

NVQ Training & Consultancy Services

Inspection date

15 August 2008

Inspection number

330546

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	6
Key areas for improvement.....	6
Main findings	7
Achievement and standards	7
Quality of provision.....	7
Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	8
What learners like	11
What learners think could improve.....	11

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 NVQ Training & Consultancy Services Limited, 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

Description of the provider

1. NVQ Training & Consultancy Services Limited (NVQ Training) was founded in 1996 and became a limited company in 2000. It contracts with Greater Merseyside LSC to provide training for adults, predominately in health and social care. NVQ Training also offers training in information and communication technology (ICT), business, administration and law and skills for life. These were not inspected separately, but information about them contributed to overall judgements within the report. Provision the company makes under a European Social Funding objective 1 contract was inspected in February 2008 as part of the European Social Fund provision in the North West.
2. During the last 12 months, 3,443 learners have followed programmes with NVQ Training. Of 931 learners enrolled on Train to Gain provision, 777 followed programmes in health and social care, 16 in ICT, 40 in business, administration and law and 98 in skills for life.
3. NVQ Training's managing director is responsible for the company and is supported by a senior management team of three directors and an assistant director. Of the remaining 47 staff, 28 are assessors.
4. Liverpool is the second most deprived district in England. Employment rates are 70% compared with the national average of 74%. In Greater Merseyside, 40% of adults do not have a level 2 qualification. Minority ethnic groups make up 5% of the population compared with 9.1% nationally.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Health, public services and care	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision are good. NVQ Training's leadership and management and its arrangements to promote equality of opportunity are good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. NVQ Training has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve. Success rates for learners following Train to Gain programmes in health, public services and care are high. The company's focus on monitoring the progress of individual learners is well established and systematic. NVQ Training has a very effective management information system and uses this well in business and training planning. The company has very effective arrangements to support the progress of the learners who have been transferred by the LSC from other providers. It uses learner and employer feedback appropriately to improve its training. Quality arrangements are well established. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning concentrates too narrowly on assessment practices.
7. The self-assessment process is comprehensive taking good account of staff, learners', employers' and partners' views. Learners' and partners' views are mainly collected by assessors and through questionnaires. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The strengths it identifies match inspection findings, although it does not identify all the areas for improvements found during inspection. The report uses data well to evaluate the quality of the provision. In parts it is insufficiently evaluative or critical. Grades in the self-assessment report were all higher than those at inspection.

Key strengths

- High success rates
- Good coaching and mentoring
- Very effective response to training needs in diverse health care settings
- Strong strategic leadership and business planning
- Very effective engagement of under-represented groups

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient focus on learning within quality systems

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates on Train to Gain programmes are high at 92% for the first eleven months of 2007/08. Learners' timely success rates are good for the same duration at 88%. Most learners are progressing well towards completing their qualifications within the allocated time. No significant differences exist between the success rates of learners from different ethnic backgrounds, or between male and female learners.
9. Learners' generally develop satisfactory levels of vocational skills and enhance their employability skills appropriately. However, the standard of some learners' work and their depth of knowledge is not appropriate for their level of training. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths in success rates, but over-estimated the overall quality of this aspect of the provision.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

10. The quality of provision is good. The self-assessment report over-estimated strengths in this area. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessors effectively ensure learners gain a sound understanding of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) requirements and what they need to do to progress and achieve. They use a good range of examples from the learners' workplace to reinforce and promote aspects of their learning. Planned assessments are arranged flexibly around shift work to meet the needs of learners, their client group and the employers. For most learners the initial assessment process effectively identifies barriers which they face or the support which they require. However, the full range of learners' skills and experience is not recorded in sufficient detail. Individual learning plans are detailed, but concentrate too narrowly on assessment. They do not sufficiently record the planning of training and learning.
11. The range and use of learning resources is satisfactory. Most learners find the workbooks NVQ Training supplies very helpful as they progress through different elements of NVQs. The workbooks are very professionally produced, but their predominantly text based approach is not appropriate for some learners with little previous successful experience of education. The contents of the workbooks insufficiently challenge and inspire learners to research additional information. Although learners are encouraged to use the internet for research some do not have ready access to computers.
12. Assessment practice is satisfactory. The company uses standardisation meetings appropriately to update assessment processes and its assessors' practices. These meetings are effective in identifying and sharing good practice such as the use of tape-recorders for learners who are anxious about providing written evidence. Where learners have followed mandatory training or gained qualifications previously, these are identified and accredited towards the NVQ, but too often learners' knowledge and skills are not adequately tested and authenticated. An over reliance is placed on the use of workbooks to generate evidence of background knowledge.

13. The extent to which the provision meets the needs and interests of learners and employers is good. NVQ Training is very effective and responsive to the training needs and requests of a diverse range of health and social care providers. The Train to Gain programme effectively meets the statutory requirements in the healthcare sector. Staff successfully gain the confidence of an extensive network of employers, often when other providers have not adequately responded to requests. Assessors have a good range of occupational experience and competence, and work effectively in a diverse range of clinical, cultural and religious orientated care settings, for example with carers working with specific minority ethnic groups and with faith community carers. Assessors are highly credible with employers and learners. The company uses translation services well to respond to the needs of employers who provide care support to different communities. NVQ Training also offers a wider range of training to support employers and provide further opportunities for their staff development.
14. Guidance and support for learners is good. Learners receive very effective individual subject coaching and mentoring support to help them overcome social, personal or learning barriers. Assessors are patient and sensitive to the needs of individual learners. Learners' motivation, confidence and aims significantly increase as they progress through their programme. Timely advice and support are readily available. Assessors meet learners at least every three weeks. They encourage learners to contact them through telephone, text and email about any subject specific difficulties they experience and for more general support needs. One assessor remained in email contact over a considerable period with a learner who had to defer for personal reasons, until she returned. Assessors provide useful information about opportunities for future development for learners who wish to progress to level 3 or higher. Learners receive a satisfactory induction to their programmes.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Leadership and management are good. Strategic leadership and business planning are strong. The business planning process has a strong focus on learners and partnership working with NVQ Training's main stakeholders including the LSC. The company sets operational performance targets well and routinely monitors their achievement. NVQ Training's response to local circumstances is very good. For example the company has responded very effectively to the LSC's requests for support for learners whose training has been interrupted due to their providers experiencing quality or financial problems. The management and use of information about learners is very good. Data on learners is accurate, timely, and readily available to staff. It provides a very effective tool for monitoring learners' progress and in business planning and development. NVQ Training's financial planning process prioritises learners and developments well, which enhance their progress. For example the company is implementing a computer based reporting system to allow learners to monitor their own progress. Arrangements for staff development are comprehensive and include coaching and mentoring for staff and managers at all levels. Every member of staff has an annual appraisal which leads to an individual action plan and the production of the company training plan. NVQ Training over-estimated the quality of leadership and management in its self-assessment report.
16. NVQ Training has a good range of quality improvement measures. Learner and employer views are sought and acted on very effectively. Staff, including senior managers, have

developed partnerships with other providers to share good practice. A company newsletter promotes good practice, offering specific suggestions of how assessors can improve the quality of their training. Staff share and discuss quality improvement topics routinely in meetings such as the staff forum. The arrangements for monitoring the quality of learners' progress reviews are good. Managers and assessors monitor and discuss monthly records of individual learners' progress reviews. They take very effective action to support learners whose reviews suggest slow progress. Internal verification processes are satisfactory. Responses to the comments of external verifiers are appropriate.

17. Equality of opportunity is good, although this was over-estimated in the self-assessment report. NVQ Training has very effective arrangements to engage learners from groups traditionally under-represented in learning. Marketing materials successfully promote the participation of males, those from minority ethnic groups and older learners in care work. Learners' success is celebrated and used effectively to motivate others facing barriers to learning. The company's strategy to provide training in a diverse range of health care setting has been very successful. The proportion of NVQ Training's learners from minority ethnic groups is above the North West averages. Of these 8.6% are from black ethnic backgrounds compared with the 0.8% in the general population of the region. The company has consistently increased the percentage of male learners it recruits to around 21% of the total in 2007/08, a high percentage for the care sector. NVQ Training systematically monitors the achievement of all groups of its learners. Its analysis shows those from traditionally under-represented groups achieve as well as all others. NVQ Training uses translation services very effectively to enable the participation of learners who might not otherwise benefit from Train to Gain provision. For example the company uses translators for the training of learners with Polish as their first language, and has translated NVQ training materials for Chinese learners.
18. NVQ Training has an appropriate range of policies and practices promoting equality of opportunity. It promotes policies suitably during induction and continues this at learners' progress review meetings. In some instances learners' understanding is not adequately tested and discussions are superficial. While most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity, some have an insufficient understanding of equality of opportunity practices within the context of their job role. Staff have received appropriate equality and diversity training.
19. NVQ Training has an adequate strategy to cater for learners with skills for life support needs. The company offers all learners diagnostic assessment of their literacy, numeracy and language skills. While support is adequate, for some learners it is insufficiently formalised. In its self-assessment report NVQ Training identifies that skills for life support is insufficiently integrated within the provision. A recently appointed team of staff is making appropriate improvements in this area.
20. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. NVQ Training has an adequate policy and practices for safeguarding its vulnerable learners. The managing director is the designated officer. All staff who may come into contact with children have been vetted and receive appropriate training.
21. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. It involves all the main partners, learners and assessors. Assessors contribute well to the self-assessment process through detailed discussions about all aspects of the learning process and how they can be improved. For example senior managers encourage and promote open discussions during well planned away-days which all staff attend. The self-assessment report uses an

appropriate range of evidence including learner performance data to support its judgements. The development plan, which is based on the self-assessment report, is detailed with clearly identified resources to implement the actions it proposes.

22. The company's quality systems insufficiently focus on learning. Observations of training sessions including learners' induction sessions are systematic, but concentrate too narrowly on assessment practice rather than teaching and learning. Grades given to sessions by observers are inconsistent and do not provide a reliable basis for improving the quality of teaching. Criteria defining the quality of some training activities are insufficiently clear.

What learners like:

- 'They are brilliant and I can't praise them enough'
- 'I saw younger staff achieving and they helped me to get my qualification'
- 'My assessor helped me to be more confident'
- 'There is always someone at the end of the phone'
- 'Its is great; I got my qualification and now I am cheerful'

What learners think could improve:

- 'The induction confused me'
- 'I like to talk with other learners in a group'

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain programmes** managed by the provider for the first 11 months of **2007/08**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	07/08	overall	227	91.9%
		timely	199	87.6%

* 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'

*** Includes 'Train to Gain' long course NVQ provision, but not 'skills for life'