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not tackled the weaknesses highlighted by the previous inspection in 2016. They have allowed the quality of provision to deteriorate further. As a result, too many learners do not receive the training to which they are entitled, make slow progress, or do not complete their courses.
- Managers do not evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of their provision effectively. Although managers have produced a quality improvement plan based on the previous inspection, they have not implemented this. Managers do not monitor actions arising from this plan systematically or effectively, nor do they measure the impact of any potential improvement on the quality of learning. The views of learners and employers on the quality of training are not sought routinely or systematically.
- Leaders and managers do not provide trainers with sufficient development of their teaching and assessment skills; consequently, learners do not receive high-quality training. Managers provide a wide range of continuous personal development for staff to maintain their knowledge of the health and social care sector, but this is not effective in improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- FCT's strategies to support the development of learners' English and mathematical skills are mostly unsuccessful. Too often, functional skills lessons are delayed until the later part of apprenticeship programmes, resulting in learners not developing the skills they need to complete their training. Managers have not provided assessors with the training they need to develop learners' skills in English and mathematics.
- Managers do not have a comprehensive overview of the progress that current learners are making, or what proportion of learners are falling behind. Consequently, they do not take effective steps to help these learners. Managers lack reliable and accurate data to analyse and understand the achievement of past learners so that they know what needs to improve. They lack the knowledge or expertise to create relevant, up-to-date reports on achievement, a weakness which was identified in two previous inspections. They do not conduct routine analysis of the outcomes for groups of learners, for example by gender, ethnicity or age. Managers were unable to provide a full breakdown of the achievement of learners who completed their qualifications in 2016/17.
- Managers and trainers have not ensured that apprentices' employers have committed to providing learners with time to study for their apprenticeship, or to meeting their assessors frequently enough to motivate them to make good progress.

The governance of the provider

- The governance provided by directors of First Training Group is weak. Directors receive insufficient management information to provide a clear picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or learners' progress and achievements. As a result, they have failed to hold managers to account for weaknesses found by inspectors.

Safeguarding

- All staff have attended training in the 'Prevent' duty. However, FCT has not developed a 'Prevent' action plan to assess local risks to their learners and staff. Learners have a limited understanding of the potential threats to themselves and others, or how to keep themselves safe from forms of radicalisation and extremism.
- Other arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Simple but effective policies are in place and learners and staff are familiar with safeguarding principles due to the nature of their work.
- FCT conducts appropriate checks on new staff and learners' workplaces. There is an appropriately qualified designated safeguarding officer and staff know how to report any incidents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- FCT trainers do not spend sufficient time teaching apprentices new topics and concepts as part of their apprenticeship. The vast majority of time is focused on assessment of knowledge or skills previously gained in their workplace, or on the administration of the apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices do not gain new knowledge or skills quickly, and do not develop a wider understanding of working in the care sector, or make the progress of which they are capable.
- Assessors do not set high expectations for the standards of learners' work. Assessors accept work which just meets the criteria and do not challenge learners to extend their knowledge. More effective assessors use a variety of methods to encourage learners to provide more thoughtful and comprehensive responses; however, too many are ineffective at checking or improving apprentices' understanding, knowledge and experience.
- Assessors do not set learners appropriate targets to help them make good progress and complete their qualifications in the planned time. Targets are mainly administrative and focus solely on achieving elements of the main qualification; they do not include progress in English or mathematics, actions to support learners' personal goals or the development of workplace skills such as teamwork.
- Learners' development of English and mathematical skills is weak. Trainers do not use the results of initial assessments in these subjects well to develop learners' weaker skills. Assessors do not correct learners' written work for spelling, grammar or punctuation; consequently, learners do not know that they have made errors. Trainers who support learners' English and mathematics are enthusiastic, but they do not have high enough levels of English and mathematics or the relevant teaching skills themselves to be fully effective.
- For the large majority of learners, assessors do not provide feedback that helps them improve the quality of their work, nor do they challenge learners to deepen their knowledge of the health and care sector. A small minority of learners benefit from clear and constructive feedback from their assessors.
- Assessors do not work sufficiently with employers to ensure effective target-setting or to plan the development of skills in the workplace. As a result, employers do not contribute

enough to reviews of their employees' progress; they do not contribute to learners' targets to help them improve or develop their skills.

- All learners have a clear understanding of equality and diversity, safeguarding and anti-discriminatory practice in relation to the clients they work with in their care settings. However, beyond a superficial level, assessors have not developed learners' understanding of the importance of fundamental British values, or of the prevention of terrorism and the risks of radicalisation.
- Assessors keep up to date with care practice through a wide range of continuous professional development, including mental health training and moving and lifting skills.
- Staff plan and teach level 5 apprenticeships in management of health and social care well, and learners develop good management skills within the care sector. For example, First City Group managers who have completed level 5 qualifications are extremely positive about the skills and confidence they have gained which they incorporate into their professional practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- The majority of learners enjoy their work and value the knowledge and skills they develop to improve their care practice. They show respect and compassion for those in their care and gain confidence in their job roles. Most learners know what progress they have made through their qualifications. However, not enough apprentices can identify the additional care skills or knowledge that they have gained during their apprenticeship or how they will use them in any future roles as they have not had sufficient teaching away from their workplace.
- Learners work well with others in the workplace, including colleagues and clients. However, they are not provided with the opportunity to work with their peers in other settings, through workshops or other activities, to explore personal, social or ethical issues related to the care sector or beyond. Not enough apprentices know what personal learning and thinking skills they are developing because assessors do not help them identify and explore these well enough.
- Too many apprentices are permitted to repeatedly cancel sessions with their assessors, which slows their progress on the apprenticeship.
- Most learners use the online electronic system to gain access to work and information well. Adult learners use distance learning materials well to improve their knowledge. However, a small minority of learners choose not to use the electronic system, or are unable to do so. Staff support these learners well with assessment, but there is no alternative information readily available to them, for example on how to report safeguarding concerns.
- Learners report that they are safe and know to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns in their workplace, although not all are aware of designated safeguarding staff at FCT. Most learners have little awareness of the 'Prevent' duty.
- Intermediate apprentices who are working towards level 1 functional skills in English undertake their speaking and listening at level 2. This positive initiative by FCT allows them to gain confidence quickly.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- Too many learners make slow or very slow progress. Approximately half of current learners are making the progress they should. At the time of the inspection, only around a quarter of intermediate apprentices and a third of higher apprentices had completed the work that they should have at that point in their programme. Advanced-level apprentices make better progress.
- Learners do not develop the skills in English and mathematics they need to pass qualifications or to become better at their job. A high proportion of learners are ill-prepared for their functional skills tests. Too many learners take their tests several times without passing, and this proportion has increased over the last year.
- Learners do not develop a range of knowledge and understanding of working in the health and social sector beyond their current setting.
- According to FCT's own data, the proportions of apprentices and adults who completed their programmes in 2016/17 have increased from the very low rates in 2015/16, but still too few complete their apprenticeship. In particular, not enough apprentices complete their apprenticeships within the planned time, although for 2016/17 the proportion who completed improved from the very low figure in 2015/16. Managers do not fully analyse achievement by level and therefore they do not know what proportion of intermediate or advanced apprentices completed their apprenticeships for 2016/17.
- FCT's data shows that the proportion of apprentices on level 5 higher apprenticeships who achieved their apprenticeship increased in 2016/17 to equal previously published rates for similar providers.
- Differences in achievement existed between groups of learners in 2015/16. For example, male apprentices, who accounted for a small proportion of learners, had a high achievement rate but that of female apprentices was low. Apprentices aged 19 to 23 performed better than other age groups but the proportion who achieved their apprenticeships was still too low. Managers do not know how well learners of different ages or genders, or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieved in 2016/17.
- The proportion of adult learners completing level 2 and level 3 diplomas in 2016/17 decreased and was low. The large majority of adult learners completed certificates for specialised qualifications such as working with people with mental health needs, although the achievement of the certificate in dementia care declined and was too low. The proportion of adults who remain on their courses improved from the low levels in 2015/16 and is mostly high.
- The proportion of apprentices who progress to a higher level of qualification is increasing but remains small. In 2016/17, a very small proportion of advanced apprentices went on to university. A few apprentices who completed advanced apprenticeships gained promotion at work, for example working in the community rehabilitation scheme.
- Most learners who complete their qualifications remain working in the health and social care sector. Adult learners increase their knowledge and confidence through the specialist short courses they complete.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The management of adult learning programmes requires improvement. Managers do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, or the achievement and progress of adult learners, well enough. The achievement of learners varies considerably across different courses, although managers have not identified why this is the case or what needs to improve.
- The initial assessment of learners' support needs is informal and is not always effective at identifying the support that an individual learner requires; this lack of precision contributed to the previous low achievement of learners. The assessments used during the adult learning programmes are effective at checking learners' knowledge.
- Adult learning courses are closely aligned to the care sector employers' needs. A wide range of short vocational courses are available for adult learners, such as working with individuals with learning difficulties, nutrition and health, and end of life care. These closely match job roles and responsibilities and are provided through distance learning, using online and paper-based resources to suit each learner.
- FCT trainers acknowledge the difficulty of learners finding time to complete these short 12-week courses due to their work patterns. As a result, learners are allowed up to a year to undertake each course through distance learning; consequently, most learners complete in this time. Managers charge an administration fee to learners who withdraw and do not return their training materials. Although the number of adult learners who stayed on their courses in 2015/16 was low, most adults now remain on their courses.
- Staff have developed materials to support adult distance learning courses which are well-presented and easy to read. They offer a wide range of information which is closely linked to the care worker role, for example, understanding the care management of diabetes, and regulatory requirements including mandatory training. Learners use these materials to explore theoretical themes linked to their professional interests at their own pace, and gain useful knowledge and confidence.
- Staff are well qualified and provide learners with a good level of pastoral support and guidance.

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

- The management of the apprenticeship programme is weak. Leaders and managers do not provide sufficient oversight of the programme, and do not have high enough expectations of their staff or apprentices. They do not monitor the progress of different groups or levels of apprentices; therefore they do not know which groups perform well and which perform poorly.
- Apprenticeships are not well planned. Staff do not take apprentices' starting points into account and do not plan learning to develop the knowledge and skills each apprentice needs to fulfil their potential. Too many apprentices do not receive sufficient training away from their workplace or enough time with their assessors. Most apprentices work in

domiciliary or residential care settings. Too often, they meet with assessors in their own time because employers do not provide them with the time needed to study for their apprenticeship. Consequently, the programmes do not meet the principles of an apprenticeship.

- The progress of current apprentices is poor. Too many apprentices are behind in their programme and steps taken by staff to help them catch up are ineffective.
- Apprentices complete useful additional training units, for example in manual handling and first aid, as requested by their employers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58719
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	670
Principal/CEO	Mr Stephen Trowbridge
Telephone number	01793 612380
Website	firstcitytraining.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+
	0	0	1	0	0	108	0	2
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	2	34	0	60	0	10		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	None							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	None							
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 lead internal quality assurer, 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, and telephone calls, 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

Helen Flint, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Tricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector

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