

Focus Training

Inspection date

6 August 2009

Inspection number

333479

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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:

- Sport, leisure and recreation

Description of the provider

1. Focus Training Limited was established in 2000 as a private training company, limited by guarantee, to deliver training in sport, leisure and recreation to the health and fitness industry. Its main administrative centre is in Bolton, Lancashire, and it offers its distance-learning training courses to health and fitness instructors and personal trainers throughout Britain. Focus Training's distance-learning programme is supplemented by intensive three- and four-day residential courses. Private provision accounts for 95% of its work. It receives government funding from Greater Manchester LSC to provide Train to Gain programmes for 26 learners, and is subcontracted by Wigan and Leigh College to deliver Train to Gain for a further 99 learners. It provides Train to Gain at levels 2 and 3 in exercise to music and in gym for instructors and personal trainers. The provider takes learners on at different points in the year. More than half of the learners are not due to complete until 2010. This is the first inspection of the provider's government-funded provision.
2. Focus Training's senior management team is responsible for quality assurance and curriculum development, equality of opportunity and health and safety. The operations director is responsible for all tutors and support staff who have direct training contact with learners.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Sport, leisure and recreation	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and all learners complete within their timeframe. Learners develop their job roles very successfully. The quality of provision is outstanding overall. Teaching and learning are good, and the provider uses its resources very effectively to support learning. The programme meets employers' and learners' needs and interests outstandingly well. The provider has developed particularly good learning resources to make learning relevant and useful. Learners receive very good guidance and excellent support for learning. Leadership and management are good. The Train to Gain programme is a key part of the company's plan to extend learning to people who might otherwise not be able to afford it. Focus Training's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. Its approach to *Every Child Matters* is implicit; it is not directly mentioned in its planning. Quality improvement arrangements are extremely effective and it responds rapidly and efficiently to indications of emerging problems. Its records of observations of teaching and learning are insufficiently judgemental, and grades do not match text.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. Focus Training has an outstanding capacity to improve. Its self-assessment process is inclusive and the report identifies strengths accurately. The provider had already rectified the areas for improvement it had identified through self-assessment by the time of the inspection. Inspection findings match the judgements and most of the grades in the self-assessment report, but the Train to Gain provision had further improved by the time of inspection, and this is reflected in a higher inspection grade. It has particularly effective quality improvement arrangements to support the provision. It has resolved the problems it had during its first contract year when only 27% of learners achieved within the timeframe, and all learners on programme this year have either completed or are on target to complete within their timeframe.

Key strengths

- High timely achievement rates
- Good teaching and learning
- Very effective strategies to meet learners' needs and interests
- Particularly well structured and extremely effective support for learning
- Very effective quality improvement arrangements
- Excellent employer engagement

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently well developed range of learners' coaching skills
- Insufficiently judgemental observations of teaching and learning

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

5. Achievement and standards are good. Focus Training has high timely success rates for Train to Gain. It has effectively identified and resolved the problems that prevented learners from completing their programmes within the agreed timescale in the first year of delivery. All learners who are due to complete this year are on target to complete their programme within the agreed timescale, and 89% of them have already completed. This is a significant improvement on the previous year, when only 27% of learners completed within the timeframe. The provider's subcontracted provision shows the same trend, with 100% of completions within the timeframe so far. This year, almost 14% of starters due to complete in 2010 left before finishing their programme, all for valid reasons, for example through changing their job role because of having to take up a caring role in the family. Different groups of learners achieve at the same rate, and no discernible trend is apparent among early leavers. All learners achieve both the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and a vocationally relevant qualification (VRQ) to increase their employability. The provider identifies this strength in its self-assessment report.
6. Learners' knowledge of anatomy and physiology is adequate at level 2 and good at level 3. Learners following the exercise to music programme demonstrate effective choreography and cueing skills. Gym learners show adequate communication skills and sufficient knowledge of an appropriate range of safe and effective exercises. Learners are usually able to give clear instructions and most demonstrate satisfactory posture and technique. However, learners have an insufficiently well developed range of coaching skills. Many learners have insufficient knowledge of methods that can be used to support individuals to improve and develop their performance.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

7. The quality of provision is outstanding overall, as identified in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Formative assessment of theory is very good. Learners receive regular, well-planned telephone calls from tutors which assess their knowledge, provide very effective learning opportunities and prepare them well for their theory exam. Learners receive very detailed, specific feedback following formative practical and theory assessments, and clear actions for improvement are identified. Learners also receive very detailed, constructive feedback about the quality of their lesson plans and are given good advice about how to make improvements. The telephone sessions are very responsive to learners' individual abilities and needs, and tutors are extremely skilled at explaining complex concepts to learners in very clear and developmental ways. All learners receive a basic skills assessment at the beginning of their course. No

learners have been identified as needing literacy or numeracy support, but tutors support learners well with any weak areas in literacy, numeracy and language throughout their learning, as well as giving them impartial information about external courses. Tutors discuss the differing abilities of their learners and how they might adapt teaching and learning activities for them, but formal plans do not demonstrate this sufficiently. The provider has not communicated its policy and procedure, on how learners should be taught to correct and support individuals, to its tutors with sufficient clarity.

8. The provider has designed its programme very well to meet the needs and interests of a diverse group of learners, incorporating great flexibility into the structure of delivery. It runs its intensive courses at times convenient to people working in the industry, and supplements these with regular and frequent very good quality telephone calls and with particularly detailed learning packs. The provider plans its telephone calls sensitively and flexibly around the individual work patterns of the learners. These calls are very well planned and structured, and they are very effective in testing knowledge, reinforcing motivation and solving any emerging problems. The provider has designed particularly good, clear materials to support learning. These include comprehensive written materials and a useful DVD to reinforce learning while learners perform their job roles. These resources clarify the learners' rights and responsibilities with regard to equality, diversity and safeguarding. The resources help learners to prepare effectively for the intensive workshop sessions.
9. Learners benefit from particularly well structured and extremely effective support throughout their programme. They negotiate the structure of the delivery of their programme with Focus Training's staff very effectively when they begin their course to ensure that it meets their learning needs. They have a comprehensive and effective initial assessment which accurately identifies their strengths and areas requiring support. Learners' personal qualities and their approach to work and learning are also assessed, and staff share this information sensitively and effectively so that each learner is fully supported at each stage of learning. Learners receive very good information, advice and guidance at all stages of their programme, and this is very effective in guiding their learning. The provider structures learning very effectively to include relevant individual support for each learner throughout the programme. Staff are particularly skilled in helping learners to increase in confidence and to understand their strengths.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Leadership and management are good. Focus Training has very effective quality improvement arrangements. All members of staff use its management information system effectively to share and gain good quality, detailed information to plan and monitor provision. The provider's quality systems are built

into its management information system, and they are particularly effective in identifying potential problems at an early stage. For example, the provider has identified and resolved the problems it had when it introduced the Train to Gain programme, and all learners in the current group are on target to achieve their qualifications within the time limit, compared with only 27% in the first year. Focus Training's self-assessment process is inclusive and comprehensive. Its self-assessment report is accurate and leads to good actions to improve the provision. It partially identifies the areas for improvement found at inspection. Grades match judgements in the report, although the Train to Gain provision had improved since the report was written, and the inspection grade was higher.

11. The provider works particularly well with employers. It has given employers very detailed and relevant information and resources to help them to support learners to practise their skills in the workplace. Employers have a particularly good understanding of Train to Gain. The provider has a clear contract with employers that sets out their rights and responsibilities. The provider guides employers in how to give sufficient study and practise time to learners so that they can complete their programmes. Employers structure learners' job roles carefully to ensure that they can benefit fully from their training and that they can progress in their job roles. Employers benefit greatly from having their employees trained, and their businesses have become more effective.
12. Focus training communicates very well with its own staff, its learners and their employers. It collects and monitors feedback, and responds immediately if learners or employers report dissatisfaction. Its staff are well qualified and experienced. It develops its staff very well.
13. Focus Training has insufficiently judgemental observations of teaching and learning. It has a long history of observing its provision, and is piloting new methodology as part of its continuous improvement. However, records of observations are descriptive rather than judgemental, and grades do not match text. The provider is aware of this and is continuing to improve this through staff training and further development of its recording mechanisms.
14. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, overall. The provider has worked hard to ensure that its new training materials reinforce learners' understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity. The training materials clearly refer to equality and diversity in every learning context and show a very good understanding of the practice of equality in the workplace. Learners have a specific module on equality which outlines their rights and responsibilities as well as giving them very good information on current legislation and its impact on their job roles. The provider's equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and clear, and it is supplemented by a useful brochure outlining all relevant legislation. Staff and learners use this brochure, and its content is continuously reinforced through assessment of learning. The provider's arrangements for safeguarding meet current government requirements. All staff have had safeguarding training and are aware of the procedures they should follow. Formal lesson planning does not give enough prominence to equality and diversity. The

provider places great importance on ensuring learners are safe and healthy, but there is little formal recognition of *Every Child Matters*.

What learners like:

- Knowing that help is available at any time
- The supportive tutors
- Support from peers during the workshops
- Being able to talk to a professional on the telephone to discuss learning
- The learning packs – 'they help to support practice in the workplace'
- New opportunities in work allowing greater interaction with clients
- The practical elements of the programme help with preparation for assessments

What learners think could improve:

- 'Some things could be explained more clearly'
- 'It's hard to locate things in the study materials. They should make it easier'

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2007 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	0	
		timely	0	
	2007/08	overall	41	77%
		timely	12	27%
	2008/09	overall	8	89%
		timely	8	100%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* 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 prior to inspection

Focus Training operates a rolling programme. Eight learners out of the nine who are due to complete in 2009 have done so in a timely fashion and the remaining learner has submitted a portfolio and is awaiting verification. This learner is on target to complete within the timeframe. Of the remaining 17 learners, five have left the programme and the others are due to complete in a timely fashion in 2010. Wigan and Leigh College data is not included because it is verified for Wigan and Leigh, not for Focus Training. The trend is, however, identical.