

Inspection of The North Lancs. Training Group Limited

Inspection dates:

12 to 15 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

North Lancs. Training Group Limited (NLTG) is a group training association with its headquarters in Accrington, Lancashire. NLTG has training centres in Accrington, Bury and Oldham and has a specialist furniture manufacturing centre in Accrington. NLTG offers education programmes for young people and apprenticeships. NLTG subcontracts joinery and carpentry apprenticeships to three general further education colleges across the North West of England. There are fewer than five apprentices who study with these three subcontractors.

At the time of the inspection, NLTG had 1,103 apprentices on levels 2 to 5, with most enrolments in the manufacturing, business and hospitality sectors. Most apprentices study at levels 2 and 3, with the largest enrolments on level 2 furniture manufacturer and level 3 business administrator. NLTG had 168 learners on education programmes for young people from entry level to level 2 studying functional skills English and mathematics, and employability qualifications.

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

Apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their training and are motivated to perform well in the workplace to achieve their apprenticeship. Apprentices benefit from learning in a calm and supportive environment. During classroom and workshop sessions, they demonstrate high levels of respect.

Learners benefit from working in small groups in a highly supportive environment. They enjoy their sessions and contribute effectively to group discussions. However, learners' attendance is too low. Leaders do not set ambitious enough targets for attendance. Consequently, learners do not routinely develop the behaviours required to move on to their next steps.

Apprentices and learners grow in confidence because of the training that they receive. They develop their confidence to speak to their peers in class when completing group activities. Learners who attend work placement undertake a broad range of tasks confidently, such as assembling and fitting furniture at customers' properties. Business administrator apprentices develop their confidence to speak to customers. When working in medical practices, they talk calmly and confidently to patients.

Most apprentices and learners do not access activities that extend beyond their apprenticeship or study programme. Although there are opportunities to attend activities such as outward-bound courses and charity events, most learners and apprentices do not take part.

Apprentices and learners feel safe. They complete online modules and discuss topics such as bullying and online safety. However, learners do not benefit from ongoing discussions on topics, such as how to stay physically and mentally fit, and how to develop healthy relationships.

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

Leaders do not design ambitious curriculums for most learners. Tutors do not use information about what learners already know and can do to plan an individualised learning programme. All learners follow the same curriculum and, in a few cases, repeat the same learning. As a result, learners do not develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to progress to employment or further education and training.

Leaders have developed apprenticeship curriculums to support employers with skills shortages in key employment sectors. Leaders have recently reviewed the apprenticeship offer and reduced the number of apprenticeships offered so that they are better able to meet local and regional skills priorities.

Leaders plan apprenticeship curriculums in a logical order from which most apprentices incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time.

Digital support technician apprentices learn how to communicate effectively and gain an understanding of the business before moving on to digital technologies. Following this training, they support colleagues confidently in multiple departments within the business.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Furniture manufacturing apprentices develop their understanding of the distinct characteristics of hard and softwood. They identify the impact of naturally occurring features such as knots on the manufacture of furniture. They apply this knowledge well when selecting timbers to make bespoke furnishings.

Tutors effectively plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job training for most apprentices. Production chef apprentices learn how to check if foods are safe to be consumed. They apply this knowledge in the workplace by ensuring that food is handled correctly and stored at the correct temperatures. However, tutors on business administrator and operations or departmental apprenticeships do not sufficiently plan or coordinate on- and off-the-job training. Tutors do not routinely consider or link activities in the workplace to apprentices' learning. They do not ensure that apprentices have the opportunity in the workplace to practise the skills they learn during their training.

Tutors use questioning and demonstration to develop learners' and apprentices' knowledge and skills. Supply chain warehouse apprentices demonstrate safe driving practices of forklift trucks when moving material in enclosed spaces. Tutors teach furniture manufacturing apprentices to use specialist furniture manufacturing machinery such as edge-banding machines. As a result, apprentices learn skills to produce handcrafted and bespoke furniture.

Most tutors provide useful feedback to learners and apprentices. Learners and apprentices know how to improve their written and practical skills. As a result of this feedback, learners and apprentices improve the quality and accuracy of their work. However, operations or departmental manager apprentices do not receive useful feedback. These apprentices do not know how to improve their work, and in most cases, do not produce work to the expected standard.

Most tutors use assessment well to identify gaps in apprentices' learning. However, tutors who teach on education programmes for young people and business administrator apprenticeships do not use assessment to identify misconceptions and gaps in knowledge. As a result, too many learners and apprentices make slow progress in their studies.

Most apprentices are prepared well for their final assessments. They complete mock tasks and professional discussions and receive timely feedback to help them improve their work. Most apprentices achieve their final assessments with over half of apprentices achieving the highest grades available to them.

Careers advice and guidance is not effective. Learners and apprentices do not receive ongoing careers education advice and guidance during their programme or

apprenticeship. Most apprentices and learners are not given sufficient information on their next steps, such as further education and training or wider employment opportunities.

Leaders have not accurately identified all the weaknesses identified by the inspection team. They have not been swift enough to improve the quality of training that learners and apprentices receive. As a result, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive. However, leaders have put actions in place to rectify a few of the weaknesses. These actions are starting to have a positive impact on apprentices achieving their apprenticeship and reducing the numbers of apprentices that leave their apprenticeship early.

Board members are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their roles. However, they do not receive sufficiently detailed reports on the quality of education that learners and apprentices receive. As a result, they do not provide suitable challenge and hold senior leaders to account. Board members do not have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement at NLTG.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve attendance of learners on education programmes for young people.
- Improve coordination of on- and off-the-job training for business administrator and operations or departmental apprentices.
- Use information on what learners and apprentices already know and can do at the start of their programme to plan an ambitious curriculum.
- Improve feedback given to operational or departmental manager apprentices to ensure that work produced is of the expected standard.
- Improve the careers information, advice and guidance that learners and apprentices receive so they are aware of the further study and career options available to them.
- Establish robust quality assurance processes so that leaders make swift progress to improve apprentices' and learners' learning experience.
- Provide accurate and useful reports to the board that include all information relevant to apprenticeships and education programmes for young people so that the board can provide effective scrutiny and challenge.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53588
Address	Bradshawgate House 1 Oak Street Accrington Lancashire BB5 1EQ
Contact number	01254 397119
Website	www.nltg.co.uk
Managing director	Gareth Lindsay
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	26 to 27 November 2019
Main subcontractors	Preston college Blackpool and the Fylde college Nelson and Colne college

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality 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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