

Ufi Ltd (North West Region)

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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, public services and care
- engineering and manufacturing technologies
- retail and commercial enterprise.

Information and communication technology; education and training; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law, were not inspected. Skills for Life provision within preparation for life and work was observed to provide evidence for judgements on the consortium support strategy. Performance data for all sector subject areas has been used to inform judgements for achievement and standards.

Description of the provider

1. Ufi Ltd (Ufi) was established as a lead consortium provider for Train to Gain in the North West region three years ago. The provision has grown alongside Ufi's established learndirect provision. Train to Gain is an increasingly significant proportion of Ufi's work nationally and regionally. North West LSC funds the Ufi North West region.
2. Ufi's management structure in the North West supports the delivery of its learndirect provision and the Train to Gain consortium provision and includes a regional director, a regional performance director and eight regional performance managers, including one senior performance manager.
3. To provide the current Train to Gain regional provision Ufi contracts with a network of around 20 consortium partner members, of which 13 currently have learners on programmes. Business Focus and Associates are the largest provider in the consortium and deliver around 70% of the whole provision.
4. The following table shows the providers associated with the Ufi Ltd consortium.

Consortium members	Number of Train to Gain learners	Visited on inspection
Business Focus & Associates	560	*
Communiweb	45	*
Pinnacle	19	*
Learning Links	29	*
PHX Training	37	*
Real Time Training	5	*
Skills City	4	*
Connect Internet Solutions	25	*
Grove Training	17	*
Online Learning	17	*
Paramount Training	4	
International Learning Centre	31	
Burnley Telematics	5	

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	Inadequate: Grade 4
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Retail and commercial enterprise	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards, and guidance and support are satisfactory. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs and interests is good. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management, and equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Ufi has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Success rates are improving and are satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and the standard of learners' work is generally good. Programmes meet employers' and learners' needs particularly well. Support for learners is satisfactory. Very effective tutor coaching and flexible arrangements help them to achieve. However, Skills for Life provision is not promoted successfully to learners. Ufi has a satisfactory infrastructure for improving its Train to Gain provision and some recent actions have had a positive affect on the quality of provision. For example, managers have identified issues they consider to be responsible for some poor timely success rates and a high number of withdrawals, and have implemented actions to resolve them. These timely success rates are now improving. Ufi is carefully selecting new consortium members who have a track record of good quality provision to reduce the current over-reliance on one large provider in the consortium.
7. Ufi is developing a range of new measures to better manage and monitor the quality of the whole provision. However, at present Ufi as the consortium lead audits provision mainly for compliance rather than to assess the quality of the learners' experience. Ufi prepared a range of short self-assessment reports before the inspection. These demonstrated a good capacity to make clearly evidenced and focused judgements about the quality of the Train to Gain provision across a number of sector subject areas. However, Ufi's Train to Gain self-assessment process is incomplete and the current self-assessment report is too focused on its learndirect provision. Some of the consortium partners remain inexperienced in self-assessment.

Key strengths

- High success rates in some areas.
- Effective coaching to support learning.
- Flexible learning programmes that meet employers' and learners' needs.
- Very effective employer engagement.
- Good management and support for new partners.

Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates in some areas.
- Slow progress for many learners.
- Some inadequate aspects of quality improvement.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Ufi has three years of success data from 2006/07. Over this period Train to Gain success rates have improved from 57% to 77%. Within sector subject areas success rates vary significantly, ranging from 94% in retail and commercial enterprises to 56% in business administration.
9. Timely success rates improved from 41% in 2007/08 to 56% in 2008/09. Progress is slow for many learners. The range of timely success rates spans from 85% in retail and commercial enterprise to only 27% in care.
10. Skills for Life overall and timely success rates are both good at 90% and 86% respectively.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All programmes are developed on an individual basis. The consortium works hard to make learning and assessment interesting and inclusive. Tutors, assessors and employers are good at blending learners' existing experiences with new skills to improve understanding and confidence levels. Employers recognise the improved skill and productivity levels gained from participating in the Train to Gain programmes. However, few records exist of training for learners where this forms part of their funded programme and the planning of training is poor.
12. Learners benefit from very effective coaching and tutors are flexible and work hard to support learners while their skill and confidence levels improve to allow independent learning. Learners' individual support needs are identified through a process of initial assessment. Promotion of Skills for Life training is not effective and few learners are taking up support. The quality of learners' progress reviews varies significantly between different partner providers. Target-setting to support qualification progression is incomplete.
13. Programmes meet learners' needs and interests well. Employer engagement is very effective. Ufi ensures that in most cases a detailed employer training needs analysis takes place to establish the most appropriate range of qualifications to match employers' and staffs' development needs. Engagement with employers by Ufi and its partners is very responsive, particularly with regard to delivering accessible and new qualifications to meet business requirements. Learners' and employers' satisfaction levels are improving.

14. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Information, advice and guidance are generally satisfactory across all programmes. Learners have a good opportunity to participate in additional qualifications and many are successful and progress within work and on to higher levels.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. Leadership and management across the consortium are satisfactory. Ufi's performance management of all new partners is good. Detailed criteria are in use to select partners as they join the consortium. Ufi monitors partners against key indicators that focus on performance, quality and capability. Most partners manage the performance of their own delivery centres well with some involvement and oversight from Ufi's staff. Ufi's regional performance managers closely monitor and manage the performance of the partners. They carry out regular performance reviews and supplement this effectively through frequent communication and meetings. Trends are analysed and used to identify areas for improvement. Ufi challenges underperformance well, for example, through the setting of short-term targets and action plans. The management information system is particularly good in generating informative, timely, accessible and accurate reports to support performance management activities. Partners are supported well by Ufi and benefit from the relevant staff training provided by Ufi's regional performance managers.

16. Strategic direction and business planning processes are satisfactory. Ufi uses several sources of information well to plan its strategic direction including funding policies and practices, government priorities and developments in the sector subject areas. The national business plan identifies challenges and opportunities and links effectively to the regional plan. However, within the plan Ufi does not identify the Train to Gain programmes clearly as a separate feature of its provision. Quarterly staff performance and development meetings are thorough in reviewing individual performance against objectives, and are a useful way for staff to contribute to the future direction. Communication and teamwork within Ufi and with partners is productive and informative. Staff in the North West region clearly understand the direction of the organisation through regular team meetings and training. Staff training and development initiatives support staff effectively in their various roles. For example, training is included that focuses on observation systems and the use of management information.

17. Ufi's Skills for Life strategy and arrangements to identify support needs are satisfactory. Where learners do receive support this is externally sourced and success rates are high. However, the take-up of support across the sector subject areas is low.

18. Arrangements for health and safety and risk assessment activities are satisfactory. Resources are generally satisfactory. Learners in some sector subject areas and at some partners have access to good online learning resources, and most learners use some form of resource material to support learning and assessment. Staff are appropriately qualified, knowledgeable and experienced.
19. Processes for self-assessment are satisfactory. The process is inclusive and generally sufficiently critical. The self-assessment report for Train to Gain draws on Ufi's regional report which is focused on its learndirect provision. Few of the judgements proposed by Ufi for the three sector subject areas inspected match inspection judgements. However, judgements made in relation to leadership and management are significantly more accurate. Progress and performance against action plans is satisfactory and recent developments to establish self-assessment for Train to Gain at sector subject area level are developing well.
20. Some key aspects of quality improvement are inadequate. A range of initiatives has successfully improved aspects of the provision. For example, regional performance managers act as champions of specific quality themes including self-assessment. The national quality team complete internal reviews of partners to test their self-assessment reports. However, quality assurance arrangements are failing to identify a number of inappropriate practices. For example, some record keeping is incomplete, particularly in relation to individual learning plans and planning of training, and some internal verification and assessment is poor. Ufi's quality improvement arrangements are applied too inconsistently and this is reflected in the variation in overall and timely success rates between the partners, and the differences in how well partners collect and use feedback from learners and employers. Furthermore, partners use their own, often weak, systems for observations of the learners' experience. Sharing good practice between partners is limited and the use of information and data to support quality improvement at sector subject area level is poor.
21. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Ufi ensures partnership members have an appropriate range of equality, diversity and health and safety policies in place. However, partners' monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements is weak. The promotion of equality of opportunity to widen participation, extend the range of qualifications, and increase overall learner numbers is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity during learners' induction is satisfactory and assessors promote equality and diversity to learners during each progress review.
22. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Ufi and the consortium members understand their responsibilities and are aware of their obligations in identifying the needs of vulnerable adults. Ufi has identified safeguarding as a priority area that requires further development.
23. Ufi routinely collects data about the participation levels on its Train to Gain programmes by ethnic heritage and gender. However, this data is not analysed sufficiently to determine variations in performance across all different groups of learners, including learners in receipt of support.

What learners like:

- 'The classroom environment helped me concentrate on learning.'
- 'Train to Gain helped restore my confidence.'
- 'The programme helped me feel that I have a part to play at work.'
- 'It gave me a taste for learning and a sense of achievement.'
- 'I used to have a dead-end job but now I have a better life.'

What learners think could improve:

- Make the wording of the NVQ less difficult to understand.

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

24. Ufi currently works with three partners to provide Train to Gain programmes in health and social care for 241 learners. The main provider delivers the programme for approximately 90% of the learners. Of the 241 learners, 138 are working towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 in health and social care with 103 learners working towards an NVQ at level 3. Most learners are funded at a higher level to support additional skills training and assessment. All learners are employed within the local care sector including residential care, hospitals and domiciliary settings. Training and assessment is mainly provided in the workplace.

Strengths

- Good progression to higher levels and within work.
- Creative and flexible assessment practices.
- Very effective employer engagement.

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates.
- Slow progress for many learners.
- Insufficient focus on quality improvement.

Achievement and standards

25. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Overall success rates are improving, but remain poor at 61%. Significant variations in success and timely success rates exist across the partnership with many learners at the main provider making slow progress and most learners from two new consortium members making very good progress.

26. The standard of learners' work and quality of portfolios are satisfactory overall. The portfolios of learners registered with the two new partners are organised well with good evidence of the development of learning and skills. Progression is good to higher level qualifications and within employment to positions demanding greater skill and responsibility.

Quality of provision

27. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Induction is good and includes an analysis of learners' training needs. Assessors at the two new providers use creative and flexible assessment practices to find new ways to record evidence for

learners. For example, they visit workplaces throughout the day and night to ensure learners can be assessed during the course of their usual duties and shift patterns. They adopt positive, firm, and challenging approaches with learners that create a culture of high expectation and self-belief. Assessors also work closely with learners to support the development of workplace knowledge, skills and understanding alongside routine tasks. Equality and diversity is promoted well throughout the programme with good examples and illustrations taken from current practice.

28. Assessors use detailed and comprehensive assessment plans and clear target-setting effectively to support learners to complete their qualifications in a timely manner. They give helpful feedback that encourages learners to become reflective and evaluative practitioners. At level 3, theory development is good.
29. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners complete literacy, numeracy, and skills assessments to identify any specialist support needs and to ensure the requirements of the qualification can be met. However, the outcome of assessment and the strategy for meeting identified needs is not always clear or recorded on learners' individual learning plans. In many cases, assessors are responsible for providing literacy and numeracy support through established learning. Too few learners with identified literacy or numeracy support needs elect to take a qualification.
30. Learning resources are satisfactory. Most staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Assessors provide training mainly in the workplace and all learners are aware of the good opportunity they have, through learndirect, to access relevant online learning support materials. However, few learners have sufficient access to computers or the internet to take advantage of online learning, and there is little support for these arrangements to be improved. One new partner offers a very effective training programme providing recognition of skills that contribute directly towards completing the NVQ.
31. Learning and progress reviews are generally weak and some learners experience long gaps before training and assessment starts. Some learners have not received any assessment or support visits for 12 weeks and employers rarely participate in learners' reviews.
32. Programmes and activities meet learners' and employers' needs and interests satisfactorily. Assessors take care to ensure that learning programmes match job roles accurately and that all chosen optional units are achievable. Learners' participation and success rates on an appropriate range of additional and higher qualifications, such as first aid, health and safety and manual handling, are satisfactory.
33. The consortium partnership has been very effective in increasing employer engagement to support the development of care sector qualifications across the whole North West region. Through this work, they have extended the range of

employers participating in Train to Gain significantly to include all major care agencies and types of care facilities.

34. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners receive clear advice and guidance throughout their programme. All of the partners' staff are knowledgeable and use their extensive industrial experience to support learning. Employers' involvement in the training and assessment process is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

35. Leadership and management are inadequate, with an insufficient focus on quality improvement. The marketing and promotion of Train to Gain has been successful. However, good practice is not shared sufficiently between the partner providers. Partners own development plans are insufficiently clear and too few effective strategies are in place to reduce the variations in success rates across the care provision.
36. Ufi does not use data collected from the partner providers about the performance of care programmes well to support quality improvement and action planning. The arrangements for gathering employers' and learners' views to contribute to quality improvement are insufficiently clear. Observations of teaching and learning have started, but the reports and action plans arising from these observations are generally poor. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently thorough and judgements are rarely supported with clear evidence. Strengths are overstated and areas for improvement are not identified.
37. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory. Equality and diversity are promoted well throughout the programme. Trainers promote and develop learners' understanding of equality well in teaching, learning and assessment sessions. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of care principles and of their own and service users' rights. Policies and procedures are in place and most staff have received training. However, Ufi's use of data to assess the effectiveness of the policies and procedures or for analysing the performance of different groups of learners is weak.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

38. Ufi currently works with one partner to provide Train to Gain programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies for 195 learners working towards an NVQ at level 2 in road passenger driving for taxi drivers. All learners are funded at a higher level to support additional skills training and assessment. None is currently working towards a Skills for Life qualification. Most training and assessment is provided in the employers' offices with some training delivered at the partner's training centre.

Strengths

- Frequent and effective progress reviews.
- Flexible arrangements to meet learners' needs.
- Good support from employers.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planning and recording of training.
- Some poor assessment practices.

Achievement and standards

39. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Most learners are making good progress. The programme has been running for approximately one year and almost all learners are progressing well with many completing their qualification early. Very few learners have left the programme without completing. Learners demonstrate good levels of vocational knowledge and understanding. Many learners have improved their knowledge of the law relating to taxi drivers. Attendance at training and assessment sessions is good.

Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Monitoring of learners' progress is frequent, thorough and very effective in maintaining a constant focus on completing the qualification.

41. The partner provides very flexible arrangements to meet the learners' needs. To ensure learners have flexible and effective access to support and assessment the partner holds very frequent drop in sessions at one of the major employers and at its own training centre. In some cases, these take place three times each week. During these sessions, assessment and coaching takes place and learners' receive clear and supportive verbal feedback. Their progress is recorded, and additional assignments are set with demanding targets set for completion.

Learners have very flexible access arrangements for NVQ assessment and these arrangements blend well with their work commitments.

42. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners take a skill test to identify any literacy and numeracy support needs. The tests are marked, but are not used sufficiently in learners' individual learning plans. Learners who request additional support are offered a course of study to suit their needs. However, few learners take up this opportunity.
43. The planning and recording of training are insufficient. Training arrangements are informal, poorly planned and not recorded. Learners receive workbooks to support the development of their knowledge and understanding of the NVQ and they are regularly encouraged to refer to these. However, individual training needs are only identified when gaps in learner's knowledge are recognised during the course of the programme. Records of training are rare and individual learning plans are poor.
44. Some assessment practices are poor. Assessors use a narrow range of evidence, which is duplicated in some portfolios. There is too much reliance on generic observation reports that make it difficult to establish the learner's own work from that of the assessor. The partner provider is aware of these poor practices and has plans in place to rectify them.
45. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs and interests is satisfactory. All programmes accurately match learners' job roles and meet employers' needs well.
46. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners receive good advice and guidance throughout their programme. All of the partner's staff are very knowledgeable and willingly pass on their extensive industrial experience to support learning. Employers are involved well in the training and assessment process. They are well informed about learners' progress and often attend the review and drop in assessment sessions. They take a keen interest in their employees' progress and are keen to provide support.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The partner provider has productive and effective links with employers and works hard to ensure programmes meet their needs. One large taxi firm has a dedicated training facility at their premises and the partner's staff use these facilities well to support learning and assessment. Resources for coaching and assessment are generally good. Training and assessment staff are knowledgeable and supportive and they are keen to help the learner to progress through the qualification.
48. Some aspects of quality assurance arrangements are weak. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate although it overstated some strengths and did not fully identify some areas for improvement. The partner has policies and procedures for

internal verification which takes place regularly. However, although internal verifiers have identified the poor assessment practice it has not yet been eradicated.

49. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The partner provides satisfactory information during learners' inductions, but little further promotion during the programme.

Retail and commercial enterprise

Good: Grade 2

Context

50. Ufi currently work with three partner providers to provide Train to Gain programmes in retail, warehousing and distribution, driving, and cleaning and support services at level 2. Of the 126 current learners, around half are working in warehousing and 50 learners are funded at a higher level to support additional skills training and assessment. All learners are employed. Induction and most assessments take place in the workplace.

Strengths

- Very high success rates.
- Good achievement of additional qualifications.
- Effective coaching to support learning.
- Very effective programmes to meet employers' needs.

Areas for improvement

- Ineffective progress reviews and target-setting.
- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements.

Achievement and standards

51. Achievement and standards are good. Nearly all learners leaving in 2008/09 achieved their qualification. Timely success rates are high at 85%. Many learners are successful in completing additional, relevant qualifications such as courses in safety, fuel efficiency and lift-truck instructor qualifications.

52. During their training learners improve their confidence, motivation and time management skills. They develop valuable knowledge and understanding relating to health and safety legislation and new practical skills. Few learners leave the programme early without achieving their qualification.

Quality of provision

53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most learners have no qualifications and have not participated in any formal training for many years. Learners benefit greatly from very effective coaching to support learning. The coaching is very successful in settling learners into the programme quickly and encouraging independent learning. Assessors make good use of their extensive experience and knowledge and useful workbooks to develop learners' knowledge and understanding.

54. At the start of the programmes, all learners complete an assessment of their literacy and numeracy support needs. The outcome of this assessment is recorded on the learners' individual learning plans. Assessors ensure support is available where additional learning needs are identified.
55. Target-setting and action planning for most aspects of the programme are ineffective. Learners and assessors do not always understand how to use target-setting to support progress. Assessors do not always set target dates for key aspects of the learners' programme and too many action plans, individual learning plans and targets on progress reviews contain insufficient detail.
56. Arrangements for meeting learners' and employers' needs are good. Working relationships with learners and employers are particularly effective. Communication between partner providers and employers are productive. Providers work closely with a range of employers to ensure they meet both their needs and the individual needs of their learners. Programmes are motivational and encourage very good participation by learners. Learners who achieve their lift-truck qualification but are not in employment often take a warehousing qualification while working as volunteers, and many progress into work. Employers benefit from the skills their staff develop through participating in the programme. For example, one employer noted a significant saving in fuel efficiency and a reduction in accidents.
57. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Information, advice and guidance are a routine feature of the programme. Partner providers ensure learners are aware of other progression opportunities or training programmes.

Leadership and management

58. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but the arrangements for quality improvement are incomplete. Assessors at the two smaller providers communicate regularly with each other to discuss specific issues and share practices. However, the quality monitoring of the provision is weak at the main consortium provider. Ufi has recently introduced a number of strategies to improve quality improvement arrangements but changes are new and are not yet having any significant affect on the provision.
59. Current quality assurance arrangements do not ensure that all key aspects of the learners' experiences are adequately monitored. Quality monitoring is generally carried out for compliance purposes rather than for continuous improvement. The self-assessment process is satisfactory.
60. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners have an appropriate awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues. Equality and diversity is discussed at induction but rarely discussed or promoted during the programme.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	53	57%
		timely	7	4%
	2007/08	overall	278	57%
		timely	100	41%
	2008/09	overall	2895	77%
		timely	1473	56%

* 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