

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health, public services and care

Business administration was not inspected as an area of learning because of the very small number of learners.

Description of the provider

1. Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (the Trust) is one of the largest teaching Trusts in the United Kingdom and operates from three hospitals; City Hospital in Birmingham, Sandwell General Hospital in West Bromwich and Rowley Regis Community Hospital.
2. Sandwell General and City are busy hospitals providing many specialist services and a broad range of emergency services, including Accident & Emergency at both sites. Rowley Regis Community Hospital was opened in 1994 and provides continuing care and rehabilitation.
3. The learning and development department is part of the workforce directorate of the Trust. It is comprised of an established team of managers, trainers, assessors and administrative support staff. The department is managed by the head of learning and development who is supported by 31 staff. The staff are attached to three key functions, namely: clinical and quality learning and development, business planning and apprenticeships learning and development, and organisational and leadership learning and development. All staff are part of a multi-disciplinary team.
4. The learning and development department delivers work-based learning in the following sectors; health, public services and care and business administration and law. The adult apprenticeship programme has only recently started. There are currently 31 apprentices on health public services and care programmes, 11 learners on the 25+ apprenticeship programme and four learners on the business administration programme. Skills for Life is offered across the Trust. The apprenticeship programme is supported by funding from the Black Country Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Birmingham & Solihull LSC.
5. Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust has been awarded Learning & Skills Beacon Status and Investors in Working Life accreditation. The Trust is a key partner along with other local Primary Care Trusts and local authorities in the 'Towards 2010' programme which is planning a radical redevelopment of local health services including new models of care and facilities. In preparation for the new developments and change of focus there has been a rationalisation of resources to meet funding deficits and significant internal restructuring. The size of the learning and development team has halved over the last 18 months.
6. In 2006, unemployment in the West Midlands was 5.6% against a national average of 5.5%. Sixty per cent of the population are qualified at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 or above against a national average of 64%. Eighteen per cent of the population have no qualifications against a national average of 14%. According to the 2001 census for the West Midlands, 13% of the population are from minority ethnic groups compared with a national average of 9%.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Sector subject area

Health, public services and care	Outstanding: Grade 1
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. Achievements and standards, the quality of the provision and leadership and management, including the contributory area equality of opportunity are outstanding. Provision in health, public services and care is outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

8. The Trust demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, learners' success rates have improved and are well above the national average for this sector subject area. Advanced apprenticeship figures for 2004-05 and 2005-06 are at 100% and apprentices' figures for the same years are at 97% and 95% respectively. Additional programmes such as business administration, key skills, basic skills and Train To Gain also have very high success rates. Learners achieve their qualifications well within the planned timescale. The learning and development department has a strong culture of continuous improvement and uses data analysis and feedback extremely effectively to improve learners' experience. Staff development and training is closely aligned to improving the service and the capacity of staff to stay up to date with regional and national agendas.
9. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. The views of all staff, learners and stakeholders are collated well. The report is self-critical and provides an accurate assessment of the provision. The self-assessment report is well written and follows the format of the Common Inspection Framework. Inspectors agree with the grades in the report. The quality improvement plan includes strategic and operational objectives. All staff are aware of their role in quality improvement. The plan is monitored rigorously to assess progress. Observations of teaching and learning are graded and cover the key training processes. Good practice is shared in meetings. There were no identified weaknesses at the previous inspection but the Trust has addressed inspection comments and learners requests for improvements.

Key strengths

- Good strategic planning
- Highly effective management of change
- Very good staff development
- Strong culture of improvement
- Extremely well established equality and diversity
- Good partnership working
- Very good promotion of skills for life strategy
- Excellent achievement
- Outstanding development of work-related skills
- Very good training
- Very good monitoring of learner progress

- Excellent progression
- Outstanding support for learners
- Very good specialist resources

Key areas for improvement

- There are no identified areas for improvement

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

10. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Learners' success rates on the apprenticeship programme are excellent. High success rates at the previous inspection have been maintained and were consistently above 90% over the past three years. This is a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Current learners have achieved the customer service NVQ and certificate at Level 2 and key skills at the start of their programme. These learners are making very good progress on the healthcare programme.
11. Learners acquire an outstanding range of work-related and interpersonal skills. They develop personal care, clinical, key and basic care skills before entering clinical placements. Learners and placement managers value this broad preparation. Learners are able to interact with patients, discuss sensitive issues and manage conflict effectively. A wide range of placements offer learners very good experience in different wards and departments. Shorter placements, such as in paediatrics also help specialist career choices. Learners have a workplace mentor who actively encourages learners to identify and access learning opportunities. Learners make good use of reflective diaries to critically evaluate their performance in the workplace. Portfolios are of a good quality.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

12. The overall quality of provision is outstanding. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Training is very good. On- and off-the-job training and assessment is co-ordinated effectively to enable learners to put their learning into practice and to demonstrate competence. Assessors liaise effectively with placement managers to arrange placements which provide a wide range of learning and assessment opportunities. The training programme is well planned. Learners attend eight weeks of introductory intensive training in the centre. This includes key skills, mandatory training, conflict management and basic care skills. Off-the-job training is good. Trainers use a varied range of delivery methods to engage and motivate learners. Training sessions are used effectively to reinforce equality of opportunity, diversity issues and health and safety good practice.
13. Monitoring, including that of learner progress is very good. The results of initial assessment are used very effectively to identify and plan individual learners' needs. Good communication between customer service, care and key skills teams enables effective monitoring of learner progress. Learners benefit from comprehensive target-setting at the 10 weekly progress reviews. There is also a monthly evaluation of progress completed by the mentor or placement manager. Issues raised are dealt with promptly to ensure the safety and welfare of the learner.
14. Assessment practice for the care NVQ has improved since the previous inspection. Holistic assessment is well-established, and assessors work alongside learners in the clinical areas to provide on-the-job training and effective assessment of performance. However, assessment planning and review does not sufficiently take into account the timely completion of individual qualification units.

15. Progression for learners is excellent as identified in the self-assessment report. Learners advance from Level 2 to Level 3 in their chosen pathway. They either take up employment in the Trust or progress to university for nursing or allied health professions training. Since 1997, 52% of learners have taken up university places. One third of these have returned to take up employment in the Trust, some now in senior positions. Learners gain a range of extremely useful additional qualifications during their programme. Customer services NVQ and technical certificate at Level 2 is completed in the first six months while working in an administration role within the Trust. Additional key skills are used effectively to develop learners' problem-solving and communication skills linked to the work setting. All learners complete the IT key skill to support them in the use of the information systems used by the Trust.
16. Support and guidance for learners are outstanding. Assessors visit learners on placement every two weeks to carry out assessment and on-the-job training. Learners have very good access to assessors outside of these visits and are able to contact them for additional support. Learners receive good pastoral support in dealing with personal issues and difficulties. This support is valued by learners who feel confident to discuss sensitive issues with their assessor. Learners are allocated a placement mentor to support them in the workplace and provide additional coaching. Assessors provide detailed, timely information and guidance to allow appropriate and realistic careers choices throughout. Communication with the parents of learners who are under 18 years of age is good. Learners with literacy and numeracy support needs are effectively supported by skills for life trainers.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

17. Leadership and management are outstanding as identified in the self-assessment report. The learning and development team has very good strategic direction which is aligned with the Trust's workforce development strategy. Despite significant internal restructuring the team have a clear sense of forward direction and a clear focus on the expansion of adult skills and development of employer-led qualifications meaningful for the service and the Trust. The team manages extremely well its links with senior management and external funding bodies to ensure standards and quality of provision are maintained.
18. The team is highly effective in managing changes to job roles and responsibilities. Restructuring has resulted in stronger teamwork and more frequent and effective communication across the team. Meetings to support learners are frequent, focused and productive. The expertise of the two assistant directors has ensured effective planning and management of learning. The team has very effective liaison with broader trust departments to ensure a high standard of learner experience on placement. Changes to staff roles and responsibilities are managed sensitively and with respect.
19. Staff development is very good for full time and part time staff. Staff have access to a wide range of external and internal training which is well planned and managed. All staff

have completed an individual training needs analysis to support changes in individual roles and responsibilities. Training is provided relevant to individual experience, aspirations and programme requirements. Personal development reviews are thorough and linked to the new occupational standards of the knowledge and skills framework. Appraisals are regular and linked into strategic plans. The team has a planned rolling programme of training and development to reinforce all key training processes as part of a continuous improvement strategy.

20. Specialist resources to support the programmes are very good. Assessors are appropriately qualified with several years' clinical experience in senior positions. They maintain their professional competence through a wide range of activities and are up to date with current legislation. Assessors use a good range of resources to support clinical skills development and involve specialist health professionals to provide additional learning opportunities. The very latest equipment is available in the clinical areas and learners are trained to meet the exacting procedural requirements. Learners attend study days on release from placement with a laptop provided where required. Two of the hospitals have well-equipped e-learning training rooms.
21. Partnership working is good. The team has very good links with Wolverhampton University. An accelerated route on the Registered Nurse Diploma has been agreed on the basis of the quality of the Trust's learners' portfolio work and additional qualifications. The practice placement manager monitoring undergraduates' progress reports issues back to the team. This is to ensure apprentices are better prepared for university life. The team has very good links with local and special schools to provide the young apprenticeship programme. It also has a very wide range of networking links with other local primary care trusts, health authorities, colleges and training groups to share good practice and expertise and develop new programmes.
22. The team has a strong culture of improvement. There is very good use of working groups to plan and implement change. Formal and informal feedback is used consistently to improve programmes for learners. The self-assessment is self-critical and leads to a detailed quality improvement plan. The team set high and challenging improvement targets. Data is collected frequently and is systematically used by all staff. Data reports are used well in team meetings and multi-disciplinary teams effectively make adjustments to individual learning plans. Individual learner progress is monitored against a traffic light system and overall progress against national and regional benchmarks. Observations are thorough but supportive and used effectively to identify good practice. Internal verification effectively monitors the quality of assessment. Standardisation meetings are regular, productive and good practice is shared across programmes. Learners are also encouraged to contribute to the improvement process. For example, one learner redesigned a letter for patients which was adopted by the Trust.

The Trust has a high regard for student welfare, with rigorous health and safety risk assessments for learners in individual clinical practice. Learner feedback is taken seriously and staff training has been implemented as a result of learners' comments.

23. Equality and diversity are extremely well established in the apprenticeship programme. Learner and staff understanding of equality and diversity is good. Learning assignments reinforce equality definitions and provide challenging opportunities to explore diversity issues. Recruitment supports widening participation. With 48% of current apprentices

previously Not in Education Employment or Training learners progress from a very low qualification base. On programme, 25% are white disadvantaged males and 20% of learners are from minority ethnic groups. Equality of opportunity data, including performance of different groups, is monitored rigorously and targets are set. The Trust responds well to legislation and has appropriate schemes, action plans and focus groups in place. Learners have access to multi-faith prayer rooms and occupational health services on all sites. Promotion of Skills for Life is very good. It is well established and sensitively promoted across the Trust. Success rates for apprentices and across the trust are high for literacy and numeracy, English for speakers of other languages success rates are satisfactory. The Skills for Life strategy is comprehensive and well integrated across programmes with good targeting of disadvantaged groups.

What learners like:

- Gaining more qualifications
- The opportunity to learn communication skills and how to deal with people
- The variety of experiences and work placements – the chance to explore hospital work
- Learning while working and putting it into practice
- Having a chance to work in administration before going on the wards and departments
- The hands on experience
- The challenge – ‘the work is tough but enjoyable’
- The technical certificate because it gives you information and knowledge
- The good support for personal problems
- ‘Being paid and having a bus pass’

What learners think could improve:

- The provision of placements nearer home

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes** managed by the provider/college 2004 to 2007.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	8	100	47	100	21
		timely	8	88	28	88	12
	05-06	overall	20	100		100	
		timely	20	95		95	
	06-07	overall	27	96		96	
		timely	28	93		93	
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	31	97	46	97	29
		timely	31	97	21	97	13
	05-06	overall	44	95		95	
		timely	44	68		68	
	06-07	overall	15	93		93	
		timely	17	76		76	

Note 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006-07 had yet to be fully validated'

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'