

Steadfast Training

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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' monitoring 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

Description of the provider

1. Steadfast Training operates from premises in Spalding, Lincolnshire. Two directors jointly own and run the company supported by 11 office-based staff. Since starting in 2005, it has grown rapidly from a commercial training background specialising in the care sector. It now also provides LSC-funded training for NVQs under the Train to Gain scheme. It currently offers training in health and social care, leadership and management, business administration and information technology. All training is in the learners' workplaces. Sixteen full-time, part-time and freelance assessors and seven internal verifiers are involved in the LSC-funded provision.
2. The provider has held contracts with Eastern Region LSC since 2007 and has recently secured contracts with West Midlands, Greater London and Eastern LSC Regions for delivery of Train to Gain. LSC funded training accounts for 75% of the provider's current business.
3. Most provision at present is in the health and social care sector, particularly in the six counties of the Eastern region, but also in the Midlands region where the provider has identified a particular demand.
4. Currently, 168 learners are on Train to Gain programmes; 164 are working towards NVQs in health and social care at Level 2 or Level 3. This is the only area included in this inspection. The provider has a further four learners on other Train to Gain programmes and 145 learners on Train to Gain contracts subcontracted from Peterborough Regional College.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Inadequate: Grade 4
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Health and social care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are good. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The provision in health and social care is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

6. The provider's capacity to improve is inadequate. Quality improvement arrangements are incomplete and the self-assessment process is not yet established. The first self-assessment report, produced in draft before inspection, is insufficiently self-critical and overgenerous in the grades. Neither the quality improvement arrangements nor the self-assessment process have yet produced significant improvements in the provision. However, the provider has only held an LSC-funded contract for one year and has already drafted plans to refine self-assessment and to improve its quality improvement arrangements.

Key strengths

- High overall success rates
- Good development of workplace skills
- Particularly effective response to the needs of the local community
- Good staff development opportunities

Key areas for improvement

- Some poor assessment practice
- Incomplete quality improvement / assurance arrangements
- Insufficient accuracy and use of data

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement and standards are good overall. This is the first year of delivery of Train to Gain and, at the time of inspection, a complete year of data was not available. To date, at period 12, overall success rates are good at 85% for Level 2 and 93% for Level 3. However, timely success rates are significantly lower at 56% for Level 2 and 50% for Level 3. This is in part due to a misunderstanding of how to set learning end dates. Steadfast Training poorly monitors the progress of current learners. The insufficient detail in the assessors' monthly reports makes it difficult to identify those who are progressing slowly or who are at risk of failing to achieve the NVQ. Many learners are unaware of their progress towards completion or of target dates for achievement. Insufficient data means that trends for different groups of learners are difficult to identify.
8. Learners demonstrate good workplace skills. Learners are more confident and knowledgeable, are more aware of their responsibilities and demonstrate improved report writing. Learners generally produce a satisfactory range and standard of work in their portfolios, however, there is some work that does not meet the requirements of the NVQ. The assessor has not identified this.
9. The self-assessment report recognises the high success rates but not the issues around standards of work or slow progress.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. All teaching, training and learning takes place in the workplace. Some assessors provide particularly good learning opportunities during assessment visits. The best assessors stimulate discussions with the learners enabling them to fully explore specific topics. These assessors give good advice and guidance enabling learners to research independently and broaden their knowledge. The best assessors have a good understanding of the preferred learning styles of individual learners which they use particularly effectively to stimulate and maintain interest in learning, help learners to produce good quality work in their portfolios and make good progress towards completing their qualification. The identification of additional learning needs is satisfactory. Assessment methods are adjusted to ensure learners are not disadvantaged, however, arrangements to help learners improve their skills for their future careers are rarely considered.
11. Assessment practice by some assessors is poor and does not meet awarding body standards. The standard of work for some learners does not adequately demonstrate sufficient understanding of the subject but both the assessor and the internal verifier have judged it acceptable. For some learners, the assessor has used just one observation of their workplace practice as evidence to confirm the learner is working to the correct standard for every unit of the NVQ. Some learners have no visits from their assessor for considerable periods of time, and there are inadequate arrangements to provide continuity of assessment if an assessor is ill. Intervention to address slow progress is not actioned early enough. Not all learners are aware of their progress or when they are likely to complete. No routine observations of assessors take place to determine the

appropriateness of their judgements, particularly when relying heavily on professional discussion and oral questioning.

12. The range of provision is good. It is particularly responsive to the needs of the local community in upskilling a low achieving workforce. It enhances care provision in isolated and rural communities especially through the high numbers of domiciliary care workers. It is giving learners a chance to gain qualifications and improve their career prospects. For many, this will be their first qualification. Assessors visit learners at unsocial hours in residential and domiciliary care, where their shift patterns require this, to complete their NVQ programme. Provision meets the needs of employers in developing skills in the workplace and is also addressing national skill shortage priorities.
13. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Learners value the support, both personal and programme related, of assessors and employers. Assessors visit the workplace regularly and make themselves accessible in between visits to clarify understanding of what is required for the next visit. They boost the self-esteem of learners, many of whom are uncertain of their ability to cope with the demands of a national qualification. Employers arrange work activities to support the NVQ programme. Processes and associated documentation for information, advice and guidance are appropriate and meet matrix standards. The company has recently produced an innovative online facility. However, few learners have yet used it for referral to other providers.
14. The self-assessment report recognises the strengths in meeting the needs of learners and employers. It also identifies a strength of very good teaching and learning, but the provider has no evidence other than its high overall success rates. The report does not recognise the shortcomings in assessment practice as an area for improvement.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff development is good. Managers encourage staff to engage in continuous personal development through in-house and external training events and through personal study. The provider supports its assessors, who also provide training to learners, to gain teaching qualifications. The support is in the form of time off work, fees and mentoring. Three assessors have completed the new preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector award (PTLS) and are about to progress to the certificate in teaching in the lifelong learning sector. Another two

assessors are about to undertake PTLs. Staff training plans are comprehensive and extend over more than one year if required.

16. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. As a Train to Gain provider, Steadfast Training has no learners under 19. It also has no learners identified as vulnerable adults. However, the Criminal Records Bureau checks all assessors as they regularly visit learners in care settings where there are vulnerable adults.
17. The provider's strategy for the provision of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. Initial assessment includes screening for all learners for additional learning. Steadfast Training refers those with particular needs to another suitable provider for discrete provision before starting their NVQ training. Steadfast Training's staff do not have the qualifications or expertise to provide this support. They do employ strategies to practically assist the learners with literacy or language. The provider has plans to extend its provision to the established delivery of skills for life in 2008/09 and to employ appropriately qualified staff to do so.
18. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The provider's approach is set out clearly in its comprehensive overarching policy, which covers race, disability, gender, equality of employment, accessibility, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion/belief. The provider's quality assurance policy includes monitoring of equality of opportunity issues. Additional specific policies deal adequately with disability discrimination, diversity, bullying and harassment and race relations. All policies apply to both employees and learners. However, none of the policies make reference to any of the relevant legislation. Satisfactory promotion of equality and diversity takes place at the learner's induction and is included in discussions at assessor's visits and reviews. Learners are well aware of how to report areas for concern. The provider does keep a complaints log but does not differentiate between equality of opportunity and other complaints and, at the time of the inspection, there were none recorded. The provider's premises are in a converted private house with steep narrow stairs connecting the three floors, however, learners do not visit the building as all training and assessment takes place in their workplaces.
19. Quality improvements are incomplete. The provider has produced its first draft self-assessment report, however, there was insufficient staff or stakeholder involvement in the process and the report is insufficiently critical and the grades are overgenerous. The business plan and company development plan focus on the growth of the business and, although the latter does indicate reflection on how the provision may be improved, it is still a consultation document and lacks detail. For 2008/09 the provider has prepared a quality assurance/ self-assessment audit calendar and plans a thorough audit of all its policies, procedures and processes, however, there is no record of audits having occurred other than in October 2007. The provider has adapted its assessor observation record to be a tool to record observations of teaching and learning and has piloted its use but it has yet to formulate a policy on the frequency of observation, the identity of the observers or any process for moderation. The internal verification procedures are incomplete. There is some recent observation of assessors' practice but some assessors have not been observed since recruitment. Feedback to assessors is not recorded in sufficient detail to improve practice. Too much internal verification takes place at the end of the NVQ. Assessor meetings do not include sufficient standardisation of assessment practice and there is little sharing of good practice or assessor devised learning resources.

20. The provider makes insufficient use of data. Performance data is inaccurate. The company depends on LSC produced data to monitor its performance. However, the clerical processes associated with recording learners' starts and completions are well thought out and thorough but there is insufficient use of data to monitor progress while learners are on the programmes or to intervene when progress is slow. The data produced is adequate to demonstrate contract compliance but not for use in driving forward improvements in the learners' experience. Managers have commissioned a bespoke management information package using LSC funding to improve the accuracy and use of data, however, this was delivered during the inspection and is yet to be populated with live data.

What learners like:

- Very good training on mandatory units
- Sense of achievement
- 'Supportive assessor and employer'
- Boost in self-esteem from praise given
- 'I didn't feel on my own'
- Enjoying the programme
- Increased confidence
- 'Improvement in my work practice'
- Very good advice sorting out issues
- 'Doing the NVQ makes you think about what you are doing'
- 'Not as hard as I thought it would be'

What learners think could improve:

- 'I don't know how far I've got'
- 'Cannot read assessors' writing'
- 'Would like an external assessor'
- 'Visits to fit in better with my shifts'

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes** managed by the provider **2007 to 2008**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
NVQ Level 2	2007/08	overall	58	85
		timely	44	56
NVQ Level 3	2007/08	overall	13	93
		timely	9	50

Note: There were no learners before 2007/08.

* 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

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection