

Tower College of Further and Higher Education London Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

19–22 February 2018

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers do not evaluate the quality of teaching and learning effectively. Consequently, they do not provide teachers with the feedback and training they need to improve their teaching.
- Senior leaders do not collect and use information about learners' performance effectively to plan clearly focused improvements.
- Tutor assessors do not extend learners' subject knowledge so that they gain a sufficiently broad understanding of the care industry.
- Tutor assessors do not teach lessons that meet the needs of the range of learners' abilities, which hampers the progress of a small minority.
- Leaders and tutor assessors do not use information on learners' skills in English and mathematics at the start of their course well, to plan their learning. The standard of written work, for a small minority of learners, needs improving.

The provider has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have introduced a curriculum that meets the needs of employers and learners in the health and social care industry.
- Almost all the learners who completed adult learning courses in 2016/17 achieved their qualifications.
- The majority of learners go on to a university degree course in health and social care and are proud of this achievement.
- Tutor assessors use their industry experience well. They provide one-to-one coaching to identify and close the gaps in learners' skills and knowledge.
- Tutor assessors direct learners well to use their own workplace experiences to contribute effectively to discussions in lessons. They learn to recognise where their opinions differ from accepted good practice.
- Staff provide effective advice and guidance, which enables learners to plan their next steps.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Tower College of Further and Higher Education London Limited (TCFHEL) is an independent learning provider. The college has four sites. Two sites are in the London borough of Lewisham and two are in the neighbouring boroughs of Southwark and Greenwich. Lewisham, where the head office is situated, is the 48th most deprived local authority in England. The proportion of the population who are unemployed is just above the rate nationally.
- Learners, who are all employed adults, attend lessons at TCFHEL twice a week. They fund their learning with advanced learner loans. Learners can start their courses at different times of the year. Almost all the current 297 learners follow courses in health and social care at level 3. One is studying above level 3. A very small number follow courses in early years, and business administration at level 3. This is the first inspection of TCFHEL. TCFHEL also provides apprenticeships as a subcontractor to another independent learning provider. This aspect of their work was not in scope for this inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tutor assessors improve the quality of their teaching and that leaders have a better overview of teaching by:
 - introducing a system for appraising tutor assessors' work
 - linking the system to support and training to develop tutor assessors' teaching skills.
- Improve leaders' overview of the curriculum by making sure that they:
 - collect and use data and information about learners' achievements, progress and destinations more effectively
 - enhance their evaluation of learning and their planning to improve quality.
- Provide opportunities for learners on health and social care courses to gain a broader understanding of the subject. Raise learners' awareness of the different types of care service users they may encounter, particularly those who may need different forms of care.
- Improve tutor assessors' use of the systems already in place for assessing learners' skills at the start of their course. Ensure that they develop learners' skills in English and mathematics.
- Improve how tutor assessors teach learners with different abilities, in particular how they plan and teach lessons for learners who have barriers to learning and those who learn at a faster pace.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have too many gaps in their overview of learning and the quality of teaching at the college. They do not evaluate the quality of learning sufficiently well. They do not collect and evaluate information on learners' achievement and destinations effectively. They have not established a self-critical culture. Their self-assessment report does not identify many of the weaknesses found by inspectors. Their plan to improve quality does not focus sufficiently on the major aspects that need attention.
- Senior leaders have not paid sufficient attention to the quality of teaching. They do not appraise their teachers. They do not provide them with the specific training that they need to improve their teaching, such as the skills they require to meet the learning needs of a range of abilities in lessons.
- Leaders do not have an effective strategy for teaching English and mathematics. Tutor assessors do not plan for learners' English and mathematics skills development well on college courses. Staff identify effectively learners' needs in English and mathematics. They refer learners appropriately to other organisations to get help with their English and mathematics. This is not sufficient to help learners develop their skills adequately.
- Leaders' strategic planning is clear in its ambition to improve the life chances of disadvantaged learners, particularly those from the diverse communities in South London the college serves. Leaders understand the challenges care workers face in moving forward in their careers. However, they do not explain well enough in their planning how they will achieve their ambition.
- Senior leaders review the quality of assessed work thoroughly. They ensure that this meets the standards set by awarding organisations. They have improved how they help learners progress towards their qualifications. Most learners achieve their qualifications within the planned time. Almost all learners gain level 3 qualifications.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of the care industry. They work well with employers who want their employees to gain higher-level qualifications. Leaders have been successful in designing a curriculum to meet local and national employment needs. They provide courses that fit with and suit adults' work commitments. They improve learners' career prospects and skills.
- Leaders have identified astutely what they need to do to help learners progress to higher education. Staff provide effective careers advice and guidance. They provide appropriate choices for those wishing to progress to higher education. The college also provides higher-level courses that offer alternative routes for those learners who cannot go on to university. They have helped the majority of their learners secure a place at university. Other learners secure advancement in their employment.
- Learners understand fundamental British values well. They know how they apply these in their care settings. They speak confidently on respect for others and about democracy and the rule of law. They value and respect their service users. They understand how to provide appropriate care to meet the different cultural needs of their service users.

The governance of the provider

- The governance arrangements have been the responsibility of the managing director. The managing director works closely with a senior manager from another education and training provider. Senior leaders recognise that the quality of the provision for learning would benefit from external scrutiny. They have very recently established a committee for this purpose, made up of members of senior staff and an external critical friend, to support the college in achieving its mission and vision. This committee also considers curriculum development and quality. It has yet to have an impact on improving quality.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff who have contact with adult learners have undergone the necessary checks to ensure that they are safe to work with learners. Senior leaders ensure that staff receive regular training in matters related to safeguarding. The managing director has received appropriate training and acts as the designated safeguarding officer.
- Senior leaders have introduced appropriate policies for safeguarding. Tutor assessors receive training on assessing safeguarding standards. All have received training on their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty and for safeguarding.
- Staff make sure that learners understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Learners feel safe at the college and are aware of how to keep themselves safe in their communities and online. Almost all are also healthcare professionals who understand how to keep the adult service users they work with safe.
- Leaders have the information that complies with their safeguarding procedures. They have information, for example, on checks they made when recruiting and vetting staff. The information, though, is not organised well. Senior leaders have started reviewing their system for collecting and retaining information.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Tutor assessors do not extend learners' wider knowledge or understanding of the care industry sufficiently. Learners do not gain an understanding of different types of service user and the social and care issues they face. Most learners' professional experiences are with older adults in different care settings. They do not, for example, have a sufficient understanding of the knowledge and skills required to care for younger service users.
- Tutor assessors do not plan learning for, or teach sufficiently well, the small minority of learners who need to learn at a slower or faster pace. For example, they do not extend the skills or knowledge for learners who complete tasks quickly. In a few lessons, learners were left waiting for others to catch up. Although learners are experienced care professionals, a few made slower progress in lessons due to their weaker spoken English skills.
- At the start of courses, tutor assessors do not make effective use of information from the assessment of learners' skills to plan their learning. For example, a few learners needed extra support with their English. Tutor assessors did not include these support needs in

plans for individuals' learning. They do have a clear idea how well learners make progress towards their qualification and help learners well on courses to identify and correct errors with their speaking and listening skills.

- In a few lessons, tutor assessors' assessment of learning is not sufficiently thorough. They move on shortly after introducing a new concept, when a few learners have not grasped it. Too often, tutor assessors do not give learners enough time to explore answers to questions they pose, or they do not reinforce their learning. They do not check sufficiently whether learners are making progress.
- Most tutor assessors provide particularly effective one-to-one coaching. They identify gaps in learners' understanding to meet the qualification requirements. They use their care experience well to plan lessons that maintain most learners' interest. They hold beneficial group discussions and other useful activities, and in their jobs learners apply the knowledge they gain from what they learn. The large majority of learners find the teaching suitably challenging.
- Tutor assessors help learners develop their debating skills well. Learners come to the college with rich experiences of working in the care industry. Tutor assessors help learners use these experiences to make valuable contributions in lessons. One enlightening discussion was on assessing risks in the workplace when working with service users. Learners discussed in depth risks to older service users. They drew well on their knowledge of risks within different care settings. They learned sensible approaches to solving difficult care situations in the workplace. They gained an understanding of how to adapt their approach to improve their professional care standards.
- Tutor assessors review learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications well. They discuss learners' work effectively with them. Learners find this useful as it helps them identify areas for further development. Learners can recall how close they are to completing their qualification. They understand the importance of meeting deadlines for completing written work. Most tutor assessors' oral feedback to learners on the quality of their assignments and their progress is effective. Almost all learners are clear about how to improve and how to pass their course work.
- Tutor assessors provide considerable encouragement and support to learners. This is particularly useful when learners do not know how to start a course assignment. They coach learners well through planned assignments and signpost for them where to go to gain the information they need to support their findings. They provide effective guidance on how to respond to questions within their assignments. Many learners have been out of learning for a while and they gain confidence and increase their self-esteem having accomplished their assignment tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Tutor assessors help learners to gain confidence in their abilities and to develop good teamworking skills. Learners value their participation in discussion groups and presentations throughout their course. They benefit from studying with other care professionals who encounter similar challenges in the workplace. In one lesson, a tutor assessor used a learner's experience of supporting an elderly person who refused to take prescribed medication. This reinforced awareness for learners on the appropriate conduct

and responsibilities of professionals. They were pleased that this reflected what they would have done in a similar situation.

- Tutor assessors motivate learners well to achieve their qualification. Learners feel well prepared for the next steps in their career or education. They are promoted to supervisory positions as well as progressing to higher levels of education.
- Staff provide effective advice and guidance to help learners develop long-term career goals. Most learners use this information well, particularly when making applications to universities. Learners are clear about the next steps they need to take in their future learning or employment. Most are successful in achieving their next steps.
- Learners feel safe and work safely in their care settings. They know how to identify potential risks to their safety in the workplace and how to report any safeguarding concerns they may have. Learners are aware of how to keep themselves safe online. Most learners have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Almost all articulate well how it can affect their lives.
- Learners attend their courses well. They enjoy their learning experience at the college. Tutor assessors engender courteous and respectful attitudes in lessons. Learners turn up prepared for learning and are mostly on time for their lessons. For the few who are not punctual, this is mainly due to their shift-working commitments. On occasions, where learners cannot attend or are late, tutor assessors help them catch up.
- A few learners do not develop written English skills that will help them in their employment and higher levels of study. These learners cannot express their health and social care knowledge sufficiently well. Tutor assessors do not ensure sufficiently that the quality of all learners' work is consistently of a high enough standard.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications is very high. Almost all learners achieved their qualifications in 2016/17.
- Learners from different cultural groups achieve their qualifications equally well, as do male and female learners.
- Most learners make good progress towards achieving their qualification. Most learners achieve their qualifications within the planned timescale. Over a third of learners this year have already completed their course work. Most learners are on target to achieve.
- Learners develop a good range of personal skills on their courses that improve their effectiveness in the workplace. For example, tutor assessors help learners improve how they communicate with care service users. This enables learners to establish good working relationships with their service users.
- Most learners improve their career prospects or go on to further training or education. The majority of learners go on to higher education. Leaders have good links with universities in London, and these universities are suitably located for where learners live and work. A small number of learners go on to universities outside London. Learners who are at university are proud of this achievement.
- Most learners' work is of a standard that meets the requirements for their level 3

qualification. Tutor assessors' observations of learners' workplace skills are thorough. A small minority of learners' work is of a higher standard compared with their peers'. A few learners' work assignments are not well written or scant in the written content. A few learners do not build sufficiently on the skills they had at the start of the course.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1236911
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	739
Principal/CEO	Theresa Mgbeobuna
Telephone number	020 8692 7500
Website	www.towercollegelondon.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)	-	-	-	-	-	296	-	1
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16								
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding								
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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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Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Stittle	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Tucker	Her Majesty's Inspector

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