

# Inspection of Netcom Training Ltd

Inspection dates:

12 to 15 July 2022

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Adult learning programmes

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Netcom Training is an independent learning provider based in Birmingham in the West Midlands. The provider holds contracts to offer adult learning programmes with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. At the time of inspection, only the provider's adult courses on the WMCA contract were within scope. There were 204 learners following one of three adult learning programmes. Some 142 learners were studying level 3 cyber security, 19 were studying level 3 Amazon Web Services, and the remaining 43 were studying level 3 website design and marketing. Courses are delivered mostly online and last 12 weeks.

At the start of the inspection, the provider opted to terminate their contract to deliver apprenticeships. Consequently, the very small number of apprenticeships the provider offered were not inspected.

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

Learners display positive attitudes to their learning and can articulate well how their course is preparing them for a future career in Information & Communication Technology (ICT). They enjoy their courses and value the support they receive from tutors. As a result, learners are motivated, and in most cases attendance and punctuality at taught lessons are high.

Learners, some of whom are returning to study after long periods of employment and have little or no prior knowledge of ICT, develop significant new industry-relevant skills throughout their course. Learners who express an interest in self-employment receive additional support and training to help them to understand this type of working.

Tutors have high expectations of learners' conduct in online lessons. As a result, learning environments are calm, and learners demonstrate respect for others, maintaining positive working relationships both with tutors and their peers.

Learners develop their confidence as a result of their studies. They speak positively about how they feel more comfortable to communicate verbally in lessons following group work with their peers on problem-solving activities. They understand how developing these transferable skills is preparing them well for the world of work.

Learners feel safe and know who to contact if they feel they need help. During induction, tutors develop learners' understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, introducing topics, such as dealing with unsolicited emails and pop-ups.

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

Leaders have selected a curriculum which is targeted at engaging adult learners who are hard to reach, giving them opportunities to engage in highly relevant ICT-related study, which can lead to industry-recognised qualifications. They work well with a number of external agencies and community groups to offer these opportunities within the combined authority areas in which they work.

Leaders receive reports to support the monitoring of learners' progress. However, these reports do not provide sufficient information for detailed analysis of the quality of education learners receive. Leaders and governors have recognised this, and development is underway to include a broader range of relevant information, which is already beginning to have a positive impact for learners.

Leaders are supported and challenged well by an advisory board, which is a key driver in organisational improvement. Those responsible for governance have a range of relevant expertise, which they use well to challenge leaders on improving the experience of learners. They rightly recognise the need for leaders to focus more sharply on the progress learners are making.

The advisory board has been proactive in working directly with learners to understand their experience better. As a result, they have been able to identify specific improvements and challenge leaders to make changes. For example, they have challenged leaders to include careers advice throughout learners' programmes, as opposed to only towards the end. This has enabled learners to have a clearer focus on developing the necessary employment-specific skills that they need to be successful.

The curriculum that learners follow is well sequenced, and carefully designed to encourage learners to develop rapidly significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, in the cyber-security course, learners first develop an understanding of the key concepts of relevant IT hardware and software, before moving on to technical aspects of cloud computing. As a result, learners are able to link each topic back to their earlier learning and can identify how these skills are building over time.

Tutors are well-qualified experts with significant vocational experience, and they undertake regular professional development with the organisations whose qualifications they teach. However, the development of their teaching skills is less well planned. Consequently, not all tutors have the skills they need to teach the curriculum effectively and in the small minority of cases, this results in poor teaching practice.

Leaders and tutors ensure that the curriculum develops learners' English and mathematics skills throughout their programmes. This learning is contextualised into the activities which form the core of the curriculum – such as financial management in entrepreneurship, binary number to decimal number conversion in cyber security, and using appropriate language and grammar in website creation.

In most cases, tutors use assessment well as an indicator of the progress learners are making and adjust their teaching accordingly. However, the results of these assessments – which are often provided by the organisations who administer the formal examinations – do not always tell tutors or learners specifically enough where the gaps in their knowledge are, or how to close them. As a result, learners are not always clear on how to address these gaps, or what they need to do to improve.

Tutors do not always provide feedback which is sufficiently detailed to allow learners to understand how to improve. In a few cases, feedback focuses heavily on the positive aspects of learners' work. Consequently, too many learners do not receive sufficiently developmental feedback, which helps them to understand how to develop their work to achieve their best.

Tutors ensure that learners quickly develop a working understanding of the technical vocabulary relevant to the course. They ensure that learners understand this vocabulary well before introducing more technical language. For example, one group of learners are taught to understand the concept of near-end and far-end 'cross-talk' before being asked to explain these terms in the context of networking and data

transmission. As a result, learners develop a deeper understanding of technical terms related to ICT and use them appropriately.

Learners participate in a detailed induction programme, which covers topics associated with equality and diversity, and life in modern Britain. As a result, they develop an age-appropriate understanding of these topics. For example, learners are taught the importance of respect for different faiths and beliefs, and why this is important for them and for their working life. However, learners' deeper knowledge of these topics is not always developed throughout their course and as a result, a few learners' understanding is narrow.

Tutors adapted the curriculum well to teach online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since restrictions have relaxed, tutors have begun to offer some learners a blended approach, focusing face-to-face lessons on practical skills development, while online classes focus on the development of knowledge and behaviours. As a result, learners develop their knowledge well across the curriculum, while having the flexibility to learn using different methods.

Learners receive impartial careers guidance that takes into account their individual needs. Teachers use initial advice and guidance to identify learners' starting points. They use this information to inform learning plans, which ensure that learners develop relevant employability skills, such as producing a curriculum vitae, personal statement, and – where appropriate – a business-related social media profile.

Learners achieve well, and a significantly high number progress into IT-related jobs or further study after completing their programme. Tutors and staff work well with learners upon completion of their learning to prepare them further for new careers in ICT by providing job-search support, mock interviews, and additional training.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have established safeguarding processes and policies, which are appropriate to the adult provision that they offer. They have appointed an appropriately qualified designated safeguarding lead and additional officers who lead on safeguarding across the organisation.

Leaders have not sufficiently planned the processes for the recording of safeguarding incidents in a centralised location. However, these incidents are recorded, and leaders discuss safeguarding as a standing item at safeguarding, management, and board meetings. These discussions address any incidents and refer to updates to be shared with staff and potential changes to the curriculum content. As a result, leaders retain sufficient oversight of safeguarding, although they acknowledge the need for more improved recording.

Learners develop an understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, and this is contextualised within the curriculum, including how to stay

safe online. However, the curriculum is not sufficiently broad to ensure that learners develop an understanding of the risks where they live and work.

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

- Leaders must ensure that the teaching practice of all tutors is sufficiently developed to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to develop rapidly new knowledge, skills and behaviours from their starting points.
- Tutors must ensure that the feedback that all learners receive is sufficiently developmental to tell them how to close gaps in their knowledge and improve their work.
- Leaders must ensure that the processes for recording safeguarding incidents are formalised to ensure that information on incidents is stored appropriately, so that all relevant staff can access updates on the progress of each incident.

## Provider details

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<b>CEO</b>	Kevin Vashi
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent Learning Provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	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 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. 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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