

# Serco Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

6–9 March 2018

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many apprentices do not complete their qualifications within the planned timescale.
- Apprentices do not receive sufficient ongoing information on the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism from their assessors or their employers.
- Apprentices do not receive good, impartial careers advice and guidance to enable them to plan for their future.
- Senior leaders and managers have been too slow in implementing their plans to ensure that all apprentices receive a high standard of teaching and learning and complete their qualification.
- Senior leaders and managers do not ensure that apprentices who fall behind catch up. Systems for monitoring apprentices' progress are not effective. Therefore assessors are unable to effectively support apprentices who need to catch up.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The vast majority of apprentices make good progress in developing their mathematical, English and information, communication and technology (ICT) skills.
- Most apprentices develop good practical skills that they use to make an effective contribution to their employers' business.
- Apprentices become self-confident and develop good personal and social skills through the training and guidance they receive from assessors and employers.
- The new senior management team has made good progress this year in improving the quality of apprenticeships and the management of subcontractors.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- Serco Limited (Serco) manages over 500 contracts worldwide. The company employs over 50,000 people across four continents. The directors created a new leadership team in January 2017 to manage the apprenticeship provision.
- Serco has over 600 apprentices, of whom 84 are aged 16 to 18 years old. Since the previous inspection, Serco has greatly reduced the number of subcontractors and now works with five subcontractors. Each has fewer than 50 apprentices. Apprenticeships are offered in business administration; sport, leisure and recreation; custodial care; retail and commercial services; ICT; and engineering and manufacturing technologies.

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

Improve the quality of leadership and management by:

- ensuring that a large proportion of apprentices complete their qualifications within the planned timescale
- making sure that assessors enable apprentices to understand how to protect themselves from the risks of radicalisation and extremism
- implementing their plans to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment immediately and check that their actions are effective in raising standards
- ensuring that all staff have immediate and frequent access to all relevant information to enable them to monitor the impact of improvements and plan further improvements where they are required
- enabling all apprentices to receive consistently good careers information and advice to enable them to plan their future careers effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not brought about improvements quickly enough. They have not ensured that apprentices receive good teaching, learning and assessment, and consequently too many apprentices do not gain their qualifications within the planned timescale.
- Leaders and managers have been slow in implementing the improvement strategy and taking actions to overcome significant areas of weakness. For example, managers did not introduce planned new management information systems for monitoring apprentices' progress quickly enough. Consequently, managers have not known what actions they should take to make necessary improvements, or when.
- Quality assurance arrangements are not effective. Managers do not have suitable arrangements in place to assure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of their subcontractors and partner colleges. The result is that too few apprentices are developing new skills or extending their knowledge and understanding beyond the job role they are already doing.
- Self-assessment is not effective. Leaders and managers do not use the wealth of data available to identify areas that are most successful. They identify as strengths what are standard expectations. Leaders and managers do not report strengths and weaknesses according to age range, occupational area or locality. Consequently, leaders and managers do not set clear and measurable improvement targets that other managers and all staff understand.
- The creation of the skills and education management team (SEMT) brought together an experienced team of leaders and managers after senior leaders recognised the need to deal with weaknesses within the provision. This team has identified the weaker areas of the apprenticeship programme and developed a clear improvement strategy.
- The strategy to improve apprentices' English, mathematical and ICT skills is very successful. The majority of apprentices make considerable improvements in their English, mathematical and ICT skills. As a result, these apprentices are prepared well for their next level of qualification or a more challenging job role.
- The SEMT has good working relationships with senior leaders and managers within Serco, and its subcontractors, which benefit apprentices. These key stakeholders understand why actions are being taken to improve the management and quality of the apprenticeship provision. However, a minority of Serco managers who have responsibility for apprentices do not understand their role in developing apprentices' skills and knowledge.
- Managers have improved their oversight of subcontractors. Managers made a strategic decision to reduce the number of subcontractors in order to exercise closer and more effective performance management, and to improve quality and apprentices' achievements. Managers now hold subcontractors to account well. Managers ensure that the selection of new subcontractors is rigorous and thorough and has resulted in a much improved overall performance this year.

## The governance of the provider

- Although senior leaders now have an appropriate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the apprenticeship programme, they have been slow to ensure that necessary actions for improvement have taken place in a timely manner.
- Directors have good links across Serco and with employers. They are very effective in raising the profile of apprenticeships at all levels across the organisation, and pose appropriate challenges to those areas of the company that have been slow to take on apprentices.
- Directors were instrumental in leading the restructuring of the SEMT unit. They are ambitious for apprentices and display clear commitment to improving and maintaining the quality and long-term sustainability of their apprenticeships.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Apprentices know what to do if they have concerns about themselves or others close to them. They know how to report bullying, harassment or unsafe practices. Apprentices are confident that any concerns or incidents they report will be taken seriously and acted upon appropriately.
- Staff and apprentices demonstrate good health and safety knowledge and know how to keep themselves safe in the workplace. Apprentices know how to stay safe when using social media or other internet sites. Reported safeguarding incidents or concerns are rare and, in all cases, managed appropriately.
- Leaders and managers have been slow to implement the 'Prevent' duty. Although all relevant staff have completed the Home Office training, the majority of assessors do not have the necessary skills or confidence to actively promote or reinforce apprentices' awareness of the 'Prevent' duty or British values. As a result, too few apprentices have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremist behaviour or their wider knowledge of life in Britain.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment within Serco and its subcontractors requires improvement. Too frequently, the level of teaching and learning is too basic and does not develop apprentices' knowledge and skills.
- When apprentices' skills are assessed at the start of their courses, assessors do not use the information accurately. They do not create suitable learning plans to guide apprentices or to set sufficiently challenging targets. Targets are not specific enough to help apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.
- Assessors provide good oral feedback to apprentices. This motivates them to practise and apply what they have learned. However, the quality of written feedback, in line with the provider's expectations, does not identify precisely what apprentices have done well or could improve. As a result, few apprentices know what they need to do to develop their

skills further.

- Workplace trainers and assessors use their industry knowledge and experience well to support and prepare most apprentices to meet commercial and industry standards. For example, apprentices developed their skills in replacing the windscreen of an RAF training aircraft. A female engineering apprentice initially had little knowledge of engineering tools, but through mentoring and teaching, she is now a skilled member of a team installing aircraft engines.
- Apprentices who have additional learning needs are supported well by assessors and staff. Apprentices who get this extra support achieve their apprenticeships as well as their peers do. Staff receive effective training to support apprentices who have specific learning needs.
- Apprentices produce good standards of practical work in the workplaces, which their employers value. Under appropriate supervision, apprentices undertake routine and safety-critical maintenance tasks. They work in a very exacting, high-pressure environment with innovative industry equipment. For example, apprentices on laboratory and associated technical activities develop good skills in the use of equipment such as advanced pH meters, rotor vats and analytical equipment used in assaying precious metals.
- Apprentices gain a good understanding of essential business skills during their induction, including health and safety, personal safety and social responsibility. They receive good support from, and have regular review meetings with, designated mentors, and they undertake mandatory learning courses.
- Managers develop apprentices' understanding of how to welcome and deal with people. Staff and assessors ensure that apprentices work respectfully with each other. Serco apprentices complete comprehensive e-learning training in equality and diversity and related subjects, and this is reinforced by assessors. For example, a facilities services apprentice commented on how his assessor had helped him to understand how to approach and manage customers of different nationalities and cultures.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Too many apprentices who have been on their programme for more than one year do not develop new skills and knowledge that they can apply in the workplace.
- Apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of the opportunities available to them through higher-level apprenticeships or wider employment opportunities.
- Apprentices do not receive careers advice and guidance of sufficiently high quality. Too many are unclear about how their apprenticeship will enhance their current and future career. For example, a minority of adult apprentices, particularly those on customer services and team-leading apprenticeships, do not know why they are undertaking an apprenticeship.
- Apprentices have a limited understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Apprentices cannot apply their understanding of British values to their everyday lives and workplaces. They do not take part in thoughtful debates or discussion throughout their programmes and therefore do not extend their understanding beyond a

basic level of knowledge.

- The vast majority of apprentices develop their self-confidence and aptitude in the specialisms of their apprenticeship quickly. They deal confidently with the wide range of people they meet during their apprenticeship; for example, laboratory technicians work confidently and competently with scientists and postgraduate students.
- Most apprentices, including those working with subcontractors, take pride in their work and enjoy their learning. They benefit from the opportunities for work shadowing that staff provide.
- Apprentices develop good skills in timekeeping, working in a team and respect for others, and are valued employees within the workplace. Employers value the contributions they make to their businesses.
- Apprentices demonstrate respect and professional behaviour in the workplace, especially when dealing with colleagues and business customers. A large proportion of apprentices develop good digital technology and project management skills that they use to make an effective contribution at work. For example, a level 3 business administration apprentice developed complicated formulas to produce spreadsheets for her manager.
- Nearly half of apprentices are undertaking English and mathematics functional skills qualifications above those expected of their apprenticeship to help them increase their skills and prepare them for the next steps in their career or education. The large majority of these apprentices pass these qualifications at their first attempt.
- By acquiring these English and mathematical skills, apprentices enhance their own development at work. For example, marine deck apprentices apply complex mathematical formulas to calculate the volume of ships' storage tanks and the extremes of load bearing of equipment. They use their new knowledge gained to propose solutions that ensure ships are not overloaded and are safe to travel.
- Apprentices feel safe. Their knowledge of safe working practices is good. Apprentices understand how to keep themselves safe online, including when using social media. Assessors provide useful advice and guidance to help apprentices stay safe.

## Outcomes for apprentices

## Requires improvement

- Too few apprentices complete their apprenticeship within the planned timescales. The proportion of apprentices now achieving their apprenticeship within the timescales has increased, but it is still not high enough. Stringent new selection processes have ensured that new apprentices are on apprenticeship programmes which will enhance their skills and career development.
- Managers do not identify gaps in achievements between males and females and different types of apprentices effectively. They do not identify apprentices who are falling behind or take action to help those at risk of not achieving.
- Currently, advanced apprentices do less well than apprentices following intermediate qualifications. Apprentices over 18 years old do not achieve as well as their younger peers. Managers have not taken remedial actions to increase outcomes for advanced apprentices and apprentices aged over 18.
- Managers have very limited information on what apprentices do once they have

completed their qualification. Therefore, managers do not know whether the apprenticeship programme helps apprentices move on in their chosen careers.

- Nearly half of apprentices improve their English and mathematical skills and qualifications beyond those expected of their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices now have clear and well-planned career routes available to them, including higher level apprenticeships. However, managers have not done enough to make sure that the vast majority of apprentices know that these routes are available to them.
- Apprentices have access to good taster sessions. Over 800 staff have undertaken taster sessions in team-leading and management at levels 3 and 5 to introduce them to learning and encourage them onto appropriate apprenticeships.
- Staff also undertake a range of enrichment activities. For example, all staff are expected to contribute to community work throughout the year. Staff act as effective role models to apprentices, a group of whom took part in a national community competition last year.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	54333
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,383
Principal/CEO	Andrew Leach
Telephone number	01935 456780
Website	<a href="http://www.serco-ese.com">www.serco-ese.com</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+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of learners by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	49	200	5	227	1	22		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of apprentices 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 subcontractors:	Crime Scene Resources Limited Green Inc (EU) Limited JT Development Solutions Limited NTG Training Limited Tempus Training Limited							



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeship manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report, development plans and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls, webinars and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices 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

Tracey Zimmerman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Flint	Her Majesty's Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Hunter	Ofsted Inspector
Gavin Murray	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Marks	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Brownbill	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Evans	Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Apprentice View**

Apprentice View is a website where apprentices can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other apprentices think about them too. To find out more go to [www.apprenticeview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for apprentices of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018