

# Voyage Group 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' 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, public services and care

## Description of the provider

1. Voyage is a national provider of residential supported living and other associated care services to adults with a wide range of learning disabilities. Created in 2002, it is part of the Voyage Healthcare Limited. Based in Lichfield, it has 5300 employees across England, Scotland and Wales.
2. Voyage was awarded a government funded training contract in August 2007, however, it was not until February 2008 that the first learners joined the programme. It holds its contract with the National Employer Service to provide National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) under the Train to Gain programme in the learning area of health and social care.
3. At the time of inspection there were a total of 67 learners working towards a qualification. Twenty-nine learners were undertaking an NVQ at level 2 and 38 learners were completing an NVQ at level 3. All learners are employed by Voyage and are based in one of their care homes. Government funded training represents approximately 10% of the provider's total training provision.
4. The NVQ programme is provided by a team of five peripatetic assessors and led by two internal verifiers who both report directly to the Vocational Qualification Manager. He reports directly to the Human Resources Director. The team is also assisted by a contracts manager and one administrator.

## Summary of grades awarded

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

## Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. The provision in health, public services and care is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory and the quality of provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory and so is equality of opportunity.

### Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Voyage has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make further improvements. This is the provider's first inspection and its self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes are satisfactory. Most the learners enjoy high success rates and the timely completion rates, although still low, have continued to improve in the recent months. The provider experienced a slow start in delivering the Train to Gain programme in August 2007, with the first learners not being recruited until February 2008. However, in the last six months, the provider has carried out a range of effective actions to improve the provision.

## Key strengths

- High success rates for learners completing the NVQ at level 2
- Good development of work-place skills
- Good assessment practice
- Good staff development strategy to meet the business needs
- Good actions to improve the training provision

## Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates for learners undertaking the NVQ at level 3
- Poor timely completion for some learners
- Poor implementation and initial management of the Train to Gain programme
- Underdeveloped Skills for Life strategy

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The overall success rates for learners completing an NVQ at level 2 are high in the current year at 83%. Since the programme began to be delivered 47 learners have achieved an NVQ at level 2.
8. Learners acquire good work-place skills during their learning programme. They become more confident and knowledgeable about the medical and social needs of their service users. Learners further develop their understanding of their job responsibilities and become increasingly adept at providing care for the service users who have varying levels of learning disabilities, many of whom have additional health and challenging behaviour conditions. They are well motivated to gain qualifications and further their career and development. Many learners go on to obtain additional qualifications, for example in understanding autism, awareness training to assist blind and deaf service users. Each learner has achieved an average of two additional qualifications or training modules. In some homes, managers encourage learners to share their knowledge with other care staff via peer support. The standards of learners' work is good.
9. Success rates for learners completing an NVQ at level 3 are low in the present year at 44%. A total of 18 learners have so far achieved an NVQ at level 3. The provider made a decision in October 2008 to stop the recruitment of further learners into this qualification until a full programme review had been carried out to bring about improvements to the quality of the learning programme. The provider has very recently re-instated the recruitment of learners onto the level 3.
10. The timely completion rates are low for some learners across the Train to Gain programmes. The timely completion rate for learners undertaking an NVQ at level 2 is 49% and 21% for those completing an NVQ at level 3. Despite being low, the timely completion rate has consistently improved in the last four months. Current learners are making satisfactory progress with their qualification.
11. There is no substantial difference in performance and achievement amongst the different ethnic and gender groups of learners.

## Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Assessment practice is good. Peripatetic assessors visit learners in the workplace for individual coaching at least every three weeks. In most assessments, planning is good, and review and feedback are clearly recorded. Learners exercise independent learning by using the internet and they use the training resources within the home to research information for the NVO standards. Assessors encourage learners to write reflective accounts and make good use of professional discussions to check the learners' understanding and share their own valuable experience. Most learners benefit from the support they receive from assessors in clarifying the language of the NVO units and in clearly identifying what is required in assignments and tasks. Learners enjoy the challenges of their learning programme and for many this is the first experience of achieving a qualification. A few learners have experienced changes in their assessor and in the past there have been delays in finding replacements.
13. Learners receive regular off-the-job training including specialist courses and programmes relating to the needs of their service users. Mandatory training is good. The programme is provided by using an electronic interactive programme on a laptop which they can access at any time either in the workplace or at home. However, learners' experience of using this system is variable depending on their preferred learning style. Assessors make good reference to the off-the-job learning during assessment.
14. Voyage satisfactorily meets the needs of learners and care home managers. Learners' career prospects improve through the completion of their NVO award. Peripatetic assessors maintain effective links with home managers who check learners progress and development in monthly supervision with their staff. The review process is satisfactory. Learners progress is reviewed frequently and written contributions are recorded from the learner, assessor and home manager. Resources are satisfactory. Assessors have recently been provided with laptops and dictaphones which some learners use to access the internet and record their evidence.
15. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. New systems implemented by peripatetic assessors have improved the programme induction for new learners. Information, advice and guidance are delivered as part of the induction, during reviews and on completion of the programme. Learners receive an adequate exit interview from their assessor. During this process, assessors advise learners on career or further training opportunities. Many new staff completing the company learning disability qualification programme are keen to start an NVO programme as a result of the positive experience current learners have. Assessors are sensitive to learners' personal circumstances and help them to be open about any difficulties they face. Assessors are flexible and learners feel well supported by their assessor.



16. The identification of additional learning needs is insufficiently thorough. This was correctly identified in the self-assessment report. The provider has recently developed an electronic diagnostic assessment programme for all staff but it is not yet routinely used with NVQ learners. Assessors provide additional coaching to learners if required and use dictaphones to record professional discussions to support learners with additional learning needs. Assessors have little expertise or training in this area, however, this is now being addressed through a development programme for assessors.

## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Voyage has a good staff development strategy to meet the business needs. The provider has developed a very clear training path that allows all staff and management to develop themselves and successfully further their careers within the organisation. The strategy has been designed to effectively meet the succession planning needs of the provider and to reduce staff turnover. Voyage delivers a wide range of training courses to meet the mandatory and statutory requirements within the industry. It has also developed training modules in a variety of specialisms to ensure the quick development of their staff as they encounter new challenges with service users who have very specific needs. Many staff have experienced promotion in the workplace after having undertaken training and have progressed to become home managers. Since the beginning of the programme, 66% of the learners who completed an NVQ at level 2 have progressed onto undertaking an NVQ at level 3.

18. The provider has implemented good actions to improve the training provision. In June 2008, in the first four months of delivery, the provider identified the poor performance of the training programmes. In October 2008, the operational management and assessment teams were replaced and a series of improvements were implemented to strengthen the quality of the provision. The new programme manager conducted a thorough review of the provision and each stage of the learning process has been developed and improved. The understanding of data and analysis has greatly improved since the appointment of a very experienced contracts manager a few months ago. A substantial investment has been made in resources such as laptops and digital technology to support the peripatetic assessors. The training centre has been transferred to the organisation's headquarters where closer contact and support has quickly been established between the new operations team and the Human Resources Director. The new assessment team are occupationally competent and very experienced and they have benefited from many development activities in the recent months. In the last six months the amount of assessor cancellations have improved and the average stay of programme by learner has also consistently increased.

19. Voyage has recently completed the implementation of its quality assurance systems. The provider has established clear quality policies in relation to the learning processes. Additional internal verifiers have been recruited to increase the verification activity and improve the support assessors receive. Standardisation meetings have very recently began to take place and there is a clear focus on identifying best practice amongst the team. The feedback mechanisms have now been formalised. Until recently, the collected learner feedback was not formally recorded and there was no system to gather learner views at different stages of the programme. The system for teaching and learning observations is still being developed. The provider has recently started to monitor the quality of assessment and is planning to extend the system of observations to other learning activities.
20. The implementation and initial management of the Train to Gain programme has been poor as identified in the self-assessment report. No learners joined the programme in the first six months of the contract. The provider did not set up the appropriate infra structure and processes to support the programme from the date the contract was awarded in August 2007.
21. The Skills for Life strategy is underdeveloped as correctly identified in the self-assessment report. Before last October, the process of initial assessment had not been carried out thoroughly. The provider has not had sufficient resources to deliver specialist support to learners with additional needs. Assessors have recently attended training on how to increase their awareness on literacy and numeracy needs. The provider is about to implement an online testing system for learners and is planning the further development of language support.
22. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learner representation in the learning programmes according to gender and minority ethnic group is comparable to the global company population profile. Voyage has very comprehensive equality of opportunity policies as required in the care industry sector. The organisation makes effective use of positive images to challenge ethnic stereotypes in their recruitment materials; however, this has not yet been applied to the specific promotion of their learning programmes. All staff and managers receive extensive equality and diversity training in line with the regulatory requirement in the health care sector. The provider has recently introduced the use of a bank of questions to further develop learners' awareness of equality of opportunity during the progress reviews. Learners' knowledge of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The provider meets the current government requirements in relation to safeguarding learners. All staff have been appropriately checked by the criminal records bureau.
23. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. This is the provider's first self-assessment report and staff have had a limited involvement in it. The new management team has been effective in conducting a prompt programme review that has led to most findings contained in the self-assessment report. The provider did not have access to accurate data when the report was compiled and there is not sufficient commentary on splitting the performance of the NVQ at levels 2 and 3. However, this is adequately covered in the quality improvement

plan. The report is very self-critical and appropriately accurate. Most strength and areas for improvement recognised in the report were also identified by inspectors.

## What learners like:

- The opportunity to reflect and improve their working practices
- 'The programme was challenging but I enjoyed it'
- Gaining knowledge and confidence, especially when taking the residents out
- The rapport they have with their assessors

## What learners think could improve:

- The amount of assessment time
- Some staff are still waiting to start their NVQ

