

# Focus Training Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

9–12 October 2018

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Adult learning programmes	<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 learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not been swift enough to improve the quality of the telephone support tutorials to ensure that learners achieve their qualifications.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications is too low; for example, one fifth of learners on the level 3 diploma in sports massage do not pass their course.
- Too many learners leave their course early. Over one quarter of learners do not stay to the end on the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing and personal training course.
- Leaders do not ensure that learners get sufficient high-quality information, advice and guidance before they sign up to a course.
- Governors do not receive relevant information to challenge leaders and managers effectively.
- Telephone support tutors do not use the information they collect about learners' existing skills and knowledge to plan individualised learning programmes. Too many learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors do not provide effective telephone support that is developmental and challenging enough to enable learners to improve their knowledge.
- Leaders have not put in place an effective strategy to ensure that all tutors support learners to develop their English and mathematical skills.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Learners benefit from good-quality face-to-face training sessions.
- Learners benefit from very high-quality teaching resources that support their learning.
- Learners who remain on their course enjoy their learning. They develop their practical skills well.
- The vast majority of learners who achieve their qualifications progress to further courses, gain employment or set up their own business in the health and fitness industry.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Focus Training Limited (Focus Training) is a private training provider that operates out of Bolton, Lancashire. It provides training in health and fitness through government-funded advanced learner loans. The company was established in 2000. Learners attend training venues in Birmingham, Crawley, Ellesmere Port, London, Manchester and York. The courses consist of distance learning via an online learning platform where learners complete handbooks and submit work online, planned telephone support tuition sessions to aid their online learning and attendance at face-to-face practical training and assessment sessions. Focus Training employs 17 staff and three directors. A further 41 tutors are contracted to deliver training and assessment sessions, as and when required.
- At the time of the inspection, around 440 learners were undertaking health and fitness courses, mainly at level 3 with a few at level 4. Around two thirds of learners study on the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing and personal training.

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

- Ensure that learners receive sufficient high-quality information, advice and guidance before they sign up to a course.
- Reduce the proportion of learners, particularly male learners and those on the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing, who leave their programme early.
- Increase the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications by identifying and sharing good practice from courses that have improved.
- Develop and implement effective arrangements to improve the quality of telephone support sessions so that learners make the progress of which they are capable by ensuring that tutors:
  - use the information they collect about learners' existing skills and knowledge to plan individualised telephone sessions
  - have the appropriate skills to develop and challenge learners to improve quickly.
- Develop and implement an effective strategy to ensure that all tutors, including face-to-face tutors and those that provide telephone support tutorials, support learners to develop their English and mathematical skills.
- Ensure that governors receive appropriate reports and relevant information that enable them to challenge leaders and managers effectively about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have been too slow to bring about rapid and consistent improvements in the quality of provision. Leaders do not effectively assess the impact of their actions on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or learners' progress.
- Following several attempts, leaders put in place a stable management structure in May 2018. The new team's actions are beginning to improve the quality of face-to-face sessions. Telephone support tutorials, however, are weak and require improvement.
- Governors, leaders and managers have focused on the areas for improvement detailed in the previous inspection report. They have not rectified successfully all of the weaknesses identified. For example, the proportion of learners who achieve their qualification within the planned time remains low. Around a quarter of learners leave their course early.
- Leaders and managers do not accurately or robustly self-assess the quality of provision. The improvement plan does not set clear measurable targets for improvement. The impact of leaders' actions is difficult to assess. While staff monitor learners who are 'at risk', leaders do not have a clear oversight of the progress that learners make.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not place enough importance on improving learners' skills in English and mathematics. Leaders have not put in place an effective strategy to ensure that tutors support learners to develop their English and mathematical skills. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that learners receive good-quality initial advice and guidance at the start of their course. A small minority of learners struggle to meet the academic demands and time commitment needed to complete their course. A significant proportion of these learners leave their courses early.
- Managers have revised successfully the lesson observation process in face-to-face sessions. It now focuses more on the impact of teaching and learning on learners. Observers make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Action plans, agreed with tutors, reflect well areas to improve. Managers put in place training to bring about improvements, which most staff benefit from. Leaders and managers have put in place effective performance management measures. Tutors who do not improve their practice no longer teach face-to-face sessions or they leave the company. Leaders and managers have not put in place effective arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of telephone support tutors.
- Leaders and managers ensure that tutors develop learners' understanding of democracy, tolerance and respect. Tutors link British values successfully to the health and fitness industry. Learners demonstrate positive working relations with their peers and tutors. Most learners integrate British values as part of their professional code of ethics.
- Leaders plan their courses well to meet the growing demands of the UK fitness industry. Courses such as exercise referral provide learners with the skills to work with clients who are referred by general practitioners.

## The governance of the provider

- The level of challenge that governors provide to leaders requires improvement. The reports that governors receive do not provide them with the information they need to challenge leaders and managers about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. Governors focus too much on detail. They fail to take a strategic oversight of improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress learners are making. Governors did not sufficiently challenge the overly optimistic picture provided by leaders in the most recent self-assessment report.
- Governors have supported leaders in establishing and developing the current management team. The new team have made changes to the structure and content of the level 3 diploma in exercise referral. They have put in place specific training to help tutors to improve their teaching practice. Learners' achievement on this course is now high.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. However, the inspection team found minor errors in documentation during the inspection. Leaders took swift action to address the issues raised.
- Leaders and managers embed safeguarding effectively into the course that learners study. Learners have a sufficient understanding of safeguarding. They know how it applies in their workplace when dealing with clients. Learners are confident to report concerns. They know how to keep themselves and others safe from a range of online threats such as phishing scams, grooming and fraud. Most learners keep separate professional and private online profiles. Learners know how to recognise the signs associated with extremism and radicalisation. This was a weakness at the last inspection. Learners feel safe and are safe.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the managing director, who supports the DSL, have received the appropriate level of training. The DSL acts promptly on any safeguarding referrals and keeps in regular contact with learners to ensure their welfare.
- Managers ensure that they complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on new staff. Leaders and managers do not follow fully their policy on staff recruitment. Their arrangements for gathering newly appointed staff's references are not sufficiently formalised. Leaders do not ensure that references are suitably recorded.
- Leaders and managers have recently put in place a 'Prevent' duty risk register and action plan. Staff at all levels have received training in identifying and supporting vulnerable adults and keeping learners safe. They refer learners to the DSL promptly, using the appropriate paperwork.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Tutors in telephone support sessions do not plan learning to meet individuals' needs. They fail to use the information they collect about learners' prior qualifications and experience to inform the session. Tutors do not challenge the most able learners sufficiently or support the least able effectively. For example, tutors ask the same

questions to learners with health and fitness related graduate qualifications and to those with no prior experience or qualifications in the industry. A significant minority of learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Tutors do not inform learners routinely about what they need to do to improve. Feedback by tutors during telephone support tutorials is too positive and insufficiently developmental. Learners do not receive enough feedback about the accuracy and quality of their written work. Tutors fail to identify learners' spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. As a result, learners repeat the same mistakes and do not reach their full potential. In contrast, learners enjoy very good tutor feedback in face-to-face sessions. Tutors guide them well to improve their practical techniques. Learners enjoy their practical training.
- Managers do not ensure that learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from appropriate support in all aspects of their course. In telephone support tutorials, tutors do not focus on the individual support needs of each learner. Learners struggle to produce work of the required standard. They underperform in their telephone assessments. Learners in face-to-face sessions benefit greatly from tutors' support. Tutors in these sessions plan learning thoroughly and appropriately to meet individuals' needs.
- Tutors do not assess effectively learners' existing knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. Telephone support tutors do not have the knowledge or the skills they need to support learners to develop their English and mathematics skills. Tutors who teach face-to-face develop learners' English and mathematical skills successfully in lessons. For example, tutors use engaging activities such as using Scrabble tiles to create high-scoring bone and joint names. Learners develop well their technical terminology and their mental mathematical skills.
- Tutors are well qualified and have very good subject knowledge. They make good use of their expertise in the fitness industry when working with learners. Tutors plan face-to-face training sessions carefully and implement them skilfully. They design them for learners of all abilities. Tutors explain clearly technical concepts such as the structure and function of the atrioventricular valves and the physiological benefits of cardiovascular exercise.
- Learners enjoy high-quality technical and theoretical learning resources. They have access to a good range of computer-based learning resources in the virtual learning environment. Learners use high-quality learning manuals. Learners acquire industry-relevant knowledge because of using these resources. For example, they learn about neutral and lordotic postural deviations. Learners develop their understanding of specific client groups, such as the elderly. They gain knowledge, skills and understanding to better support their clients to achieve their goals.
- Learners value the flexibility that leaders and managers have built into the courses. Learners benefit from the arrangements that managers make for the face-to-face training sessions. For example, managers support learners very well to attend where personal circumstances make this difficult. Many learners would not be able to attend less flexible training courses. Leaders and managers widen participation in training for the health and fitness industry successfully, because of the structure of their distance-learning provision.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Learners do not have access to enough high-quality information, advice and guidance before they sign up to a training course. Learners are not clear about the demands of the course before they sign up, because sales staff do not inform them about the course in enough detail. For example, a significant proportion of learners on the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing and personal training course leave early because they struggle with the academic level of the course and the demands of distance learning. Leaders and managers have recently identified accurately that initial information, advice and guidance is a key area for improvement. They plan to put in place changes in November 2018.
- Tutors encourage learners to word process documents rather than handwrite them. A significant minority of learners do not have the required word processing skills. Tutors do not provide enough support to ensure that learners develop the skills they need to word process their written work confidently. They do not prepare them well enough to produce high-quality records and documents in the health and fitness industry.
- Many learners benefit personally and vocationally from the training they receive. For example, they become much more knowledgeable about the importance of a healthy cardiovascular system and the need for physical exercise and healthy eating. Learners adapt their own gym routines to make them more effective. They change their diets to make them more nutritious. They also pay much more attention to maintaining a healthy weight.
- Learners enjoy their training and speak very positively about it. They value the flexibility of distance learning. They arrange their study time around domestic and work-related responsibilities. Learners become increasingly aware that they have the potential to be successful. Their self-confidence increases and their self-assurance improves as they progress on their course.
- Learners improve their opportunities to become employed or progress in their jobs on successful completion of one or more health and fitness courses. Learners select courses to meet their career goals.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality at the face-to-face training sessions are good. Learners enjoy interacting with others. They develop together their fitness-related knowledge, skills and understanding. Learners and tutors arrange convenient times for regular telephone support tutorials. Most learners are available at the pre-arranged times and they readily engage with their tutors.
- Learners receive good enrichment activities in the face-to-face sessions. For example, tutors introduce techniques including movement screening, exercise adaptation and postural assessment techniques. Learners practise these activities which they then use with their clients. Leaders and managers support learners' entry into the National Register of Personal Trainers. This improves learners' employment prospects.
- Leaders, managers and tutors prioritise learners' welfare. They provide good pastoral support. Leaders and managers have implemented a robust system since the last inspection to follow up quickly any pastoral or welfare issues. Tutors ensure that a very small minority of current learners who would have left early remain on their course and progress.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications is low and below that of similar providers. Around one fifth of learners on the level 3 diploma in sports massage course do not achieve their qualification. About one quarter of learners across all programmes do not achieve their qualification.
- Too many learners leave their course early. Over one quarter of learners do not stay to the end of the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing and personal training. This course accounts for two thirds of the advanced learner loan provision. Leaders and managers have rightly identified that information, advice and guidance and the structure and content of the course require improvement. They have clear plans to improve these aspects of the provision but have not yet implemented them.
- Leaders' and managers' actions have not succeeded in reducing the achievement gap between male and female learners in 2017/18. The achievement of male learners continues to be worse than that of females. The actions that leaders have put in place to increase the proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieving their qualification have been successful. Learners now achieve in line with their peers. Leaders have rightly identified that in 2017/18 the achievement of learners in Ellesmere Port and Birmingham was worse than in other regions. They have put in place actions to narrow this gap for learners in 2018/19. It is too soon to measure the impact of these actions.
- Most learners make the expected progress towards the completion of their course. A minority of learners make good progress. The standard of work learners produce meets the requirements of the awarding organisation. Tutors develop learners' knowledge and skills very well in face-to-face sessions. They develop learners' practical skills successfully.
- The vast majority of learners who achieve their qualifications progress onto further courses, gain employment or set up their own business in the health and fitness sector.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	51873
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	406
Principal/CEO	Bob Ellis
Telephone number	01204 388 330
Website	<a href="http://www.focus-training.com">www.focus-training.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 learnerships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	431	-	8
Number of learners by learnership 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:	None							



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the finance director, 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; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and assessments. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Debra Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Mollon	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Newbould	Ofsted Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector

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