

Nova Training

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53682

Name of lead inspector: Harmesh Manghra HMI

Last day of inspection: 16 April 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Nova Training (Nova), based in Willenhall in the Black Country has been providing publicly funded learning since 1992. It is part of Staff Select Limited, a company limited by guarantee. Nova operates from Dudley, Brownhills, Willenhall and Wednesbury in the Black Country and Telford in Shropshire. In response to the government initiative of the January guarantee of a place on education, training or learning for learners aged 16 to 18, the company has opened three new centres in Low Hill, Darlaston and Oldbury. A senior management team of five support the managing director, which includes the operational director, commercial director, operations manager, staff development manager and quality manager. Nova employs 78 staff to provide learning across all sites. The numbers of staff and learners have doubled since the previous inspection.
2. Nova has had contracts with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Black Country and Shropshire for the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme and for apprenticeships in motor vehicle engineering. LSC contracts amount to 42% of the income of the company. Some 21% of its work is to provide vocational training tasters on Headstart programme from 60 schools in the Black Country and Shropshire for learners aged 14 to 16. Under subcontract arrangements with the Black Country Training Consortium, Nova provides learning for disengaged learners aged 16 to 18 under the Kickstart Life programme and Train to Gain. This constitutes 10% of its work. The provision for Train to Gain has already been inspected.
3. The proportion of people with a minority ethnic heritage in the West Midlands is 25%, compared with 9% in England (2001 census data). Unemployment rates are higher in the West Midlands than nationally. According to the LSC data, in January 2010, the numbers of learners aged 16 to 18 not in education, employment and training (NEET) in the local authorities in which Nova operates is 2648. Nova recruits approximately 9% of NEET learners.
4. Of all the Nova learners, 77% are male and 15% from minority ethnic groups. Some 29% of the learners have declared a learning difficulty or disability. During the inspection week, Nova had 73 learners on Train to Gain in business administration, customer services and motor vehicle and 27 on Kickstart Life, 25 apprentices and 248 E2E learners. Inspectors used evidence from the apprenticeship programme to inform judgements in outcomes and leadership and management.
5. Nova Training also provides Train to Gain and Kickstart Life training on behalf of:
 - Black Country Training Group

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Young learner provision:	
Entry to Employment	460 learners
Kickstart Life	116 learners
Headstart	643 learners
Employer responsive provision:	
Apprenticeship	40 learners
Train to Gain	152 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 1
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Area	Grade
Employability Training	2

Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of Nova Training is good. Young learners aged 16 to 19 who have been out of education, employment and training; Nova quickly engage into training. They enjoy the learning environment and the individual attention they are given. They develop good levels of self-confidence and literacy, numeracy, computer and job-related skills. Most of them achieve at least one nationally accredited qualification. Most learners progress into education, employment and training. Apprentices on motor vehicle programmes also achieve high levels of qualifications. Younger learners aged 14 to 16, become highly interested in trades such as construction and motor vehicle and they see the clear relevance of learning to their future prospects.
7. The quality of teaching, training and learning is good. It is fun and challenging. Nova promotes the health and safety of learners very effectively and learners say they feel extremely safe. The range of programmes is excellent and meets the needs of learners and their future employers. Support for learners on pastoral matters is outstanding. Although staff work very closely with the learners they have not been very effective at removing main barriers to progress for a minority of learners.
8. Leadership and management of the training, including arrangements for safeguarding and protecting learners, are outstanding. The managers set high

standards and encourage all learners to achieve them. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All learners achieve equally and there are no significant gaps in the performance of different groups of learners. Nova celebrates the achievement of learners very effectively in centres and in the local community.

Main findings

- The outcomes for learners are good, including progression rates into education, employment and training. Most of the current learners have been offered a place on college courses to start in September. Learners develop good levels of social and vocational skills. Success rates for apprentices are now good and most achieve their qualification satisfactorily within the allocated time.
- High proportions of learners achieve one or more level 1 qualification. Learners develop a good range of literacy, trade and personal skills. Learners aged 14 to 16 on the Headstart programme gain good knowledge and appreciation of skills required for working life. Due to substantial improvements in the learners' behaviour, enthusiasm and motivation, they re-engage into learning at school.
- Learners feel extremely safe. They make well-informed decisions about their health and well-being after gaining comprehensive knowledge about the benefits and dangers of various drugs and life style choices. Learner celebration of success is excellent.
- The quality of training is good. Learners receive good practical and theoretical training in construction and motor vehicle trades at the Nova training centres. The well-planned lessons make creative and highly effective use of information communication technology. Assessment is satisfactory; tutors do not encourage learners to collect valuable evidence from their work experience and community activities.
- Progress reviews are frequent; however, these are not sufficiently thorough in the identification and recording of key personal objectives and barriers to progress. It is difficult to follow the extensive paperwork to see if the removal of barriers and the meeting of objectives are taking place.
- Nova has outstanding partnerships with several local authorities, colleges, schools and voluntary sector partners. Working collaboratively, it has swiftly located the provision in several of the most deprived wards of Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Learners are fully engaged in productive activities to improve their skills and chances of gaining employment. This is contributing to the sustainable development of the local communities.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners and parents/carers receive very clear information about training and learning opportunities. Good numbers of learners have re-engaged into learning after persistent efforts by Nova staff.
- Nova leaders and managers have established a supportive and positive culture to set and meet challenging targets. Nova has continued to raise levels of learners' achievement and progression. Nova influences and plays a prominent

role in local and national policy initiatives to engage learners into education, employment and training.

- The use of management information is highly effective at operational level. Nova uses a broad range of data for monitoring purposes. Through careful analysis, Nova measures the provision against many performance criteria. However, it does not make full use of the wide-ranging management information to set individual objectives and improve outcomes for example, early leavers.
- Nova is outstanding at engagement of learners and partners to support improvement and develop the provision. Learners are regularly and fully involved in recruiting the tutors as well as evaluating teaching sessions. Much of the improvements to the design and provision of training are a result of learners' feedback.
- Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and exceed government requirements. Vetting of all staff is thorough and they have received training up to a level 3 in safeguarding learners. Risk assessment for all activities and venues is comprehensive. Learners receive training to safeguard their own interests. Health and safety arrangements are thorough.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Nova has developed its provision in the wards where the participation and achievement levels are particularly low and learners are at risk of exclusion from schools. Learners develop thorough understanding of their responsibilities and rights and become better-informed citizens.

What does Nova need to do improve further?

- Improve the removal of the main barriers to learners' progress by setting further specific targets in learning plans and following up reviews by more focussed interventions. In addition, set challenging and realistic targets for learners in their individual learning plans to improve their personal skills such as behaviour or attendance while supporting them to become more mature.
- Improve the outcomes and provision for learners, particularly early leavers by increasing the analysis of the wide range of management information.
- Make better use of learners' experience in the workplace and community projects through collecting the evidence and presenting it in their portfolios to use as an evidence of their achievement.

Summary of the views of learners as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- very good practical training and broad range of training opportunities
- excellent quality teaching, training and assessment
- superb support and supportive tutors
- opportunities to gain formal qualifications and study subjects that they need

- very relaxed and adult learning environment
- learning and teaching often better than at schools
- the incentives to learn; such as bonuses.

What learners would like to see improved:

- heating in the training room in one centre
- no other improvements suggested.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers/partners like:

- superb quality of training
- the fantastic experience for the learners
- consistently good record of achievement for learners
- excellent communication and the speed of response to requests
- excellent service they receive.

What employers would like to see improved:

- Nova's capacity to recruit more learners.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

9. Nova has outstanding capacity to make and sustain improvements. It has successfully improved all the areas for improvements identified at the previous inspection and has further consolidated its strengths since the reinspection in 2007. The leadership and management of training are now outstanding. Business planning processes are thorough and have been used to improve the design of the programmes. Nova has successfully managed substantial growth of the business. The very effective processes for user engagement make excellent contribution to improving the provision. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Equality of opportunity remains good. The company has taken strong steps to improve the analysis of data and promotion of equality and diversity. Most aspects of the provision are good or better with some outstanding features.
10. Nova has appointed several new staff and made substantial investment in staff development. The investment in improving the centres and acquiring an extensive range of information communication technology is having a very positive effect on the learning and the standards of the work learners produce. Staff are highly enthusiastic, passionate, committed and particularly effective in improving the provision for learners. They work extremely hard, set high standards for themselves and expect learners to improve their prospects.
11. The current self-assessment report is highly accurate and makes systematic use of a broad range of evidence including data. The self-assessment report and the process of developing the report are thorough and included the views of all learners, staff and partners. Action planning for improvement is strong and its monitoring is thorough. Whilst Nova accurately identified the strengths of the provision, it failed to identify one key area for improvement. Quality improvement is very thorough and it is working extremely effectively. Inspectors agreed with most of the grades and awarded a higher grade for leadership and management. Nova provides excellent value for money.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. The rates of progression into education, employment and training are good at 67%. Nova has maintained this strength in the past three years despite the poor economic climate. All learners achieve some externally accredited qualifications. For example, 56% of the early leavers have achieved at least a qualification. Up to March 2010, 79% of learners have achieved at least one qualification at level 1. Achievement of unit accreditation in construction awards is high at 84%. Learners enjoy taking part in training. They attain good standards and progress well on their programmes. Most learners make rapid progress in a short time. Attendance is satisfactory.

13. Learners' self-confidence significantly improves through producing work of a very high standard both in the classrooms and in the workshops. They fully understand how to improve their economic well being through learning valuable trade skills. Most have made a well-considered choice to learn a trade. All learners are encouraged to consider safety aspects in all their work practices and use safe working practices in the workshops and while using computers. Their awareness of health and safety is good. They fully understand the dangers of drugs and the importance of healthy lifestyles and make sensible choices to give a clear direction to their lives.
14. Learners make a positive contribution to their community. They develop clear awareness of the local neighbourhood through projects including collecting litter and gardening for the elderly. They also gain economic independence and improve their chances of securing and keeping a job.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. The quality of training across all programmes is good. Tutors are well qualified and highly experienced in working with young people. Well-planned lessons have clear aims and objectives. Particularly effective use of good quality learning resources make lessons interactive and fun. Good levels of discussion and a broad range of activities in all lessons keep learners fully engaged. The quality of literacy and/or numeracy support during the lessons is good. The training programmes are particularly good at helping learners to gain appropriate work ethics, such as personal discipline, setting high standards of work, timekeeping, and respect for others.
16. The progress reviews of learners are satisfactory. Staff frequently review learners' progress and record their findings using standardised paperwork. Individual learning plans list the qualification and progression aims. However, the plans do not always identify the key objectives to develop their personal skills and the main barriers to progress. The steer to learners on how they can help in their own progress is not sufficiently strong.
17. Nova provides an exceptional range of training in eight centres in the Black Country and Shropshire to prepare learners for life and work. Learners take part in practical sessions including brickwork, plumbing, painting and decorating and motor vehicle maintenance. Other training sessions include health and safety, citizenship, work skills and functional skills. Work experience is an entitlement for all learners. Some 57% of the current learners have either taken part in a placement with the employers or a community activity. Nova makes full use of an extensive database of over 300 employers. Learners move seamlessly from one programme to the other. Progression opportunities are good with a broad range of courses with several providers. The creative use of an extensive range of enrichment activities engages learners to plan activities and develop high-level skills including functional skills. Although learners develop these skills,

tutors fail to give sufficient recognition of the skills and experiences gained as part of the activities.

18. Nova has established an outstanding array of partnerships with a range of partners. These include local authorities, employers, colleges, Connexions, schools and other partners to meet the needs of young learners. These work collaboratively to share expertise and local intelligence, refer learners, design programmes and contribute to provision through support or reviews. For example, the establishing of provision in Darlaston was result of working with the local youth service and the Black Country Training Consortium.
19. Care, guidance and support are good. Nova staff have a full understanding of the needs and barriers facing the learners. Learners feel valued and are highly appreciative of the efforts staff make to help them succeed. A dedicated and well-qualified team of advisers offer good information, advice and guidance. Connexions advisers act as strong advocates to ensure that the learners are making good progress. Learners with additional learning needs receive effective additional support including language, number and communications. Tutors use topics and examples in classes to reinforce fully understanding of equality and diversity.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

20. The company has a clear mission and vision, which all staff share, and provides a clear direction and focus on learners' progress and achievement. Managers and staff have set and met very high targets to raise standards and promote ambition within the company. Nova has completely met challenging targets of 95% retention, 80% achievement of at least one level 1 qualification and a progression rate of 66%. Over the past few years, Nova has made a significant contribution in reducing the numbers of NEET learners in the locality in line with the national and local policy initiatives to engage learners into learning.
21. Nova has established an impressive set of arrangements to protect and safeguard learners that exceeds the current government requirements. All staff have been thoroughly vetted through the enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. All staff have undertaken Local Safeguarding Children Board training at level 3 and have very strong awareness of protection and safeguarding of young people and adults. They conduct thorough risk assessment of all activities, centres and employers and apply safeguarding measures to protect learners. Nova takes its safeguarding responsibility very seriously. A comprehensive management action plan is in place to protect learners.
22. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Nova has taken very effective steps to encourage learners from some of the most deprived wards in the country. Learners have fully engaged into learning in high numbers and they have revised their life goals and raised their aspirations. Through local partnerships and promotional activity with schools, many of the school pupils who are at risk

of leaving education, start learning with renewed enthusiasm by attending vocational training sessions. Nova staff broadly reflects the ethnic composition of the local areas. Learners have high level of awareness of equality and diversity as well as their rights and responsibilities. They understand how bullying and harassment can affect people and understand their rights and responsibilities in their personal and working life. Nova supports employers in developing equality and diversity policies and promoting diversity. The promotion of equality and understanding of diversity is good in learning sessions. Staff fully check learners' understanding of this area during progress reviews. Outcomes for different groups of learners are good. Managers and staff have effectively tackled the achievement gaps. Nova has appointed equality champions in all centres to give greater emphasis to equality and diversity issues. Managers and staff have not fully identified a minority of the barriers facing learners. Nova has taken strong steps to implement a range of equality and diversity impact measures; however, these have not had sufficient effect.

23. Nova distinguishes itself in the way it engages with its users and learners in particular. Its impressive record includes involving learners in the recruitment of staff and evaluating teaching sessions and performance of all staff at least once a month. Tutors then reflect on the comments of the learners and improve the planning and delivery of their sessions. Most newly recruited staff have improved their skills dramatically and some others have left. Nova also regularly collects the views of employers and staff through a range of mediums and makes changes accordingly.
24. The self-assessment process is highly effective at identifying strengths and areas for improvement as well as raising standards. The process of observations of teaching and learning is sound. Staff development and clearly targeted supportive observations bring about immediate improvements. Sharing of good practice amongst staff is effective. The quality improvement team is very thorough in checking the whole range of processes to ensure that the centres and staff are reaching their targets. Managers use this information extremely well to get an overview of the performance of each centre. A good range of data and management information is available to the staff and managers. They use it well to improve the measurable aspects of learner outcomes such as qualifications; however, the setting and monitoring of targets to remove key barriers to progress for learners and the development of personal skills is not sufficient
25. Nova uses its resources very well to achieve excellent value for money. Nova has reinvested substantial sums of its income to supporting learners into learning through subsidised transport, payment for additional qualifications, and by providing excellent level of resources including ICT in all its centres. This level of support combined with excellent resources and highly qualified staff make a significant difference to the lives of many young people who are at a distinct risk of disengaging from society.

Information about the inspection

26. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's operational 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 local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and subcontractors, the previous inspection report, reports from two good practice survey visits and reports from the inspectorate's reinspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
27. 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 the main subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Nova Training Limited

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	16-18 Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	691	275
Part-time learners	0	416
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	1	
Outcomes for learners	2	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?	1	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	1	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2	
Quality of provision	2	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
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?	2	
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

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