

# Omega Training Services Limited

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Inspection date

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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](http://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](http://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 and social care
- Preparation for life and work

## Description of the provider

1. Omega Training Services Ltd (Omega), established in 1996 and provides work-based learning for the care sector, specialising in the care of the elderly in the West Midlands. The senior management team consists of two directors. One manages the contracts, finance, and resources, and the other director looks after marketing. Omega employs 13 staff including the two directors. Five training co-ordinators are responsible for training and assessment. Omega has a key skills/Skills for Life manager and a key skills co-ordinator, a technical certificate co-ordinator, and two administrators.
2. Omega contracts with Birmingham & Solihull LSC. The company offers apprenticeships, Train to Gain at Levels 2 and 3 and Skills for Life, and NVQs in health & social care. There are 21 learners on the advanced apprenticeship, 25 are on the apprenticeship, 179 learners are on Train to Gain at Level 2, three are on Train to Gain at Level 3 and 25 are on Skills for Life programmes. The company also offers assessor training on a commercial basis.
3. The company currently works with 45 employers and all learners have employed status. They work in nursing homes, residential homes and domiciliary agencies. Learners are supported either by work-based assessors, or by Omega peripatetic assessors.
4. Birmingham's population is 977,087. Birmingham ranks 15 out of 354 in the average scores for the highest levels of deprivation in England. Birmingham's unemployment rate is just over twice the national average. Some 30% of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE at A\*- C including English and mathematics in 2007 was 41.6% compared to a national average of 46.7%.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject areas

Health and social work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning  
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The effectiveness of provision is satisfactory for both work-based learning and Train to Gain. The provision is also satisfactory for preparation for life and work. Achievement and standards and the quality of the provision are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity.

### Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The capacity to improve is satisfactory and success rates have steadily improved since the previous inspection, although some still remain unsatisfactory. The inspection grade profile is similar to the 2004 inspection. Omega has maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and has remedied most weaknesses. The range of provision has increased by adding preparation for life and work programmes. The provider's quality improvement arrangements are incomplete.
7. Omega regularly carries out self-assessment but the process is insufficiently critical and evaluative. Some strengths highlighted in the self-assessment report were judged by inspectors to be normal practice and their impact on the learner is not always clear. The report did not identify some areas for improvement and the coverage of preparation for life and work was insufficient. The report's development plan is insufficiently specific on the timeliness and the accountabilities for implementing improvements.

## Key strengths

- Good strategic direction to strengthen the provision
- Particularly effective actions to improve the training programmes
- High success rates for learners on Train to Gain
- High success rates for apprenticeships in 2006/07
- Good skills development of learners
- Good employer partnership working to support learners
- Good learner progression

## Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of management information to identify overall learner performance
- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements
- Low success rates for advanced apprentices
- Low success rates for skills for life learners
- Insufficient promotion of independent learning on Train to Gain programme
- Insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunities with learners

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning  
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates are high for Train to Gain and apprentices. Success rates for learners on advanced apprenticeship and on preparation for life and work are low. Omega has slow, yet improving, success rates across all programme areas.
9. Learners are motivated, enjoy their training, and have a clear understanding of their training programmes. Train to Gain and apprentices have high levels of self-confidence and workplace skills. They apply these skills effectively in the workplace when looking after client's needs. For preparation for learning and life learners, the rate of progression from Levels 1 to Level 2 is good. These learners develop in self-confidence and prepare themselves well for further learning and training. Key skills are successfully integrated in the apprenticeship programmes with high success rates for both literacy and numeracy. Inspector's judgements agreed with strengths and areas for improvements in the self-assessment report.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning  
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory, well structured and effectively meet the needs of learners. Learners on all programmes benefit from effective individual coaching sessions in the work place. Off-the-job training for apprentices and preparation for life and work learners is effective. Staff provide learners with effective support on the preparation for life and work programmes preparing them for the skills for life tests and attend effective group or individual training sessions. Staff are able to relate clearly training to learners' job roles. Employers give very effective support to learners taking an active role in providing support and working with them. Assessors visit learners regularly, every one to two weeks depending on the need of learners and of their employers. The identification of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. Omega provides appropriate support to learners who need additional help with literacy, numeracy or language skills.



11. Omega's learning programmes meet the needs of learners and employers satisfactory. All learners are employed before signing up for their apprenticeship programme. Learners receive a good induction into Omega, which includes health and safety and equality of opportunity.
12. All learners receive effective induction and information, guidance and advice. Assessors visit learners weekly, providing clear guidance and setting appropriate targets for the next assessments. Assessors provide effective guidance to learners regarding further programmes and career progression. Most employers are actively involved in providing good support and guidance to learners. Inspectors agreed with this strength in the self-assessment report.

## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Omega has demonstrated a good strategic direction. In 2005, it successfully underwent changes at senior management level. A full organisational re-structure took place to address the need for increasing the provision to meet the needs of a sector short of skilled staff. Directors clarified and re-defined staff's roles and responsibilities. Omega identified further areas for growth in the local market and secured a new training contract on domiciliary care. Omega made a substantial investment in resources to support its strategic direction. The training centre has re-located to improved premises and staff have now access to better equipment.
14. Omega implemented particularly effective actions to improve the training for learners. At the previous inspection, the planning of training was weak, however managers now have effective arrangements to plan and improve training for learners including better theory tuition arrangements for the NVQ and the integration of key skills within the learners' main area of study. The number of learners who leave early has decreased significantly since the introduction of these changes.
15. Appraisal for staff is effective. Managers agree staff training based on individual needs including business and personal development requirements. All staff and managers are qualified and vocationally competent, and new staff receive a comprehensive induction.
16. The use of management information to identify overall learners' performance is insufficient. The provider gathers data through the assessors' feedback but there is no centralised data on learners' progress. Managers do not maintain a central record to provide an accurate assessment of learners' progress and are unable to

obtain overall information on learners' performance issues to inform quickly of their decisions.

17. Quality improvement arrangements are incomplete and Omega does not have a formally written quality policy and procedures manual. There is no member of staff with overall responsibility for quality assurance and improvement, however, Omega satisfactorily grades teaching and learning. Regular effective internal verification and standardisation meetings take place to highlight and share good practice.
18. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Omega has the relevant equality and diversity policy although the document does mention legislation. At induction, learners are adequately introduced to equality of opportunity. Promotional and marketing materials promote positive images of ethnic groups. Staff receive annual training in equal opportunities which includes coverage of legislation on equality and diversity within the care environment. The provider has an effective system to deal with learners' complaints and learners are aware of the grievance procedures. Reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the apprenticeship programmes is insufficient. Assessors miss some opportunities to extend the learners' knowledge on equality of opportunity. The learners have a basic knowledge of equality and diversity. Some of the strengths and areas for improvements for leadership and management are recorded in the self-assessment report.

## What learners like:

- 'My assessor put me at ease'
- Staff are friendly and very helpful
- 'My assessor visits regularly and explains what I need to do perfectly'
- 'My assessor is flexible and will visit at weekends'
- Not like school
- Good support from assessors and tutors
- How the programmes are structured
- 'I like being able to get help when I request it'
- 'The three courses have been great, it's like working with friends'

## What learners think could improve:

- 'Sometimes messages do not get passed on'

## Sector subject areas

### Health and social care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

#### Context

19. Omega provides work-based learning in health and social care including apprenticeships, advanced apprentices. There are 19 advanced apprentices, 22 apprentices and 172 Level 2 and eight Level 3 Train to Gain learners. All learners are employed. Training and assessment takes place in the workplace, however, apprentices and advanced apprentices attend the training centre for theory and key skills workshops. There are 28 work-based assessors working alongside the training co-ordinators to provide support for learners. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups reflects the local industry sector.

#### Strengths

- High success rates for learners on Train to Gain
- High success rates for apprentices in 2006/07
- Good skills development of learners
- Good employer partnership working to support learners

#### Areas for improvement

- Low success rates for advanced apprenticeships
- Insufficient promotion of independent learning
- Insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities with learners

#### Achievement and standards

20. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for Train to Gain learners were high in 2006/07. The framework success rate for apprentices was high in 2006/07 and between 2004/05 and 2006/07 the rate of increase was significant. This is substantial improvement on the previous inspection when the framework success rate for apprentices was only 33%. Success rates for key skills test on apprenticeship programmes are high. Framework success rates for advanced apprentices were low in 2006-07 and they have only increased slightly between 2004/05 and 2006/07. These strengths and areas for improvement are recorded in the self-assessment report.

21. Learners develop good skills, including a greater understanding of clients' needs and increased levels of confidence. They develop good team working skills. Learners are able to apply their newly acquired skills in the workplace effectively. Employers value the increased levels of learners' confidence. Some learners progress to senior care positions and demonstrate the ability to take on additional

responsibility such as care planning. Learners make effective progress, particularly on the apprentice programme.

### Quality of provision

22. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Learners benefit from effective individual coaching and support from the training co-ordinators during workplace visits. Apprentices attend effective off-the-job training and key skills workshops. However, staff rely heavily on questions and answers to support learning and this does not always provide sufficient variety and challenge for learners. Staff have the appropriate occupational competence to support the NVQ and all co-ordinators have or are working towards assessor and verifier awards. Learner's key skills assignments are well thought out and relate to work activities.
23. The partnership between Omega staff and employers is good and works well to support learners. Employers and assessors work collaboratively, providing assessment opportunities at various times to meet effectively the needs of the learner for example, evenings, nights, and weekends. Many employers offer guidance and support between the assessor visits, providing witness testimony of competence. Liaison between the employer, learner and training co-ordinators is effective and communications are good. Regular effective progress reviews take place with apprentices and advanced apprentices that include the employer. Omega staff keep clear records of the contacts they make with each learner, setting appropriate targets for learners at every visit. Theory workshops are available in the workplace when learners have difficulty attending the training centre. Where there is a work-based assessor, Omega staff provide effective guidance for the assessor. This was identified within the self-assessment report.
24. Assessment is satisfactory. Omega staff visit learners regularly and set appropriate assessment tasks. Observations are clear, well recorded and accurately referenced to the NVQ standards. Staff effectively reference prior learning to the NVQ.
25. The promotion of independent learning on the Train to Gain programme is insufficient; this was not identified in the self-assessment report. Although learners make good progress with the collection of NVQ, evidence staff do not encourage learners to develop independent learning skills. Access to resources is limited and tends to rely on what is available in the workplace. Opportunities are available to attend off-the-job training workshops at the training centre to obtain resources, although, very few attend. There is no remote access to training materials through information learning technology.
26. Omega's response to the needs of care learners and employers is good. An expanding range of programmes is provided, which effectively meet the needs of the growing care sector for skilled staff. Employer's needs are well met; Omega provides flexible and effective service, which meets the needs of local employers, visiting learners in the workplace at times to meet learners and business needs.

27. The support and guidance for learners is satisfactory. Before enrolment, there is appropriate guidance in the most suitable training programme for learners. For Train to Gain learners, staff effectively identify prior levels of experience and map it to the NVQ. Induction settles learners into their training effectively. The provider has good arrangements to identify and provide support for literacy, numeracy and language; this was identified in the self-assessment report

#### Leadership and management

28. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Training co-ordinators manage effectively learners' training appropriately and maintain clear records of contact with learners. Co-ordinators meet weekly with the senior managers to discuss individual learner's progress and agree appropriate actions when appropriate. The apprentices programme training co-ordinators' liaise effectively with the key skills manager and the off the job trainers to plan training. This was an area of weakness rectified since the previous inspection. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. However, co-ordinators do not use management information effectively to provide an overview of the progress of learners they look after. With the exception of the strengths and areas for improvement around data, the self-assessment report for this sector subject area makes few clear judgements. However, it does identify some of the issues raised during the inspection.

29. Reinforcement of equal opportunities with learners is insufficient. Omega staff introduce equality of opportunity at induction. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity as it relates to their clients, however, they have an unsatisfactory understanding of how this relates to them as individuals.

## Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

30. Omega currently has 13 learners in training for skills for life. Of these, seven are undertaking numeracy training and a further six literacy training. Most learners are employed in the local care sector and studying for their NVQ in care. Learners are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds but there are no male learners. Most off-the-job training sessions are in small groups or individual sessions. Learners undertake an initial assessment to determine the level of programme and then a diagnostic test to determine the areas of improvement before starting. Most learners meet with the skills for life trainers on a weekly basis.

### Strengths

- Good learner progression
- Very good support for learning

### Areas for improvement

- Low success rates in 2006/07
- Inadequately formalised system for monitoring learners' progress
- Insufficient learner evaluation of teaching or training

### Achievement and standards

31. The progression through the levels on skills for life is good. The standard of the work is good and learners apply their newly gained skills within the workplace well. Learners develop high levels of self-confidence and are motivated to achieve further.

32. The success rates are low for skills for life learners in 2006/07 at 31%. In 2006/07 Omega was not given a contract by the LSC until March 2007, by the time they had recruited learners it was already late in the year, all learners were set an end date of the 1 August 2007. Thirty learners were recruited but the target end date was unobtainable for most learners.

### Quality of provision

33. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Omega staff plan learning effectively and use well-presented worksheets and booklets for learning. Learning sessions are available on an individual or group basis at the employer or the provider's premise depending on the needs of the employers and the learners. Communications between employers and the provider are good, progress of the learners is regularly

discussed and employers are involved in discussions about how training can be completed. Learners who miss training sessions or get behind with their work are interviewed and their learning programme re-assessed. The provider does not formally record and monitor this information.

34. The provider meets the needs of learners well and offers an appropriate range of skills for life provision. It effectively meets the needs of learners to improve their skills for life and for employers to have an appropriately skilled workforce. Learners and employers value the skills for life programme and consider the skills gained to be particularly useful for working in the care industry.
35. Support and guidance for learners are good. Support for learning on an individual basis is particularly good. Omega staff use very well the results of initial diagnostic assessments to target the skills for life area that each individual learner needs to develop. Staff ensure learners are motivated, enjoy their studies and develop their self-confidence. At the end of each support session, the learner knows exactly what they have achieved and have clear targets to complete before the next session. Employers are fully involved in the skills for life training of their employees by helping with set work and by allowing learners time off from their normal duties to complete the work and to attend the training sessions. However, there is an inadequate formalised system for monitoring learners' progress. Trainers and managers monitor learners' progress informally.

#### Leadership and management

36. The leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers and staff work together effectively to improve the quality of the provision. They undertake the training at times and places to meet the needs of the learners and the employers. Resources are appropriate to meet the needs of learners and staff are competent and well qualified. The links with employers are very good. Evaluation of teaching and training by learners is insufficient to influence quality improvement. However, all learners interviewed reported that they are very pleased with the teaching and training they are receiving. The Omega self-assessment report does not sufficiently acknowledge skills for life. There is only one comment within the self-assessment report about skills for life. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are appropriate, however, the promotion of equality of opportunity is insufficient. The self-assessment report, for this sector subject area did not record strengths and areas for improvement.



## Learners' achievements

### Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider 2005 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	11	45%	48%	38%	34%
		timely	13	31%	31%	23%	22%
	05-06	overall	18	44%	53%	33%	44%
		timely	28	8%	34%	0%	28%
	06-07	overall	17	53%	N/a	41%	N/a
		timely	13	23%	N/a	23%	N/a
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	39	67%	51%	56%	39%
		timely	50	28%	29%	18%	22%
	05-06	overall	40	53%	58%	57%	52%
		timely	48	19%	38%	13%	34%
	06-07	overall	29	83%	N/a	83%	N/a
		timely	25	72%	N/a	72%	N/a

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

\*\* Provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

### Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006-07	overall	28	79%
		timely	****	****

Note: 2007-08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first 3 months or greater of the LSC contract year  
Timely success rates not available.

\* 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

\*\* Provider qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

\*\*\* Includes 'Train to Gain' long course NVQ provision, but not 'Skills for Life'

\*\*\*\* Timely success rates was unavailable at the time of inspection.