

# Unique Training Solutions Limited

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

27–29 March 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>		<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>	Apprenticeships <b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>	
Outcomes for learners	<b>Good</b>	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have taken decisive and successful steps to improve the provision as a result of the monitoring visit. This has ensured that apprentices benefit from good-quality apprenticeship programmes.
- Well-qualified and experienced board members have been instrumental in supporting leaders to improve the quality of their apprenticeship programmes.
- Apprentices enjoy and take pride in their learning. They gain confidence in their own abilities.
- Tutors provide well-planned off-the-job training for apprentices which deepens apprentices' sector-related skills and knowledge. Apprentices develop their study skills effectively and know how to improve their work.
- Apprentices make good progress because they are supported effectively by tutors and assessors to develop substantial new knowledge and skills.
- Leaders and managers have developed and sustained very good partnerships with employers which ensure that the provision closely meets apprentices' training needs.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and know what to do to keep themselves and others safe.
- A high proportion of apprentices pass their final assessments first time, remain in employment and enrol on higher-level qualifications.
- Assessors do not focus well enough on identifying and supporting apprentices to improve their English and mathematical skills. While many more apprentices pass their functional skills examinations, too few develop the specific skills they need in their current and future job roles.
- Assessors do not use apprentices' starting points sufficiently well to structure learning to help apprentices make the maximum possible progress in the sector-specific and broader people skills they need.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Unique Training Solutions Limited (UTS) became a prime contractor in May 2017, following 15 years as a private and commercially funded provider. The first UTS apprentices started their health and social care and team leading standards-based apprenticeships in June 2017. The large majority of apprentices are on the lead adult care worker level 3 programme, with smaller numbers on the level 2 adult care worker programme and the team leader programme at level 3. Apprentices work mainly in 10 care sector employers in Hertfordshire, Essex, London and West Berkshire.
- At a monitoring visit in August 2018, the progress that UTS leaders had made in establishing successful apprenticeship programmes was judged to be insufficient.

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

- Assessors need to work with apprentices and their employers to identify the specific English and mathematical skills needed by apprentices in their workplace. They then need to plan learning, with the support of the functional skills tutor where required, to help apprentices develop these skills.
- Managers need to ensure that assessors:
  - use apprentices' starting points to structure learning to meet their individual needs better
  - identify and help apprentices to develop the broader people skills, such as leadership or team working, that they need to be successful.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have developed a clear and realistic strategy for their apprenticeship provision. They work closely and effectively with employers and local county councils to make sure that their apprenticeship programmes improve the skills of workers in the adult social care industry.
- Leaders have high aspirations for the success of their apprentices. They have acted quickly to improve all the weaknesses identified at the monitoring visit. They make sure that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that helps them become effective and successful employees.
- Leaders and managers work closely with their employers and know their training and skills development needs well. They set challenging targets for employers and check their progress against these frequently. They make sure that employers understand fully the requirements of an apprenticeship before apprentices start their programmes. Leaders assess the effectiveness of employers in working with assessors to support apprentices and act decisively to stop working with those not meeting their high expectations.
- Leaders and managers assess correctly the strengths and weaknesses of their teachers. Staff and board members carry out detailed lesson observations and focus well on the learning that is taking place. They set clear and detailed actions to improve classroom practice and check that these have been carried out in monthly meetings with tutors.
- Leaders and managers use staff appraisals and reviews effectively to improve teaching, learning and assessment. They incorporate targets from lesson observations into reviews and appraisals and check and track improvements frequently. They set challenging targets for staff to improve.
- Leaders make sure that staff improve their skills quickly through effective and well-planned staff training activities. For example, managers identified that assessors needed to improve the reviews they were writing with apprentices. Assessors attended a training session designed to improve the effectiveness of review writing. Leaders and managers checked reviews after this and identified improvements in the quality of assessors' work.
- Leaders and managers know their provision well. They recognise strengths and identify weaknesses accurately. They plan to improve weaknesses carefully and act swiftly to make sure that improvements are successful. However, although they check and track improvements effectively, targets and performance indicators are not always clearly defined. Consequently, leaders and board members are not always clear when these targets have been achieved.
- Leaders acted quickly after the monitoring visit to increase apprentices' access to functional skills lessons. The recently appointed functional skills manager has improved the effectiveness of English and mathematics teaching and the planning and delivery of functional skills lessons. Managers adapted the functional skills programme to enable apprentices to start learning earlier. They changed examination boards to enable apprentices to benefit from improved online resources and assessment tools. As a result, first-time pass rates have improved, and for English are now high.
- Employers appreciate the frequent and clear communication with staff at UTS. They are

very positive about their links with UTS and know in detail the progress that their apprentices are making. Workplace managers are involved in reviews and employers receive frequent feedback about the progress of their apprentices.

- Leaders have recently put in place new systems which substantially improve quality assurance processes. However, it is too early to judge the impact of all these processes.
- Leaders and managers track and record the off-the-job training that apprentices complete to make sure that they satisfy the requirements of an apprenticeship.
- Leaders do not observe all new staff soon enough after they start working with UTS. As a result, they are slow to identify strengths and weaknesses to inform their knowledge of the effectiveness of new staff.

### **The governance of the provider**

- The members of the newly appointed board of trustees are well qualified and experienced learning and development professionals. They understand in detail the strengths and weaknesses of UTS. They use their skills and knowledge to support the managing director and senior staff effectively and to drive improvements in the quality of the provision.
- Board members recognise the fast pace of improvements since the monitoring visit. They challenge senior managers effectively to improve further the quality of the provision. The actions that they agree are sensible and appropriate. Board members track progress with these actions effectively.
- Board members are highly aspirational for the success of the company's apprentices. They are well informed about the company and receive frequent and detailed reports on topics such as safeguarding.
- Senior leaders and board members meet frequently to discuss apprentices' progress and attendance, and strategies to support those causing concern. However, they do not review actions taken frequently enough to judge their success.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns. They learn about safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty during induction. They develop their knowledge of topics such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage during their courses.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is well qualified and trained for her role. Two other senior members of staff have also been trained to cover this role when the DSL is absent. The DSL uses links with the local county council effectively to help when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Leaders have developed detailed and clear safeguarding policies which have been ratified by the board of trustees and are well understood by staff.
- The DSL deals with the small number of safeguarding concerns effectively and records actions taken in detail. Learners benefit from a follow-up interview after their concerns have been closed to make sure that they remain safe. Employers understand how to raise any safeguarding concerns with UTS staff.

- All staff have completed appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Apprentices complete online learning to improve their knowledge of staying safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Assessors check their knowledge during reviews. Staff use their links with the regional 'Prevent' coordinator and Hertfordshire police counter-terrorism staff to make sure that they know about potential threats to apprentices. They communicate these threats to learners clearly. Their 'Prevent' duty risk assessments are thorough and useful.
- UTS staff recognise potential risks for their learners in adult social care and make sure that they develop the knowledge that helps to keep them safe. For example, staff decided to end learning sessions earlier in the winter to reduce risks for learners going home in the dark. Staff make sure that apprentices understand the dangers of lone working and help learners plan safe routes home after work.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Apprentices enjoy and value their learning programmes. They are motivated by employers and assessors to deepen their knowledge and achieve their programme aims.
- Off-the-job learning activities are well planned by employers and assessors. Apprentices benefit from a range of off-the-job opportunities, including work shadowing, training days and online learning. This deepens their sector-based knowledge and develops their industry skills and their skills as a learner. For example, level 3 team leader apprentices improved their assignment writing skills following attendance at a training session. A level 2 adult care apprentice found working alongside a senior nurse particularly beneficial in developing knowledge and understanding of the safe handling and management of medication.
- Tutors provide very effective group training sessions. Tutors and assessors deliver courses with enthusiasm and pace sessions well. As a result, apprentices enjoy learning and make planned progress, building on the knowledge and skills which they develop in each learning activity.
- Assessors have very good industry experience and keep up to date through regular staff training sessions. They use their knowledge and skills to provide apprentices with very clear guidance on the requirements of the final assessment. This ensures that apprentices start to develop good skills early in their programmes.
- Assessors' monthly staff training activities are well focused on maintaining or improving their knowledge and practice. This training includes sharing good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Apprentices and their employers know clearly when apprentices are making good progress. Apprentices know what they need to do to complete their programmes. Employers help them to develop the good knowledge, skills and professional behaviours they require to become successful practitioners. Apprentices and employers appreciate the detailed information provided by assessors.
- A specialist tutor provides good teaching and support to apprentices who need to take functional skills examinations in mathematics and English. Apprentices who did not enjoy these subjects at school, now enjoy learning and can see the relevance of these skills in their job roles. However, too few apprentices are set developmental targets to improve

these skills further in the workplace.

- Apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity which they link well to their work practice. For example, one level 3 adult care apprentice challenged a service user when they expressed inappropriate stereotypical views about ethnicity.
- Assessors have high expectations of apprentices. Assessors use questioning techniques successfully to encourage apprentices to expand on their answers and think more deeply. For example, an assessor used very effective and detailed questioning in a review session with a level 2 adult care apprentice. This helped the apprentice provide particularly thoughtful reflections on their workplace practice.
- Employers value the skills that new apprentices develop, which help them to become effective employees. Apprentices develop their skills well in the workplace and reflect on their practice. Employers appreciate the additional skills that apprentices develop such as improved confidence and higher-quality report writing.
- Assessors and employers support apprentices very well and are readily available for advice and guidance. If apprentices fall behind, they are supported effectively with a variety of activities to catch up. For example, one apprentice who was reluctant to continue was given additional support sessions by the employer to boost their confidence and develop effective coping strategies. Apprentices who struggle with functional skills are provided with extra one-to-one support. Assessors provide appropriate additional support to apprentices where needed.
- Assessors do not use information about apprentices' starting points sufficiently to plan individual learning. As a result, too many apprentices are not set challenging targets to develop their vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours or to improve the broader people skills they need.
- Feedback from assessors lacks specific guidance about how apprentices could improve their work. For example, an assessor's feedback to a level 2 adult care apprentice highlighted the apprentice's effective work in supporting the client as well as colleagues but did not identify further development points. Assessors' feedback on assignment work for level 2 and level 3 adult care apprentices focuses on the assessment criteria that have been met and lacks explanation on how they could improve the quality of work further.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Apprentices take a real pride in learning substantial new skills and knowledge. This improves their self-confidence significantly. For example, a level 3 team leader apprentice improved her leadership skills and confidence levels, which enabled her to perform well in interviews and secure promotion early in her programme.
- Apprentices produce good-quality portfolios and high standards of work which meets or exceeds the programme requirements.
- Apprentices achieve a diploma qualification which is carefully tailored to meet the requirements of their standards-based programmes. They also benefit from a range of additional learning on subjects such as professional boundaries and the Mental Capacity Act. These additional qualifications enhance their performance and career prospects.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism

and know what to do to keep themselves and others safe. They also have an appropriate awareness of British values. Apprentices feel and are safe.

- Apprentices' attendance at off-the-job training has improved significantly since the monitoring visit and is now good. Assessors are successful in supporting apprentices who do not attend a training day to ensure that the apprentices catch up with the learning they have lost.
- Staff provide apprentices with good initial information, advice and guidance. The advice they provide about potential next steps for apprentices is less well developed. Managers have recognised this and have planned specialist training for managers and training staff.
- Assessors do not focus well enough on identifying and supporting apprentices to improve their English and mathematical skills. While many more apprentices pass their functional skills examinations, too few develop the specific skills they need in their current and future job roles.

### Outcomes for learners

### Good

- Most apprentices are making at least good progress. Assessors quickly identify apprentices who are in danger of falling behind and provide effective help to enable them to achieve.
- Apprentices' achievement of functional skills awards in English and mathematics has increased. Functional skills first-time pass-rates in mathematics have improved since the monitoring visit but are not yet good. A high proportion of apprentices now achieve their functional skills award in English.
- Most apprentices gain additional responsibilities during their apprenticeship programmes. A small number have been promoted early in their programmes as a result of their substantial new skills and knowledge and enhanced workplace behaviours.
- Most apprentices who have completed their final assessment have been successful at their first attempt. On the level 3 lead adult carer worker programme most completers achieved a merit grade. Apprentices who have completed their end-point assessment have moved on to a nursing degree apprenticeship.
- Very few apprentices leave their programmes early. Most continue to be employed by their employers on completion of their programmes.
- No achievement gaps exist between the different groups of apprentices. However, managers do not identify separately all groups of apprentices, such as those with additional learning needs, and therefore do not monitor their progress.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	1278575
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	151
Managing Director	Michelle Hillier
Telephone number	01727 733999
Website	<a href="http://www.uniquetrainingsolutions.co.uk">www.uniquetrainingsolutions.co.uk</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+
	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	40	–	91
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 managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the new provider monitoring visit 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

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maria Rayworth	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Fitt	Her Majesty's Inspector

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