

Central Training Group Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too many teachers do not effectively challenge or deepen learners' knowledge of theory in vocational subjects or in English and mathematics, resulting in too many learners and apprentices unable to achieve their full potential.
- Too many apprentices make slow progress from their starting points because too much provision is not good enough.
- Too many subcontractors have underperformed over time, but leaders' quality assurance arrangements for this subcontracted provision lack rigour.
- Leaders' actions to improve the quality of the provision are not robust. As a result, they have been too slow to tackle some of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not have a robust understanding of the progress their learners make across all provision. Leaders' monitoring arrangements are insufficient. As a result, leaders do not hold effectively managers to account when learners' progress is slow.

The provider has the following strengths

- Teachers and assessors have highly relevant industry knowledge and expertise, which they use effectively to enhance learners' and apprentices' practical skills. As a result, the standards of learners' practical work are often of high quality.
- The majority of learners enrolled on study programmes and adult courses develop good knowledge, understanding and skills and make effective progress.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and comprehensive. Leaders work effectively with appropriate organisations and employers to ensure that learners and apprentices are safe.
- The support that learners and apprentices receive is highly effective. Learners and apprentices receive good-quality mentoring which enables them to stay in learning and attend their lessons regularly and on time.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Central Training Group (CTG), established in 1983, is a private limited company providing learning in London, Essex, Suffolk and Rotherham. CTG provides study programmes, adult learning programmes, traineeships and apprenticeships, which is the largest proportion of provision, in five sector subject areas. The majority of learners and apprentices follow apprenticeships and study programmes in hairdressing, beauty therapy and barbering. Leaders also work with subcontractors to provide apprenticeships and study programmes.
- CTG provides learning for learners with a range of prior attainment. The company places a strong emphasis on recruiting learners with previously poor experiences of education.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve quality assurance arrangements to:
 - ensure that there are comprehensive processes in place to enable leaders to have a robust understanding of the quality of all provision
 - make certain that plans and targets to improve the quality of all provision are robust, and ensure those who are responsible are held effectively to account
 - ensure that the arrangements to assure subcontracted provision are thorough and that failing subcontractors are held to full account.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners by putting in place actions to ensure that:
 - teachers deploy effective teaching methods to challenge and deepen apprentices' and learners' understanding of theory and advance their progress
 - teachers and assessors set apprentices challenging and meaningful targets to enable them to make swift and timely progress
 - leaders and managers make full use of the information they receive regarding apprentices' progress, and quickly put in place actions and interventions to help those who fall behind to catch up with their studies
 - teachers and assessors rigorously monitor learners' and apprentices' progress in order to ensure they make good progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Quality assurance arrangements are not effective enough to enable leaders to secure sustained improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners. As a result, too many of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection remain. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for learners and apprenticeships programmes require improvement.
- Leaders and managers do not monitor effectively the quality of provision provided by their subcontractors. They do not ensure that subcontracted staff carry out required actions needed to secure improvement.
- Improvement planning is not suitably clear or comprehensive. Leaders and managers do not take into account the quality of subcontractors' provision in their self-assessment. They do not effectively monitor learners' and apprentices' progress across all subcontractors' provision.
- The proportion of learners and apprentices studying with subcontractors who do not achieve their qualifications has increased over time. For example, Jay's Training Ltd and Harington's Ltd have declining outcomes for learners over time. Although leaders accurately identify the weaknesses, they do not put in place remedial actions quickly to ensure that subcontractors' managers are held to account.
- Leaders' planning to improve teaching of English and mathematics is not effective. The majority of learners and apprentices achieve their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications. However, too few learners make sufficient progress and/or achieve high-grade passes at English and mathematics GCSE level. Managers do not effectively plan or put in place firm expectations to their staff to ensure that learners who are exempt from examinations improve their English and mathematics skills at a higher level.
- Leaders do not collect and use robust data about the full range of destinations of leavers and therefore do not fully know the impact of their provision.
- Leaders and managers collaborate effectively with a broad range of external partners and employers, both nationally and locally, to plan and ensure that their provision meets local and national skills requirements. Leaders and managers maintain effective links with major hairdressing employers to provide industry-relevant training and enrichment opportunities for learners. For example, managers and Life Skills Ltd managers ensure that the traineeship programmes and study programmes are well planned and provide many learners with good opportunities to progress to higher-level courses or apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the requirements of the new standards in hairdressing, with the implementation of well-considered curriculum and the sharing of good practice across direct delivery and subcontracted provision. Staff and apprentices have grasped effectively the new apprenticeship requirements and the implications of end-point assessment.
- Leaders provide good opportunities for staff to develop their skills. Staff training is linked appropriately to the identification of needs through the appraisal process. Staff undertake extensive networking to keep up to date with key national developments. For example, in

addition to updating their vocational skills, staff develop a good understanding of child protection and mental health.

- Leaders and managers promote a strong culture of respect and tolerance across the organisation and with subcontractors. Learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of equality and diversity, for example how to avoid the promotion of negative stereotypes.

The governance of the provider

- The arrangements for governance require improvement.
- The reports that leaders receive from their managers lack clarity and precision against their progress towards the performance indicators leaders set. Leaders do not challenge managers assiduously in order to drive up improvements, which has resulted in slow progress made since the previous inspection. For example, leaders do not receive useful information regarding the progress of all learners nor do they understand fully the quality of provision within subcontracted provision.
- Arrangements to strengthen leadership through external scrutiny are insufficient. Leaders and managers have not benefited from sufficient external analysis and challenge with regard to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners to enable them to hold managers to account effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The processes for safer recruitment and making the necessary checks to vet staff are comprehensive, updated annually and meet statutory requirements.
- All staff are appropriately trained, including staff delivering in subcontracted provision. Subcontractors have clear guidelines to the expectations of their duty to safeguarding and adhere to the expectations set by leaders. Managers conduct frequent audit checks.
- The designated safeguarding lead has devised an effective 'Prevent' duty action plan and maintains close links with external organisations such as the child sexual exploitation board, of which staff at CTG are champions. All staff have undergone effective training for 'Prevent', safeguarding and mental health awareness. All learners receive comprehensive training during their induction to their programmes but few apprentices are able to recall their learning from their training, particularly that regarding the dangers of extremism.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that staff and subcontracted staff fully understand the requirements to safeguard all learners; safeguarding concerns are followed up effectively to full resolution. Processes and procedures to report concerns are well understood by all staff and learners.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers and assessors within apprenticeships provision and in a few study programmes, such as construction and motor vehicle, do not have high expectations of their learners in theory lessons. Too many apprentices and learners complete easy, mundane and

undemanding tasks. As a result, they become distracted and fail to make swift progress.

- Most teachers and assessors teaching on apprenticeships programmes do not use the information they have of learners' prior knowledge and existing skills effectively to provide purposeful assessment activities. Consequently, learning outcomes and assessments of learners' work are frequently unclear and do not take into account their different abilities; as a result, too many apprentices do not reach their full potential.
- Too many teachers and assessors do not set challenging and precise enough targets to enable apprentices and learners to excel and make rapid progress. Apprentices' targets often focus only on tasks they are required to complete for their qualifications and do not challenge them to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, too many teachers do not urge apprentices to improve the standards of their written work. Learners following study programmes and trainees at Life Skills Ltd do not receive targets that are sufficiently individualised to reflect the skills or behaviours they need to improve.
- Most learners enrolled on English and mathematics functional skills qualifications make good progress because their teachers set them challenging tasks that motivate them to make good progress in their lessons and most achieve. However, learners enrolled on study programmes studying English and mathematics GCSE courses do not make good progress. They receive little feedback on how they can improve their work; for example, practice papers are often marked simply with 'ticks and crosses' and teachers do not provide learners with information on why calculations are wrong or how to correct them.
- Teachers and assessors do not routinely improve apprentices' mathematical skills. For example, they do not promote or sufficiently reinforce the skills they conduct in the workplace such as using the tills or stocktaking. Apprentices who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications receive little support from assessors on how to enhance their skills further.
- Teachers and assessors have highly relevant industry knowledge and expertise, which they use effectively to enhance learners' and apprentices' practical skills. As a result, the standards of their practical work are often of high quality. Apprentices enrolled at Anne Caulton-Jones Ltd, CTG Ltd and Sean Hanna Ltd make rapid progress in their practical skills development.
- Staff are well qualified and experienced, with many teachers who remain as occupational practitioners. They access a wide range of staff development activities that help them effectively support learners. For example, a comprehensive programme for staff on supporting people with mental health issues enables them to provide learners with specific help such as reducing general anxiety and depression.
- Tutors effectively promote the importance of equality and diversity in lessons. For example, learners understand fully how to put arrangements in place in salons to treat and cut hair when the client wears a burka or has specific access requirements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Most learners and apprentices attend well and enjoy their learning. They work collaboratively and value one another's responses during discussions and scrutiny of each other's work. Most learners and apprentices take pride in their work and are keen to display their work at skills competitions and exhibitions.

- Almost all learners enrolled on at CTG direct provision receive good impartial careers advice and guidance. Staff make use of good-quality assessments based on their skills, knowledge and prior experiences to place them on the correct courses at the right level. However, in a minority of subcontracted provision such as TLT Ltd and Beauty Skills Academy Ltd, too many learners and apprentices left their courses as a result poor initial advice and guidance.
- All learners and apprentices at CTG make use of effective support and guidance through a learner mentor scheme. For example, learners who suffer from mental health difficulties benefit greatly from mentoring and external support services to enable them to stay in learning.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour, and challenge appropriately learners and apprentices who do not adhere to their expectations. However, a minority of learners and apprentices on subcontracted provision are disruptive in lessons and staff do not challenge their behaviours to meet the required standards.
- Teachers and assessors effectively develop learners' and trainees' work-related skills such as curriculum vitae writing, how to perform at an interview successfully and 'dress to impress' training. Almost all apprentices demonstrated appropriate occupational professional standards in the workplace.
- Most learners and apprentices benefit from a vast range of work-related and vocational skills training from professionals through effective enrichment activities. They regularly receive up-to-date and vocationally relevant information. As a result, the standards of their practical work are of good quality.
- Most employers value the contribution that apprentices make to the workplace, such as sharing their knowledge of new technologies and techniques in the use of digital media that support business improvements.
- Learners with identified needs or difficulties receive well-considered support that meets their needs well and helps them maximise their potential. The few learners with education, health and care plans follow bespoke courses and have highly effective plans in place that enable them to make good progress throughout their courses.
- Learners and apprentices know how to keep themselves safe online and to whom they should report any instances of bullying or harassment. Most adults, learners enrolled on study programmes and trainees have a good understanding of the importance of British values and how to stay safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. However, too many apprentices lack an understanding of such topics or how they relate to their work.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Too many apprentices make slow progress and, as a result, too many do not achieve or complete within the time allocated to them. In contrast, the majority of learners enrolled on study programmes and adult programmes make good progress and achieve.
- Managers within apprenticeships provision identify learners who fall behind in their studies but they do not put in place precise enough targets to help enable those learners to make swift progress. For example, a high proportion of apprentices at Sean Hanna Ltd are not making good, timely progress, and managers do not have plans in place to enable them to catch up.

- Learners following study programmes who are studying GCSE courses make slow progress towards improving their English and mathematics skills. Too many who are capable often fail to achieve a high-grade pass. Most learners enrolled on English and mathematics functional skills qualifications make good progress in their lessons and many achieve well; however, too few apprentices make good progress.
- Too many apprentices and a significant minority of adults leave their programmes early, particularly within subcontracted provision. Leaders' data indicates that more current learners have remained on their programmes than in the previous year. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this.
- Although leaders have been successful in reducing some of the differences in achievement gaps for learners following study programmes and apprentices, male learners fare far worse than females. Adult and apprentices of Black Caribbean origin fare worse than their peers do.
- The proportion of learners and apprentices who make good progress varies across subcontractors and too many do not achieve as well as those nationally.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Around 340 learners are enrolled on study programmes that are provided by Life Skills Ltd. Learners are enrolled on vocational programmes such as hairdressing, beauty, construction and motor vehicle at levels 1 to 3.
- Leaders and managers ensure that courses are well planned and managed so that they meet the principles of study programmes. The large majority of learners carry out work experience and those not yet ready for external placement complete relevant activities in workshops, salons and construction site work.
- Teachers provide challenging teaching to enable the majority of learners to make good progress. However, in a minority of subjects teachers do not challenge and deepen learners' knowledge sufficiently in theory lessons.
- Learners make use of effective occupational career guidance from teachers that enables them to progress to employment or further training. Learners who decide to embark on different career pathways receive good quality and impartial careers guidance from specialist staff or external agencies.
- The majority of learners are making good progress in their studies and are developing appropriate industry-standard skills and knowledge. For example, learners following motor vehicle programmes at level 1 carry out proficient and accurate wheel balancing and tyre changes of vehicles.
- Most staff set appropriate targets, which often relate to specific activities and industry-related skills and units. However, too often targets are not sufficiently challenging to reflect skills or work-related behaviours that learners need to improve that are beyond the requirements of their qualification.
- Learners make good progress in their functional skills English and mathematics lessons and most pass their exams. However, the provision of English and mathematics GCSE

requires improvement because teachers do not take into account the specific skills that learners lack in order to enable learners to make good progress. As a result, too many fail to make good progress or achieve a qualification at a high grade.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- Around 50 learners are enrolled on hair and beauty courses provided by CTG and four subcontractors. Leaders and managers have ensured that programmes are effective and well planned to meet the aspirations of most learners. Leaders have taken effective action to cease working with subcontractors who underperformed in the previous year and that had resulted in too many adults failing to achieve their qualifications.
- A high proportion of adult learners progress from studying level 2 programmes to level 3. The large majority of adults gain employment. However, leaders' recording of learners' next steps requires improvement because leaders fail to record accurately the destinations of all adult learners.
- Most adult learners develop good practical skills, grow in confidence and enhance their social and work-related skills. Teachers facilitate well the development of practical skills through effective coaching and mentoring which enable most adults to make good progress. However, a few learners do not make the progress of which they are capable because they do not have adequate access to work with clients or models to practise their skills.
- Most teachers ensure that learners receive constructive feedback, which enables them to improve the standard of their work. As a result, most learners are aware of their progress and they are aware of how to raise the standards of their work. The majority complete within the time allocated and progress onto a higher-level course. However, a few learners enrolled on level 3 courses with limited prior knowledge and skills do not make good progress and, as a result, struggle to keep up with their peers.
- Information, advice and guidance for learners at CTG are good and teachers have suitable training to enable learners to make informed choices about their next steps. However, initial advice and guidance for a few adult learners on courses such as 'fast track' does not inform them of the requirements of the course and, as a result, some fall behind in their studies or leave their programmes early.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- There are around 640 apprentices following apprenticeships programmes. The majority of apprentices are enrolled on intermediate and advanced level programmes in vocational subjects such as hairdressing, business administration, warehousing and graphic design. A few follow higher-level apprenticeship programmes in business management. Around a third of hairdressing apprentices study the new standards apprenticeships in hairdressing. The remainder of apprentices follow frameworks programmes.
- Leaders have ensured that they effectively plan the standards frameworks with employers. Staff are well qualified and have a good understanding of the end-point assessments for apprentices; a few assessors have already trained to become end-point assessors. However, assessors and employers do not record sufficiently the values and behaviours apprentices develop or what they need to improve in order to have a good

understanding of apprentices' full progress against the standards criteria.

- Too many apprentices do not make good progress. Leaders' data indicates that more apprentices remain on their programmes than in the previous year; however, leaders do not have a robust understanding of the progress apprentices make and are therefore not in a position to put in place appropriate actions to ensure that apprentices make timely progress.
- Staff do not ensure that apprentices who are behind in their studies are set challenging and meaningful targets to enable them to catch up swiftly. For example, the majority of apprentices enrolled with Sean Hanna Ltd and Harington's Ltd are not on track to achieve within the timeframe allocated to them and staff do not have any plans in place to ensure that apprentices are able to catch up and achieve on time.
- Teachers do not plan off-the-job training sessions well because they do not take into account the starting points of their apprentices. As a result, the outcomes and expectations of what each learner will achieve are unclear, and teachers fail to provide learning that enables apprentices to excel.
- Too many assessors and teachers do not set apprentices precise targets to enable them to develop their wider skills and behaviours. For example, hairdressing staff set apprentices task-based targets such as colouring and cutting methods but they do not set targets to improve their customer care and problem-solving skills.
- Most apprentices do not improve their English and mathematics skills within the context of their subjects. For example, apprentices who struggle with spelling technical vocabulary correctly do not receive effective support and guidance to help them improve. Staff in the workplace do not develop wider mathematical skills such as calculating the cost of treatments and using tills.
- Teachers and assessors provide apprentices with good-quality verbal feedback that enables the majority of apprentices to understand how theory relates to their application of practical skills. However, teachers' and assessors' written feedback, including in reviews, seldom enables apprentices to understand how to improve their work.
- Most apprentices improve their practical skills as a result of effective coaching they receive from staff and employers. As a result, most apprentices add value to their workplace and are valued by their employers. For example, graphic design apprentices develop skills in collecting and analysing incisively a broad range of customer feedback and use the results to accurately inform marketing campaigns.
- Too few apprentices are aware of the importance of British values in the workplace or the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51072
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,662
Principal/CEO	Andrew Wright
Telephone number	01702 331648
Website	www.centraltraininggroup.com

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+
	180	8	81	43	76	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	390	112	68	62	0	6		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	17		0		17			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	1							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Anne Caulton-Jones Ltd, Best Practice Ltd, Sean Hanna Ltd, Keith Hall Ltd, CSL Ltd, Beauty Skills Academy Ltd, TLT Ltd, Hairdressing Education Ltd, PH Academy Ltd, Life Skills Ltd, Harington’s Ltd and Jay’s Training Ltd.							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the strategic director of data and funding 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

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