

In Touch Care Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50138

Name of lead inspector: Tim Gardner HMI

Last day of inspection: 27 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: St David's House
Drake Business Park
11 Drake Crescent
Waterthorpe
Sheffield S20 7HT

Telephone number: 0114 263 3889

Information about the provider

1. In Touch Care Ltd (ITC) is a privately owned training provider based in Sheffield. The executive director is the company's joint owner in partnership with her husband. The primary areas of training delivered by ITC are health and social care and childcare learning and development. It also offers programmes in oral health and hygiene. ITC offer its programmes nationally throughout England although the largest numbers of learners come from the Sheffield area. Ofsted last inspected ITC in 2007 where inspectors judged the provision good overall. Since August 2009, ITC has contracted for all its learning and skills funded provision with East Midlands Learning and Skills Council (LSC).
2. ITC has recently completed a major re-organisation and re-structuring process resulting in the appointment of five managers. Further development of the support and administration structures is continuing. ITC directly employs 43 staff; a small number of staff are funded through partner support. ITC is reducing its use of agency assessor staff.
3. Since the last inspection, the LSC has awarded ITC a direct contract for Train to Gain provision in health social care and childcare learning and development alongside apprenticeship programmes. LSC funded provision constitutes 64% of ITC's provision and Train to Gain programmes amount to 75% of this. Either the local education authority or schools directly fund learners aged 14 to 16 studying with ITC. This constitutes 10% of ITC's business. ITC funds the remaining 26% of the business in order to support employers and other key partners.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	91 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	438 learners 283 apprentices
Informal Adult Learning: Assessor, Mentor, Preparation for and delivery of Training	121 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	1
Subject Areas	
Health, Public Services and Care	2

Overall effectiveness

4. ITC is a good training provider with some outstanding features. Outcomes for learners and the quality of the training are good. Since the last inspection in 2007, ITC has taken effective actions to recover from the low success rates achieved in 2007/08 and these are now good again. The company has shown that it has a good capacity to improve.
5. Overall, the success rates for all learners are good. Success rates for apprentices, advanced apprentices and learners on Train to Gain programmes are good. Success rates for learners aged 14 to 16 are outstanding. All learners make good progress in key skills that are part of the apprenticeship requirements. Skills acquired prepare learners well for employment in the care industry.

6. The quality of teaching and learning at ITC is good. Tutors use a range of strategies to enhance learning. They use high quality learning resources and technology effectively. Assessment is good but individual progress reviews lack sufficient detail.
7. The range of programmes offered and the use of partnerships to develop and improve the provision are outstanding. ITC uses a large number of employers to provide an extensive range of placement opportunities for apprentices. Train to Gain programmes provide opportunities for employed learners to access health and social care, childcare learning and development as well as Skills for Life qualifications. Apprentices access a wide range of additional qualifications which help to make them more employable.
8. The leadership and management provided by the executive director and senior managers are outstanding. The executive director sets a clear strategic vision and company mission that focus wholly on meeting the needs of its users. ITC prioritises high standards for both its staff and its learners.
9. Arrangements for gathering the views of learners and employers are good. Although, employers indicate they would like ITC to provide them with more detail regarding the actions taken following consultation.

Main findings

- Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are good. Overall success rates on young apprenticeships and programmes for learners aged 14 to 16 are outstanding and on Train to Gain programmes are good. However, timely success rates for health and social care and childcare learning and development remain low. ITC does not currently have a system for detailed monitoring of learner progress.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors embed equality and diversity into class sessions and manage detailed discussion well. They use a range of very effective teaching and learning strategies. Provision for 14 to 16 year old learners is excellent. Tutors use high quality learning resources and workbooks. Classroom management is good. Assessment practice is good. Verbal and written feedback from assessment is thorough.
- The range of provision is outstanding. ITC provides Train to Gain, apprenticeships, young apprenticeships and 14 to 16 programmes in health and social care, childcare and oral health as well as a good range of other provision to meet employer needs. ITC is outstanding at using partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs.
- Support for learners is good. Assessors have close contact with their learners and are able to resolve any issues swiftly. ITC provides evening and weekend sessions for those learners unable to attend during the day. Staff are accessible through email, telephone and individual visits. All learners have an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills.

- Progress reviews are ineffective. Records of these are insufficiently detailed and ITC staff do not routinely monitor previously identified actions. Reviewers make little reference to the content of the informal 'ongoing progress reviews' in the 12 weekly reviews. Targets are too general and lack specific focus on progress through the qualification.
- The strategic and operational management to raise expectations and promote ambition is outstanding. The strategic vision clearly reflects the needs and interests of users. The recent organisational restructure has promoted a motivating culture where ITC prioritises high standards and staff are valued and supported.
- The arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults are excellent. A clear strategy complements the highly appropriate policies, procedures and practices. All staff are very well trained and knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities to keep learners and colleagues safe in different working environments.
- ITC's arrangements to promote equality and diversity are outstanding. An equality champion and four equality co-ordinators work effectively to promote inclusive practices. Managers and staff embed equality and diversity into all aspects of the company's business. Learners and staff have a very good understanding of issues and take every opportunity to celebrate diversity.
- ITC makes excellent use of technology and resources to deliver effective and efficient training programmes. The resources at the training centre are outstanding and used effectively to support learning and secure value for money. Staff utilisation is optimal. Good use is made of a virtual learning environment to enhance access to resources remotely.
- ITC gather views from all key stakeholders but does not have a system to provide effective feedback on actions taken, especially to employer comments and suggestions.
- ITC does not have detailed policies, procedures and user guidelines for key quality systems such as the observation of teaching and learning. ITC's self-assessment report is too long and descriptive with unnecessary content more suited to strategic and business plans. However, it does contain broadly accurate judgements.

What does In Touch Care Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Develop a more detailed, accurate monitoring system to ensure that all learners progress and achieve their qualification in a timely manner.
- Develop policies, procedures and appropriate user guidelines to cover key quality systems such as the observation of teaching and learning.
- Make more effective use of progress reviews to provide learners and employers with more detailed information on specific, measurable and achievable targets.
- Devise systems to ensure that employers who provide feedback or respond to questionnaires receive information on actions taken in response to improve the provision.

- Revise the format and structure of the self-assessment report in order to be less descriptive and contain less strategic vision and business planning content and focus more clearly on evaluative judgements of the quality of provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the courses that help them prepare well for careers and further study in health and social care
- the quality of training that they receive that is both fun and helpful
- the good quality of teaching and training
- the good support, group discussions and being shown where information can be found to improve their skills
- being able to work as part of a team
- tutors' patience and guidance
- the progression opportunities provided by the range of courses and programmes offered.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more time allocated to complete requirements for key skills
- for key skills to be made even more relevant to the subject area
- for more information to be provided on progress
- for group sessions to be organised with other childcare workers to share ideas and support each other.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the very approachable ITC staff
- the good level of knowledge ITC staff have about funding and how they explain this to employers effectively
- the way that ITC staff keep employers updated
- that ITC listen to what is needed and then do it
- that assessors are knowledgeable, punctual and reliable.

What employers would like to see improved:

- employers did not identify any aspect of the provision they would like to see improved.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. ITC's capacity to improve is good. Overall success rates for the 14 to 16 year olds have been consistently outstanding. Apprenticeship overall success rates had been good and then decreased during 2007-08. ITC have managed the underlying circumstances for this well and success rates have since improved significantly and are again good. All current apprentices are making good progress. Train to Gain success rates are good, although timely success rates for the smaller number of learners on health and social care programmes are low and remain a challenge.
11. All six of the key strengths identified at the last inspection have been maintained; the area for improvement around learner reviews remains an issue for further development.
12. The self-assessment process is thorough, particularly inclusive and makes good use of learner, staff and employer views. The most recent report is lengthy and at times overly descriptive, nevertheless it is based on evidence and identifies accurately successes and areas for further development. The action plan is used as a key tool for identifying priorities and driving improvements.
13. The recent restructure has resulted in a number of existing and knowledgeable staff securing senior management roles. Although their impact has yet to be realised, these managers are working effectively as a team, are highly motivated and committed to improving all aspects of provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

14. Outcomes for learners are good. On the apprenticeship programmes success rates improved from 53% in 2007/08 to 71% in 2008/09. Advanced apprenticeships improved from 42% in 2007/08 to 70% in 2008/09. Train to Gain success rates are good at 97% for level 2 and 92% for level 3. Train to Gain timely success rates are generally satisfactory at 83%. However, on social care and child development programmes they are low. Systems for monitoring the progress of learners are underdeveloped but new systems are being developed.
15. Outcomes on the 14 to 16 BTEC First Diploma and Young Apprenticeship are outstanding. In 2008/09 learners on the BTEC First Diploma and young apprenticeship scheme achieved a 97% pass rate with 50% of these at merit or distinction and A* level. The quality of the work in learners' portfolios is of a particularly high standard.
16. Learners develop good practical skills. They are motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Apprentices extend their knowledge from classroom sessions to developing their practice in the workplace. Train to Gain learners who are in employment build on their occupational skills.

17. ITC provides good systems and processes to ensure all learners feel safe. These are particularly effective for the 14 to 16 year old learners who attend the centre.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

18. Teaching and learning are good. Staff are suitably qualified. Equality and diversity are embedded into class sessions and are also made explicit where appropriate. A range of teaching and learning strategies is used effectively to support and extend learners. Learners are fully engaged and are motivated to learn. Clear links are made between class sessions and workplace practice. Tutors skillfully use questions to guide learners to the knowledge they need.
19. Assessment practice is good. Assessors complete detailed planning before the event in order to ensure learners are clear what is to be observed. They provide thorough verbal and written feedback from the assessment and evidence is clearly recorded on appropriate documents. Internal verification is satisfactory.
20. The provision is outstanding at meeting the needs and interests of users. ITC provides an extensive range of provision at a number of levels. This provides learners at all levels with opportunities for progression. Programmes are augmented by the offer of levels 3 and 4 specialist topics. Learners on the apprenticeship programme are offered a menu of 10 additional qualifications designed specifically to enhance their employability. Learners who have the ability are encouraged to undertake key skills at higher than the minimum required by their programme.
21. ITC is outstanding at using partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs. ITC has developed partnerships with a large number of employers to both deliver training to their staff and to provide placement opportunities for apprentices. ITC brokers highly effective projects with partners intended to develop staff from both parties, for example, a business exchange programme where staff change roles for a short period. ITC has strong links with local schools in developing its 14 to 16 provision. ITC is also developing strong links with community and voluntary groups. The executive director is extremely active in a wide variety of ways to both develop the provision and to contribute back to the local communities.
22. The care, guidance and support for learners is good. Initial and diagnostic assessments for literacy and numeracy support needs are completed. A range of other personality and interest profiles are completed to ensure compatibility with programme aims. Information, advice and guidance is provided at the start, mid-point and on exit from programmes. ITC has developed good strategies to overcome barriers such as by providing evening and weekend access for employed learners to Skills for Life and key skills support. All staff are approachable and provide good quality and effective support to help learners overcome a wide range of difficulties.

23. Progress reviews are ineffective. They are insufficiently detailed and reviewers do not routinely monitor previously identified actions. Little reference is made to the ongoing progress reviews in the 12 weekly review. Targets that are set are insufficiently focused and cumulative progress on the programme is not documented. Many learners and employers are unsure of the level of progress being made.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

24. Leadership and management are outstanding. The strategic direction and business planning arrangements compliment a comprehensive understanding of the needs and interests of users. Strategic and operational performance management focus clearly on raising expectations and promoting ambition. The very recent restructure has consolidated the motivating culture geared towards promoting growth and high standards. All staff are clear about the structure, their roles and responsibilities, and are well supported through appraisal, training and development activities. Opportunities for staff to access continuing professional development such as verification and teaching qualifications are very good. Communication and teamwork are particularly effective. Current management information practices are appropriate and contribute to decision making and action planning.
25. ITC has outstanding safeguarding arrangements. Highly appropriate policies, procedures and practices effectively support the requirement to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Particularly rigorous arrangements are in place for the 14 to 16 year old learners. A clear strategy complements the clarity staff have about their roles and responsibilities to keep learners and colleagues safe in different working environments. A preventative and proactive approach underpins the detailed work staff carry out in assessing and managing risk. All staff are very well trained, knowledgeable and responsive to the needs and concerns of learners. Learners themselves, through the curriculum, are informed about a wide range of child protection issues. Learners report that they feel safe, and some have followed procedures in reporting instances that relate to safeguarding. All of these reports have been dealt with very appropriately. Particularly good working relationships with employers and other partners successfully help to promote and ensure safety awareness and safe environments.
26. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are outstanding and well integrated across all aspects of the company's business. There is a clear focus on inclusion, community cohesion, and ongoing work towards a single equality plan. An equality and diversity champion is especially proactive in the role of promoting best practice, and is very well supported by the recent appointment of four equality co-ordinators. These co-ordinators work collaboratively with colleagues to foster inclusive practice. Staff plan for equality and diversity topics to be covered in teaching and assessment sessions, and also take advantage of other opportunities to promote issues and challenge stereotypes.

27. Learners and staff are protected from discrimination, harassment and bullying, and any instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with according to established procedures. Staff work very effectively with partners and employers to uphold important inclusive values. The performance of different groups of learners is monitored effectively, and with a particular focus on narrowing any gaps in achievement. ITC is presently trying to attract more males into the caring professions.
28. External links, partnerships and networking at local, regional and national levels are excellent and contribute significantly to ensuring that the needs and interests of users are realised. Responsive programmes are available to employers, and their feedback and insightful comments about the courses help ITC to identify and implement improvements. However, employers are not always informed about how their comments have been used to improve provision. Links with employers are further strengthened through the sharing of resources and training which is provided at no cost. Training programmes such as assessor awards and teaching qualifications are provided for employers' staff.
29. The use of technology and other resources to promote learning and secure value for money is excellent. Technology and resources such as a three-dimensional projector and robotic dummies are used particularly well to deliver effective and efficient programmes. Staff utilisation is optimal. Good use is made of a virtual learning environment to enhance access to resources remotely.
30. The self-assessment process is rigorous and inclusive. However, the report is too long and descriptive and contains significant aspects of strategic and business planning. The report does follow the structure of the common inspection framework in a logical way. Judgements are based on evidence and it is accurate in what it identifies as strengths and areas for improvement. A detailed action plan is helpful to staff in prioritising quality improvements.
31. Not every aspect of the learner journey is supported by a detailed policy, procedure and guidance for staff to implement it. At times, quality audit and control procedures reduce the focus on quality improvement. For example, although observation of teaching takes place it is not supported by a detailed policy and procedure. Staff do not have guidance on what to expect or on how to carry out the process. The forms used to record the observation do not provide sufficient guidance on the criteria or standards against which performance is to be measured.

Information about the inspection

32. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's executive 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 LSC or other funding bodies, 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.
33. 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)

In Touch Care Ltd

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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners			111
Part-time learners		69	333
Overall effectiveness	2	1	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	1	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	n/a		
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	n/a		
Quality of provision	2	1	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	1	1	1
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	n/a		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1		

*where applicable to the type of provision

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009