

# Mobile Care Qualifications

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Elaine Clinton HMI

Last day of inspection: 29 January 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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## Information about the provider

1. Mobile Care Qualifications (MCQ) is a private training company that was established in 1994. The head office and main training centre are based in Newcastle upon Tyne with satellite centres in Middlesbrough and York. MCQ contracts with Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside to offer apprenticeships, Train to Gain and response to redundancy programmes. Tyne and Wear is the lead LSC. MCQ also holds a sub-contract with the Tyne and Wear Care Alliance. Most learners are in the North East.
2. In the last two years the company has gone through major changes and the number of learners has increased significantly. MCQ now has 57 staff, 47 of whom work full-time and 10 part-time. The company is led and managed by a senior management team that comprises two directors and three curriculum coordinators. The two directors oversee the overall management and quality assurance of the programmes. Curriculum coordinators have responsibility for specific curriculum strands and management of the York centre. They are supported by a team of internal verifiers, assessor/trainers and tutors.
3. Currently there are 477 apprentices; 243 are on health and social care programmes and 234 on children's care, learning and development programmes. A further 443 learners are completing Train to Gain programmes in health and social care. Some 21 learners are on the response to redundancy programme. Of the 477 apprentices, 67% are assessed as having literacy and numeracy levels below level 1. The inspection covered the apprenticeship and Train to Gain provision.
4. The proportion of school leavers in the North East gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including mathematics and English is lower than the national average. The unemployment rate for the regions varies, with rates in Yorkshire and Humberside lower than in the North East, but rates overall are higher than the national average, particularly in Newcastle and Middlesbrough.

The provider provides training on behalf of the following provider:

- Tyne and Wear Care Alliance

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	404
Apprentices	391
Employability skills provision:	69
Response to Redundancy	

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Health, public services and care	3

## Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of MCO's provision is satisfactory. Reasonable progress has been made to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Although there have been significant increases in learner numbers over the last three years, including the number of learners receiving additional support, the number of learners achieving their qualifications has improved. Many learners are still taking too long to complete their qualifications. MCO has recently implemented a good range of actions to improve the speed at which learners achieve their qualifications. Learners enjoy learning and gain good work-related skills.
6. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Assessors provide good support for learners. They are accessible, make regular visits and provide valuable help. However, assessment and tracking information is not used consistently to ensure that all learners achieve within their planned timescales and written feedback does not always sufficiently identify further areas for development.
7. The company has established strong partnerships to engage learners from underrepresented groups and deprived communities. Good use is made of the specialist knowledge of MCO to support training of staff across the North East.

8. Leaders and managers set a clear direction in the development and expansion of the programmes and enjoy the support of a knowledgeable and enthusiastic team. Evaluation of staff performance is not sufficiently linked to learner outcomes. Senior managers have worked hard to ensure that finances are sound. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily.
9. MCQ uses self-assessment satisfactorily to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Quality arrangements have been developed since the last inspection; however, they do not focus sufficiently on continuous improvement. Data are not used systematically to evaluate and improve all aspects of provision and some inconsistencies in quality assurance remain.

## Main findings

- Management action has brought about improvement in success rates over the past year, leading to satisfactory outcomes for most learners. Overall success rates in 2008/09 were satisfactory for Train to Gain learners and apprentices on early years programmes but low for health and social care apprentices.
- Timely success rates are low. The timely success rate for apprentices in 2008/09 was 20% below the national rate. MCQ recognises this issue and has put in place measures that are taking effect. Timely success rates so far for 2009/10 are satisfactory, as is the progress made by new learners.
- Many learners make better progress than is expected of them. They make significant improvements in their personal and social skills and their confidence levels increase. Learners develop good workplace skills which enable them to make good progress in their careers.
- Learners feel safe and have a good understanding of health and safety. They can apply policies and procedures to both themselves and those they are caring for. Good arrangements are in place to ensure the safety of learners who are working alone or travelling at night.
- Learners enjoy their training. Assessments are well planned and frequent, but not all learners are involved sufficiently in their planning. Written feedback from assessments does not always clearly explain how learners can improve. Target setting is not sufficiently focussed and too few learners take responsibility for the planning and monitoring of their progress.
- Partnership working is effective and enhances learners' experience. Partnerships are developed with schools and youth and careers services to relevant training. MCQ has good relationships with employers, other providers and services, and local authorities and shares good practice and training.
- Learners receive good individual and personal support which they value highly. Assessors and managers provide good personal support to learners. Where learners need extra support for key skills and other aspects of learning, they receive additional support from the specialist Skills for Life assessors. Learners

receive timely and appropriate information on further training available and career progression.

- Leadership and managers set a clear direction that is well communicated to staff. The recent reorganisation of the company was well planned and implemented in close collaboration with staff. However, targets for staff are not always sufficiently challenging or linked to learner outcomes. Action to improve timely success rates has been slow.
- Safeguarding of learners is extremely well managed and a high priority for the provider. Well written policies and procedures cover all aspects of this area and staff and learners adhere to them strongly. Arrangements to provide learners with a safe experience are thorough. Health and safety is very strong.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Recent initiatives to increase the numbers of males and participants from minority ethnic groups have begun to have an impact. The performance of different groups of learners is monitored but not sufficiently analysed. The difference in the achievements of males and females was not identified as an area for improvement by MCQ.
- Engagement with learners, employers and staff to promote improvements is good and has led to many improvements in the provision, including the refurbishment of the two main centres.
- Quality improvement is satisfactory. There is now a clear focus on improving success rates through improved target setting and the closer monitoring of learner progress. Self-assessment judgements are broadly accurate and the process inclusive. However, the grades awarded through self-assessment were higher than those awarded by inspection.
- The use of management information is insufficiently embedded. Success rate data are not used systematically to plan interventions and improve outcomes. The performance of different groups is monitored but the reasons for differences in performance are not clearly recognised or acted upon.

## What does Mobile Care Qualifications need to do to improve further?

- Ensure improvement in the timely success rates for all learners. Improve the rate of progress of all learners by setting and recording realistic target dates and monitoring learners' progress more closely.
- Use assessment and tracking information more consistently so that all learners can more effectively take responsibility for their performance and progress. Link assessments more closely to individual learning plans and targets so that all learners have a clear idea of their progress.
- Improve the quality and consistency of written feedback to challenge and develop the knowledge and skills of learners.
- Make more effective use of management information systems to monitor and analyse the performance of staff and programmes.

- Further develop the monitoring of progress and performance of different groups to ensure that variations are quickly identified, analysed and acted upon.
- Continue to develop and embed arrangements for quality improvement to ensure robust monitoring of all aspects of the provision.

#### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

##### What learners like:

- being treated as adults
- gaining new skills and knowledge that enable them to gain meaningful employment
- enjoyable and stimulating learning
- feeling respected
- the skills that they develop, in particular better reading skills
- gaining confidence in their own identity and feeling worthwhile in their own right
- the electronic portfolio system
- supportive and approachable staff who make you feel you can achieve
- feeling safe.

##### What learners would like to see improved:

- the use of electronic portfolios
- being clear about how much work is needed to complete the whole qualification.

#### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

##### What employers like:

- the good skills shown by learners
- the positive attitude of learners towards work
- having a skilled and well prepared workforce
- the willingness of MCQ to share good practice, including delivering training
- the collaborative approach of MCQ
- the effective support of assessors to enable learners to achieve.

##### What employers would like to see improved:

- a few employers wanted to be better informed about the progress their staff were making so that they could be more effective in supporting them.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 3

10. MCQ demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. The organisation has expanded significantly since the last inspection and trains considerably more learners, many of whom have additional support needs. Since the previous inspection MCQ has made reasonable progress in addressing the areas for improvement. Increasing numbers of learners are achieving the best outcomes of which they are capable. Overall success rates have improved for all learners but remain below the national average for those in health and social care. The number of learners completing their framework within expected timescale remains low.
11. The self-assessment process is inclusive and makes effective use of learner and employer feedback. The judgements in the self-assessment report are broadly accurate, although most grades proposed by self-assessment were higher than grades proposed by inspection. MCQ has identified its key priorities for improvement and made substantial changes to most of its operations, including improving staffing arrangements. There is a shared vision and set of priorities to drive the provision forward and leaders and managers set a clear lead in the development of the programmes. Arrangements for quality assurance have been strengthened but there is insufficient focus on continuous improvement. Data are not used effectively to monitor and improve performance of staff and learners. Assessment and tracking information is not used consistently to ensure that all learners achieve well.

### Outcomes for learners Grade 3

12. Learners enjoy their training programmes and overall their success rates are satisfactory; the majority make significantly better progress than is expected of them. Success rates for Train to Gain are satisfactory and exceeded the national rate by 5.5% in 2008/09. Success rates for apprentices on early years programmes are also satisfactory and inline with national rates, having improved by 19% to 70.9% in 2008/09. Despite significant improvements in 2008/09, success rates for health and social care apprentices remained 6% below national rates.
13. Success rates for learners completing within their expected timescales are low. Since 2006/07, the number of learners achieving their framework in their expected timescale has increased but rates remain significantly below the national averages. MCQ have identified this as a key area for improvement and current data for 2009/10 identifies that all learners have completed their qualifications within the expected time scales.
14. Learners enjoy learning and take pride in their work. They develop a good range of workplace and social skills and benefit from their training programmes.

They make good progress in the development of caring skills and understanding the needs of children and adult service users.

15. Learners feel safe at work and benefit from safe working practices. They have a good understanding of the health and safety procedures. Learners make informed choices about their health and well-being. Some demonstrate that they have adopted more healthy practices. However, others have not yet made such a decision and miss opportunities to consider how they, and the children and adults they work with, could benefit from a healthier lifestyle.
16. Learners contribute to the community through activities linked to their technical certificate and place of work. This is often effective in developing their team-working and organisational skills. However, too few learners are encouraged to extend this beyond the requirements of their award.

### The quality of provision

Grade 3

17. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning. Assessment methods are varied and the process is positive and valued by most learners. However, some assessment practice is guided too much by assessors, leaving little opportunity for learners to develop independent learning skills. Written feedback fails to identify strengths and areas of improvement. Assignment work often receives little comment and spelling errors are not always corrected.
18. Target setting is ineffective. An effective electronic system tracks learner progress but not all learners are using this system; these learners have insufficient access to their targets, reviews of progress and learning plans. The review of their progress against achievement dates lacks rigor and many targets are too vague.
19. Learners' and employers' needs are adequately met. Learners exercise choice in choosing units relevant to the requirements of their employment and career goals. In many cases employers are engaged in planning the learners' work schedule to provide challenging learning opportunities. MCQ is responsive to employers' requirements, providing further qualifications where appropriate. Arrangements for training and assessment are flexible to suit learners and employers.
20. MCQ's partnerships with industry, the community and other learning providers are good and beneficial to learners. They work closely with partners to identify specific learning needs in the area, engage new learners and develop their own learners. These productive links have been very effective in developing programmes and progression routes for learners, particularly those most at risk of not engaging in education, employment or training. Employers are fully involved in the learning process, acting as mentors and advising on progression routes.



21. Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners value highly the support they receive from assessors. They receive timely and appropriate information on further training available. Assessors develop good, supportive relationships with learners, which builds trust and confidence. They use coaching well and are good role models for the learners. Learners with additional support needs are quickly identified and appropriate action taken to support their learning and development.

## Leadership and management

Grade 3

22. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Senior managers have a clear vision and strategy that is shared well with staff. The rapid expansion of the provision in the last two years has been well managed and MCO has carefully restructured. Staff are motivated and enthusiastic. The monitoring of learners' progress is now a key focus of the organisation. However, action to improve timely success rates has been slow to implement. Individual target setting for staff lacks challenge and is not linked to learner outcomes.
23. Resources are developed and used well. Staff have appropriate occupational experience and skills. MCO has made good preparations to meet government requirements for assessors and trainers to gain appropriate teaching qualifications. All staff are registered with the Institute for Learning. Staff development is well planned and based on staff appraisal and a thorough analysis of training needs.
24. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and meet government requirements. Learners have a good understanding of safe working and the wider aspects of safeguarding. Links with local safeguarding boards are good. An appropriate staff development strategy includes external updating for senior safeguarding staff and six-monthly in-house training for other staff. All employers receive a safeguarding policy summary as part of their initial health and safety training. Good arrangements are in place to risk-assess and support the most vulnerable learners whilst on placement, to ensure they and those they are working with will be safe.
25. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Training is provided for all staff and appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Learners are clear about policies on harassment and bullying. A culture of respect for learners with disabilities and/or from different cultural groups exists and regular celebrations promote diversity. Generally, the promotion of equality and diversity is good, both within the curriculum and at learner progress reviews. However, not all learners have a clear understanding of equality and diversity legislation in the workplace and their understanding of diversity is not always explored and challenged in teaching and assessments. Equality and diversity impact measures are set and monitored and recent initiatives have had an impact on increasing the number of males and minority ethnic learners. The performance of different groups is monitored but variations are not sufficiently recognised or

analysed. Actions to improve the performance of diverse groups are not sufficiently challenging and monitoring of progress is insufficiently rigorous.

26. MCQ has very good and productive external partnerships. Engagement with employers is sustained through a flexible, responsive approach to programme delivery. Working with the local provider network, MCQ has successfully led a series of joint funding applications to secure finances for items of equipment that, as individual providers, could not be afforded. The organisation's specialist safeguarding knowledge has been used well to deliver joint training across the area. Learner and employer feedback is used well to improve the quality of provision. Arrangements to engage learners and employers in the wider aspects of the development and design of the curriculum are at an early stage.
27. MCQ takes appropriate action to improve the quality of provision. The observation process is effective and effectively linked to staff appraisal. Tutors are provided with constructive verbal and written reports. Self-assessment is inclusive and associated action plans are monitored regularly. However, many of the quality processes are focused on compliance rather than on continuous improvement. MCQ has identified this as an area for improvement and has recently revised all its procedures.
28. Arrangements to evaluate performance are not sufficiently embedded. Data are not sufficiently well used to develop appropriate actions. Management information is not used systematically to inform and influence management decisions. Realistic targets are set for learners' performance but these are not always analysed and reported on at a senior level. Success rate data is not used sufficiently to plan interventions and improve outcomes. MCQ recognises the use of data as an area for development and are currently introducing a comprehensive management system.
29. Value for money is satisfactory. Forecasting and financial budgeting is appropriate and prudent. Close monitoring of the budgetary position takes place at quarterly meetings, where occupancy, success rates and funding are analysed. No separate budget is set aside for staff development but company reserves take full account of staff development needs.

## Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's director as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Mobile Care Qualifications**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	940				940
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	3				3
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	3				3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*	3				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	3				
Quality of provision	3				3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	3				3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*					
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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