

Inspection of North West Community Services Training Ltd

Inspection dates:

6 to 9 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

North West Community Services Training Ltd (NWCS Training) is based in Knowsley, Merseyside and was established in 1986 as an independent training provider. Since July 2016, NWCS Training has transferred ownership three times, with the most recent acquisition in November 2021 by a large healthcare services organisation, Cera Care Ltd.

At the time of inspection there were 140 apprentices in learning on standards-based apprenticeships. There were 27 on the level 2 early years practitioner, 47 on the level 3 early years educator, 43 on the level 3 teaching assistant, six on the level 5 early years lead practitioner and nine on the level 3 business administrator apprentices. There were less than five apprentices enrolled on the level 3 team leader/supervisor and the level 5 leader in adult care.

NWCS Training works with approximately 40 employers across the Liverpool City Region and does not subcontract any of their provision to other providers.

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

Apprentices have a positive attitude to their training. They are motivated and ambitious to achieve their apprenticeship. They develop good professional behaviours as a result of their training. For example, level 2 early years practitioners use appropriate personal protective equipment and follow the correct procedures in the workplace when changing babies' nappies, to reduce the risk of infection and ensure the comfort of the babies.

Apprentices feel well supported and value the support they receive from their training officers. Training officers are trained mental health first aiders, which enables them to provide apprentices with support should they have mental health concerns.

Apprentices increase in confidence as a result of their training, which enables them to become more effective in the workplace. For example, level 3 business administrator apprentices mentor new colleagues in the workplace and become more confident when dealing with customers. Employers value the contribution that apprentices make to their workplace.

Apprentices demonstrate respect for others in the workplace. For example, they have a good understanding of the importance of selecting stories and planning activities that are culturally diverse when engaging with children in the childcare settings in which they work.

Apprentices do not benefit from a broader curriculum beyond the vocational training of their apprenticeship. Staff have introduced 'themes of the month' that incorporate topics such as mental health and addiction awareness. However, apprentices do not have the opportunity to participate in activities to support them to become active citizens.

Apprentices do not receive a high-quality, planned careers education programme. Some apprentices receive informal information on what they can do next from their training officers. However, this is often limited to opportunities within the sector that they are training in. Information provided does not give apprentices a broader understanding of potential career pathways to help them make well-informed decisions about their longer-term career goals.

Apprentices receive training on how to keep themselves safe at the start of their programme. Early years and teaching assistant apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of safeguarding young children. They can apply this in the workplace. Apprentices say they feel safe.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear rationale for the apprenticeship programmes they offer. They ensure that programmes are clearly aligned to the skills priorities of

the Liverpool City Region. For example, the early years practitioner apprenticeship is developed to meet a workforce shortage in childcare in the Liverpool City Region.

Training officers are appropriately qualified and have industry experience in their subject areas. They use their subject knowledge and vocational expertise to plan the delivery of the curriculum in a logical sequence. For example, apprentices on the level 3 teaching assistant programme study fundamental principles relating to keeping children safe in education before learning more complex topics, such as how pupils learn. Level 3 business administrator apprentices learn about organisational structures before learning about stakeholders and the impact they can have on the business.

Training officers use assessments completed at the start of the apprenticeship to identify learners with special educational needs. They provide additional support, such as the use of coloured paper and screen overlays. As a result, apprentices make the expected progress and achieve their programmes as well as their peers.

Training officers do not use information gathered at the start of the apprenticeship about what apprentices know and can do to plan an ambitious programme for all apprentices. All apprentices follow the same curriculum regardless of their prior experience and knowledge. Training officers do not plan learning so that apprentices build on their existing knowledge, skills and behaviours so they can make the best possible progress they can. Apprentices who do not need to complete functional skills qualifications in English are not challenged to further develop their academic writing skills, to prepare them for their next steps into higher levels of learning or future job roles.

Feedback to apprentices is inconsistent. Most training officers provide positive feedback to apprentices on their written work. Apprentices know what they have done well. However, training officers do not always ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Not all apprentices receive feedback to support them to achieve high grades. As a result, the standard of work that apprentices produce is too variable.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that all training officers use effective teaching techniques to enable apprentices to embed concepts they have learned into their long-term memory. Training officers do not always use assessment effectively. They do not revisit previous learning frequently enough or check for gaps in knowledge. Too many apprentices leave their apprenticeship early without completing it.

Most training officers prepare apprentices well for final assessments. Apprentices benefit from completing mock tests, presentations and professional discussions. This ensures that apprentices understand what is required from them and helps them to increase their confidence. Of the early years apprentices who have completed their final assessment, many have achieved high grades.

Training officers do not coordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively. Although many employers are present at the progress review sessions, training officers do not

plan with employers the apprentices' learning in the workplace. As a result, apprentices are not challenged to practise and gain the knowledge and skills to make rapid progress.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that training officers receive ongoing development to help them improve their teaching skills. Quality improvement processes do not accurately identify weaknesses in the quality of education. The improvement plan is too vague on how actions will bring about improvement. Consequently, the quality of education is not yet good.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that they do not have effective systems in place to monitor accurately the progress apprentices make on their apprenticeship so they can swiftly intervene when apprentices fall behind. Plans are in place to rectify this, but these have yet to be implemented.

Leaders and managers do not have effective systems for monitoring the attendance of apprentices at their planned visits. Therefore, they are unable to identify how many sessions are attended or cancelled and are unable to provide the necessary support to improve attendance.

Board members who are responsible for governance understand most of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of training that apprentices receive. However, they have been too slow to support and challenge senior leaders to bring about necessary improvements in the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers provide staff with appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training so they know how to keep apprentices safe. Leaders carry out appropriate checks when recruiting new staff to ensure they are suitable to work with apprentices.

Apprentices complete training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty at the start of their apprenticeship. However, training officers do not frequently revisit these topics with apprentices to strengthen their understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have concerns.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the information they gather on apprentices' knowledge and skills at the start of their apprenticeship is used to plan an ambitious programme for all apprentices so they can make more rapid progress.

- Leaders and managers should implement rigorous and robust quality processes to ensure they can identify swiftly the weaknesses in the quality of education that apprentices receive. They should provide training officers with ongoing development to ensure that all apprentices receive high-quality training and assessment to help them improve the standard of the work that they produce.
- Leaders should implement systems so that leaders and managers have effective oversight of the progress and attendance of apprentices so they can swiftly intervene when apprentices fall behind or when they do not attend learning sessions.
- Leaders and managers should provide apprentices with a broad curriculum beyond their vocational training, to support apprentices' personal development and ensure they receive a high-quality careers programme that helps them make informed choices on their longer-term career goals.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that the off-the-job training that apprentices receive is coordinated with employers so that apprentices can practise what they have learned, to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours quickly.
- Board members should provide the scrutiny, support and challenge to senior leaders to bring about swift improvement in the quality of education and training that apprentices receive.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that training officers frequently revisit topics such as the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism so that all apprentices develop a deeper understanding of how these risks apply to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53611
Address	Maggie O'Neill Community Centre 433 Liverpool Road Huyton Liverpool L36 8HT
Contact number	0151 521 5888
Website	www.nwcstraining.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Paul Sheron
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 July 2016
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the centre manager, 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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