

Inspection of South West Association of Training Providers Limited (Swatpro)

Inspection dates: 22 to 25 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Swatpro was formed in 2011. It is a not-for-profit partnership for employers and learners and operates predominantly in the south west of England. The partnership currently comprises 22 provider partners. Between them, they offer traineeships for young people between 16 and 18 years of age and adults, adult learning programmes to diploma level and apprenticeships at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. Swatpro also trains learners on its own account. Each partner is a subcontractor of Swatpro and each has its own senior management and training teams. Swatpro's main role is to provide partners with information about the education and training sectors together with training and support.

In combination, partners have just under 1,400 learners. Around 80% of learners are over 19 years of age. Nearly two thirds are apprentices following qualifications in the health care sector. Other apprenticeships that partners offer include construction, engineering, child development, digital marketing, business management and accounting. Around 150 diploma learners are funded by adult learner loans. The adult skills and traineeships programmes have a small number of learners.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

The great majority of apprentices work in very supportive and encouraging environments which are calm and well ordered. Apprentices are highly respectful, punctual and conscientious employees who attend work and training sessions regularly. They are ambitious, committed to their learning and want to be successful in their future careers. In particular, apprentices demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and their trainers. During training sessions, they listen carefully to the views of others and allow thinking time for those who might be less certain about responding. In one provider, apprentices learn listening skills, self-awareness and effective communication as integral elements of their programme. Consequently, they have a good awareness of the needs of others and the impact their work has on service users.

Apprentices quickly become effective team players who are productive and respected by their peers and managers. Provider staff have successfully helped apprentices working in hospital trusts to develop resilience, tenacity and good team working skills during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learners whose health and social care programmes are funded by adult learner loans are highly motivated to achieve their qualifications and also want to make progress in their careers. These learners rapidly gain new knowledge that they apply at work. For example, one learner applied what she had learned about safeguarding children to help her employer develop a new policy for the care home where she worked.

Tutors prepare most learners on traineeship programmes well to work in sectors including healthcare and child development. Consequently, the great majority of these move on to a level 2 apprenticeship. These learners are valued by employer staff and develop their confidence quickly. One learner who progressed from a traineeship to an apprenticeship did so because she was given trust and responsibility for the first time in many years. This inspired her to pursue a career in healthcare.

All learners feel safe. Their knowledge of personal safeguarding is good. They appreciate the support structures which have been implemented well by Swatpro's partners. These help learners maintain their well-being and mental health.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Swatpro leaders have high aspirations for, and engage very professionally with, their partners. They provide a professional network that supports the sharing of good practice and sector information successfully. For example, leaders run quarterly meetings about quality improvement which all partners attend and value. They provide them with pertinent information and identify areas for improvement. Leaders have also developed a useful bespoke learning and information portal used well as a learning resource by learners, employers and partners. Leaders promote a culture of high aspirations and learner-focused provision. Partners share this culture, providing training that learners and employers value highly.

Swatpro's leaders conduct frequent online reviews of partners' learner files, including the hours apprentices spend doing off-the-job training. As a result, they have a good understanding of partners' provision. However, their judgement of learners' success relies too heavily on data and too little on more qualitative aspects.

Leaders in all providers in the Swatpro partnership, including Swatpro itself, have clear and ambitious strategies for their various curriculums. These curriculums are rich in content and reflect local and regional employment priorities.

Curriculums for apprentices are designed carefully to ensure that apprentices build their new skills, knowledge and behaviours progressively. The topics managers choose are carefully selected to help apprentices deepen their understanding of key concepts, methodologies and practices sequentially. Most learners have little relevant experience when they start their apprenticeships, but they learn rapidly and quickly become valued team members.

Curriculum leaders readily adapt their curriculums to reflect changes in the sectors in which they specialise. This means that apprentices' learning is always relevant and current and best meets their and their employers' needs. Most apprentices are able to choose optional units which reflect the specifics of the work they do. Their programmes frequently include additional qualifications, for example in coaching and mentoring, and provide good opportunities for personal development.

The partners' leaders and managers have invested wisely in well-resourced training facilities which emulate industrial practice. Learning environments are safe and conducive to learning. Leaders and managers have very high expectations of apprentices and the companies they work for.

Employers routinely give all but a small minority of apprentices the time off work they are entitled to for study and to complete assignments. The quality of off- and on-the-job training is good and ensures that apprentices are being fully prepared for productive work.

Before starting the apprenticeship, applicants complete a thorough assessment to determine what they already know and can do and their suitability for the apprenticeship. Staff quickly identify apprentices with additional learning needs at the start of their programme. Assessors then ensure appropriate practical support is available, such as extra time for tests. For example, a healthcare apprentice with dyslexia and anxiety is allowed to submit oral recordings of her learning instead of producing written evidence.

Apprentices' trainers are knowledgeable and highly experienced in their respective industries. They use their wealth of expertise to contextualise theoretical elements and practice in different employment settings. Trainers plan training activities well and teach at an appropriate pace using a broad range of methods. In combination, these all help apprentices develop their knowledge in depth. Apprentices quickly apply their theoretical learning to practical work-based situations.

Assessors' verbal and written feedback to apprentices is generally constructive and sufficiently detailed. For the most part, this helps apprentices further improve the quality of their work. However, a few assessors' feedback is scant and does not explain clearly enough what the apprentice has done well and where further improvement could be made. This means the apprentice is unable to develop their understanding and improve their work.

Most apprentices develop their knowledge of safeguarding, personal care and functional skills in English well. Teachers plan functional skills teaching and support well. These are sequenced carefully and effectively. Teaching is challenging and improves learners' knowledge and understanding. Teachers expertly contextualise functional skills content to apprentices' work settings. However, not enough childcare apprentices gain a functional skills qualification in mathematics.

The majority of apprentices are clear about what they need to do for the assessments at the end of their apprenticeships. Training staff give helpful coaching and practice tasks to those who are approaching this stage. These prepare most apprentices well and develop their confidence.

Apprentices are keen to demonstrate what they have learned and use technical and professional language well. In most cases, apprentices produce good-quality written and practical work which at least meets the standards expected for their qualifications. Apprentices reflect well on the impact their learning has on those that they work with directly, such as patients in hospitals, and the communities in which they live. For example, carpentry apprentices understand how their work affects the community, such as when refurbishing council or sheltered properties. Most apprentices take on more complex tasks as a result of their training. Nearly all progress to sustained employment within their organisations or are promoted to roles with increased responsibilities and pay.

Assessors work closely with adult learners and employers to ensure that the content of adults' healthcare qualifications meets their individual needs and job roles. As a result, adult learners quickly acquire relevant new knowledge that they apply in their care settings to support better their service users or residents. For example, a level 3 adult care learner quickly studied a unit on diabetes care which allowed her to give prompt personal support to a new resident in a care home.

Assessors on Swatpro's adult loans programme have appropriate vocational qualifications and experience. However, these assessors lack the pedagogical knowledge and qualifications to ensure that learners benefit from consistently high-quality teaching and learning.

Most apprentices know how to recognise different forms of abuse and how to protect themselves, or their organisation, from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. All apprentices have a good practical knowledge of safeguarding at work and training. They understand how these would be or are being managed in the work environment. However, most apprentices have only a superficial understanding of fundamental British values. Too many are unable to define what these values mean in general or at work.

Swatpro's board members provide informed challenge to leaders. They are appropriately experienced and well connected and fulfil the requirements of their role. Board members usefully include a former leader of a national training provider and a further education college governor. Board members have strong local and regional connections with key stakeholders, employers and industry partnerships.

Most learners have a good understanding of career opportunities within their current employment setting. However, very few receive wholly impartial careers guidance and are not being made aware of the wider career opportunities or progression opportunities beyond their current working environments.

Too many health and social care apprentices working in Swatpro's two NHS trust partners are making slow progress. This is primarily due to the challenges and disruption to workflows and staffing created by COVID-19. Leaders and managers in both these trusts are implementing well-considered plans to promote apprentices' motivation, improve their confidence and give them more time off to complete work. These are helping to speed apprentices towards completion.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding policies are up to date and include appropriate content. Providers carry out the necessary checks to ensure staff are suitable and safe to work with learners. They maintain a single central record of checks which include essential details. All Swatpro partners have established a positive culture of safeguarding and ensure staff complete mandatory training.

Swatpro has an appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and three deputies trained to at least level 3. All partners have similar arrangements. Swatpro's DSL meets weekly with the DSLs from all partners to update information about referrals. As a result, leaders and managers have current information on safeguarding concerns and identify themes for discussion and training.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Swatpro and partner staff should enable all learners to understand and remember what British values mean in practice and specifically at work.
- Swatpro and partner staff should provide all learners with impartial information, advice and guidance on their careers which includes consideration of relevant career paths extending beyond learners' current workplaces.
- Swatpro leaders should ensure assessors on the adult learner loan-funded programme professionalise and develop their teaching skills.
- Swatpro leaders should evaluate the quality of assessors' feedback and broaden their perspective of learners' achievements beyond numerical data.

- Ensure that all childcare apprentices gain a functional skills qualification in mathematics.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59093
Address	Unit 6 First Floor Offices 6 Marsh Green Road North Marsh Barton Exeter Devon EX2 8NY
Contact number	01393 437659
Website	www.swatpro.org.uk/
Principal/CEO	Rod Davis
Provider type	Not for profit organisation
Date of previous inspection	10 to 13 May 2016
Main subcontractors (partners)	Channel Training Ltd Hudson Training Ltd The North Bristol NHS Trust The Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Trust Puffins Training Ltd Train4All Ltd Varsity Training Ltd Wessex Training Ltd Working Knowledge Ltd White Horse Training Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the contract and quality improvement director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider and its partner subcontractors. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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