

GSS Solutions Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

19–22 June 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	Requires improvement		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers have not secured sufficient oversight to provide sector-related benchmarking, advice and challenge.
- Assessors do not effectively plan and provide teaching, learning and assessment that take learners' starting points into account. The most able learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Assessors provide insufficient feedback to learners to ensure that they all progress well.
- Staff do not report on and monitor learners' progress well enough.
- Leaders and managers have insufficient focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Assessors' focus on the completion of qualification units does not encourage learners to produce work above the standard of the qualification.
- Managers and assessors do not develop well enough learners' written English skills relevant to their programme and future employment.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners benefit from, and have high regard for, the vocational knowledge and expertise of their assessors. This motivates learners to seek a long-term career in the security sector.
- Leaders and managers have effectively designed their curriculum to include relevant additional qualifications for the security industry. A high proportion of learners progress to employment.
- Learners' attendance is high. Learners have a good understanding of the importance of attendance and punctuality in the security sector.
- Leaders and managers have successfully narrowed achievement gaps between male and female learners.

Full report

Information about the provider

- GSS Solutions Limited, established as a training provider in 2015, operates from Atherstone, Warwickshire. The company provides courses in customer-focused security training across the country. In 2017/18, the company began to deliver the senior healthcare professional training and employment programme to a very small number of learners. The structure of the programmes for the vast majority of learners consists of distance learning, full-day teaching and training sessions, and online support.
- All learners were funded through adult learner loans at the time of inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop and implement effective arrangements for senior leaders and managers to receive scrutiny, challenge and support, to help them to improve the quality of provision.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - focusing observations on the impact teaching is having on learning and learners' progress
 - ensuring that assessors use the information on learners' starting points to inform their teaching
 - ensuring that feedback to learners helps them to develop their skills and improve their progress.
- Ensure that learners are encouraged to develop their skills and standards above the level required for the minimum standards of the qualification by:
 - ensuring that programmes build on learners' prior learning, knowledge and skills
 - broadening assessment strategies to ensure that learners can apply the knowledge they have gained.
- Collect accurate and reliable data and information about all aspects of the learners' programme, including destinations.
- Develop and implement an effective strategy to improve learners' written English skills by:
 - identifying and planning additional support for learners, where necessary, at the start of their programme
 - providing learners with feedback on the standards of their written work
 - providing learners with the option to further develop their English skills through formal qualifications, to support their future employment prospects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Managers at GSS Solutions Limited were awarded their contract three years ago. They initially made slow progress in developing their policies and procedures. They have begun to address the requirements of adult learning programmes and have made significant progress since September 2017. Outcomes for learners in the first two years were poor; they improved in 2016/17, but still require improvement.
- Managers and staff have previously been too focused on compliance rather than continuous improvement. Managers' focus on overall qualification achievement rates and compliance with awarding bodies' feedback does not effectively improve or drive quality improvement. Managers recognise that they need to evaluate the impact of their actions on learners' progress, their skills development and standards of work. They are in the early stages of doing this on a periodic basis and are beginning to set targets accordingly.
- Leaders and managers do not hold assessors to account sufficiently for their core role of teaching, learning and assessment. Observation of teaching, learning and assessment does not sufficiently focus on learners' progress in classes and over time. Managers' feedback to assessors does not identify key actions and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers do not monitor learners' progress and destinations well enough. Managers are in the process of making the transition from paper-based portfolios for distance learning to an electronic system to improve reporting. However, managers continue to record and analyse information on learners' progress in more than one system. This means that they are too often unclear about the expected progress of learners. They do not have oversight of the whole programme because the different systems do not always have the same information on learners' start and end dates or progress.
- Leaders and managers do not have an effective strategy to promote the development of learners' English and mathematical skills. Too few learners receive support to develop their written English skills. The current strategy is too complex and has not been clearly communicated to staff and learners. Learners receive good support to complete assessments to identify their prior learning and development needs for their literacy skills. Assessors refer those learners who would benefit from developing their literacy skills to selected learning resources for support. However, managers and assessors do not monitor learners' take-up of this support, and too few learners use or benefit from these learning resources.
- Leaders and managers have successfully recruited experienced and knowledgeable staff from the security sector. Assessors have appropriate qualifications in assessment and are currently working towards a level 4 qualification in teaching, learning and assessment. Managers place an appropriately high priority on professional development and updating assessors' knowledge of the security sector. Managers ensure that staff have good, up-to-date knowledge, particularly in the 'Prevent' duty, safeguarding and implementing the electronic portfolio system. Managers and staff discuss their practice in regular monthly standardisation meetings and share good practice with each other. However, they have limited opportunities to share good practice with external partners, in particular those within the adult learning sector.

- Leaders and managers have a clear strategic direction for the business and are ambitious for their learners. Managers have conducted a detailed analysis of the company's strengths and weaknesses to inform future growth. They are focusing on providing learning in their core business of the security industry and expanding to meet regional skills shortages. Managers have rightly identified the need to put their planned expansion into delivering apprenticeships on hold until they have the capacity to manage new learning programmes.
- Managers are recognised by employers as being experts within the security sector. Managers and assessors are recognised as master trainers within the sector. External partners and stakeholders seek the expertise of managers and staff in the development of training within the security sector. Managers have good links with local employers and recruitment agencies that provide trained security staff across the country. Managers effectively promote the profile of the industry and have attracted previously under-represented learners.
- Managers have designed a suitably broad programme of learning. Learners develop their skills through the level 3 diploma in customer service. Learners acquire additional skills by achieving a first aid at work qualification and a specialised sector-specific qualification. Specialised qualifications include those in close protection or door supervision. Leaders ensure that all learners gain their Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence while on their programme to support their entry into employment in the security industry. An increasing proportion of learners gain employment within the sector.
- Leaders and managers successfully promote equality, diversity and inclusion. They target their programmes towards, and are successful in recruiting, disadvantaged learners, including those who are unemployed. They have had reasonable success in attracting learners to their programmes and helping them to succeed, in particular increasing the number of females to work within the security sector. In partnership with Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (CAVA), leaders and managers have succeeded in supporting the majority of learners to join programmes by offering them help with paying for their Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

The governance of the provider

- Managers do not have access to a critical friend from within the sector to advise, challenge and support the leadership team. Managers are unable to benchmark themselves against the best in the adult learning provider sector.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers ensure rigorous background checks are made prior to staff starting their employment. Managers have substantial first-hand experience of safeguarding from the local authority and working with the police service. They have strong links with various agencies for assistance and the referral of learners, should they need to do so.
- Managers and staff have a good understanding of how to deal with the signs of radicalisation and extremism. Managers take appropriate action to refer learners to agencies to deal with concerns.

- Learners place a high priority on safeguarding when they are in work roles or voluntary placements. They demonstrate respect and tolerance. Learners develop a comprehensive understanding of the risks posed from radicalisation and extremism through their close protection training. Learners develop a good understanding of safeguarding on their programme, which is reinforced through training in the workplace.
- Learners feel safe and the majority know whom to go to with safeguarding concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Trainers and assessors do not use effectively their detailed assessment of learners' starting points to plan and provide teaching, learning and assessment. Assessors do not effectively structure sessions, assessments or reviews to include appropriately demanding work, to ensure that all learners develop their skills to their full potential. Assessment frequently does not build upon prior attainment or support learners to improve the standard of their work. Assessors do not encourage learners to produce a standard of work above that of the minimum required standard of their qualification.
- Trainers and assessors do not set sufficiently clear and challenging targets to maximise learners' potential. Assessors do not use individual learning plans to review systematically learners' progress. Targets agreed with learners concentrate too heavily on unit completion and not enough on the development of skills and knowledge. Targets are not effective at helping learners understand what they need to do to improve.
- Regardless of their ability, all learners follow the same core programme. The most able learners are not sufficiently challenged to achieve as well as they can. They complete the majority of their qualification through access to online learning resources. These resources are too often not related to the security sector and do not always inspire learning.
- Assessors do not provide learners with sufficient feedback on what they need to do to improve. Feedback is often not specific or useful enough to support learners to understand how to develop new skills or improve their knowledge beyond the defined minimum competency of a qualification unit.
- Assessors carry out limited tracking and monitoring of learners' progress. Learners at risk cannot always be identified early and appropriate interventions put in place.
- Assessors do not use the information gathered from the assessment of starting points well enough to plan for the development of learners' literacy or numeracy skills. Assessors do not challenge or support learners effectively enough to improve their written literacy skills in particular.
- Assessors use their extensive industry experience and knowledge to support and motivate learners well. Learners value the flexibility and accessibility of this support. Learners particularly enjoy their practical training and demonstrate a high level of practical skills development and a good understanding of the demands of the work role. Trainers share engaging examples of when they were working in close protection for celebrities and how the demands of their client had an impact on how they conducted the job role. Learners develop a good understanding of the job roles available to them within the sector.
- Learners develop good communication skills, particularly in the practical work-related elements of their programme. Learners are able to articulate how they use these skills

effectively in the workplace. Learners demonstrate how they have become more empathetic and approachable at work and within the teams. They develop their communication skills to manage potential conflicts at festivals to defuse situations. Learners are able to de-escalate difficult situations at work, using effective communication to reduce the potential threat of injury.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Learners do not benefit from support to develop their written literacy skills in order to progress in their careers. Learners with poor literacy skills do not receive effective feedback or support to improve. Within the current year, there have been no learners accessing the online English and mathematics modules provided to support learning within the programme.
- Learners demonstrate good practical skills that meet industry standards. This supports learners' routes into work.
- Learners benefit from the expertise of assessors when developing their knowledge of the career pathways available to them. Leaders, managers and staff provide signposting for impartial and external careers education, advice and guidance to learners; however, managers do not yet evaluate the benefits learners have derived from this. Managers provide learners with advice and guidance on enquiry, at enrolment and at exit from the programme. Managers have yet to recruit or train staff with the necessary qualifications to provide impartial careers education, advice and guidance.
- Learners' attendance is high. Managers successfully promote high levels of attendance and punctuality. Learners demonstrate a detailed understanding of their role as an employee within the security sector and the need for punctuality and high levels of attendance to ensure the safety of others.
- Learners' progression into employment is good. Of the majority of learners who have completed at this point in the year, most have progressed into either employment or self-employment within the security sector. A minority of learners have received promotion, additional hours at work or a wage increase. A small number of learners have set up their own security business following the completion of the programme and gaining their SIA licence. These learners have recognised the need to continue with their education. They have enrolled on a business administration course to support the development of their business.
- Learners develop good employability skills through the completion of additional qualifications required for the sector. Learners on security programmes gain the SIA licence to enable them to gain employment. Learners have completed first-aid training, and door-supervision and manual-handling qualifications relevant to their planned career routes. All learners on security-guarding qualifications undertake and gain their SIA licence in preparation for employment in the industry. Learners are ambitious and keen to learn. Learners now regard progression into this industry as a meaningful, long-term, aspirational career.
- Leaders and managers have developed effective partnerships with employers to provide pre-employment placements. Learners have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the sector through the completion of stewarding roles at local events. The vast majority have undertaken stewarding roles at the British Cycling Tour of Britain,

Donnington Park motorsport circuit and football stadiums.

- Learners have a good understanding of extremism and radicalisation and its relevance to the security sector. Learners develop their understanding of concerns about extremism when providing close protection for individuals, and when working at events and at large venues. A minority of learners further develop their understanding outside the good mandatory training. Assessors ensure that all learners have developed a detailed understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Learners are making expected levels of progress to achieve the skills required to meet the minimum requirements of their programme. Assessors' focus on the completion of units to meet the needs of the accreditation and awarding bodies means that they do not encourage learners to produce work above the standard of the qualification.
- Managers and staff do not effectively identify or provide support for learners who have additional learning support needs. Learners who identify themselves as requiring support for their English skills do not receive appropriate support.
- The majority of learners who were unemployed prior to starting on their programme and whose destinations have been recorded have progressed into employment.
- Managers have significantly improved outcomes for learners over the last three years. Overall achievement rates and those completing within the planned timescale have improved and are now slightly below or at the high national rates. More learners stay on their programme than is the case nationally. Managers have identified that in 2017/18, learners' timely achievement rates have declined.
- Managers have taken effective action to close the achievement gaps that existed between male and female learners in 2015/16. Managers have been effective in improving the proportion of female learners on the programme; it is now slightly above the security sector average.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1236902
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	158
Principal/CEO	Luke Hyde
Telephone number	01827 230 441
Website	www.gss.ac.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	0	0	0	158	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	0							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, 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

Andrea Dill-Russell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Elaine Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Gavin Murray	Ofsted Inspector

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