

# Profound Services Ltd

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 58464

Name of lead inspector: John Dunn HMI

Last day of inspection: 23 April 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Novus Business Centre  
Judson Road  
North West Industrial Estate  
Peterlee  
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Telephone number: 0191 587 8161

## Information about the provider

1. Profound Services Ltd (Profound) is a private training provider formed in 2006. The head office is in Peterlee, County Durham. The company employs 23 people, including nine assessors and two trainers. Most of the training is carried out in the workplace. Off-the-job training takes place at head office or on employers' or rented premises.
2. Profound contracts with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to provide Train to Gain programmes in road passenger vehicle driving. The company provides training throughout the UK with most of its work concentrated in the north-east, Leeds, Leicester and Stourbridge. In addition to the funded training, Profound also offers a small but growing amount of commercial training on a full fee basis.
3. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Bishop Auckland College
  - New College Durham

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Train to Gain	504 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	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject areas	Grade
Road passenger vehicle driving	2

## Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of Profound's provision is good. It has a good capacity to improve. Directors and managers provide good leadership and highly effective management. During the short time that Profound has been offering funded training, managers and staff have made particularly good progress in introducing and establishing good arrangements for quality improvement and assurance. The number of learners achieving their Train to Gain qualifications is very high and most achieve within the agreed time. The quality of teaching and learning is good, as are assessment and internal verification. Arrangements to safeguard learners are good. Learners report that they feel safe. Profound's promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity. They are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Training resources are satisfactory. Profound provides outstanding value for money.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for Train to Gain learners are good. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications, particularly those achieving within the agreed timescale, is very high.

- Learners make good progress in developing work-related skills.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most learners enjoy their lessons and participate fully. In the best sessions teachers maintain learner interest by using a variety of activities to promote learning. However, the unimaginative learning materials used in induction produce a bland and unmemorable introduction to the programme.
- Assessment is good. The process is well planned to meet the needs of learners and employers. Assessments are fair, accurate and reliable and use a range of methods to gather appropriate evidence. Internal verification is good.
- Assessors provide highly effective support for learners. The arrangements are very flexible and assessors meet learners at times and locations to best suit the needs of learners and employers.
- Learners benefit from a range of highly productive partnerships with employers. Profound has successfully engaged a number of key employers in its programmes. The employers have a good working knowledge of the content of the qualifications that helps them to provide highly effective support for their learners.
- Directors have worked successfully with managers and staff to establish an appropriate strategic direction. This is clearly articulated in a suite of good strategic and operational plans and supported effectively by challenging but realistic targets.
- Directors and managers provide good support for staff through good performance management. Target setting is particularly good and the monitoring of performance, through well-defined and understood key performance indicators, makes a significant contribution to the very high success rates. Staff development is good.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are particularly good. Learners feel safe and are protected from bullying and harassment. Training is particularly good and staff demonstrate a good knowledge of safeguarding. Profound gives appropriate emphasis to the management of health and safety throughout the organisation.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Profound recruits a high proportion of its learners from minority ethnic heritage groups. Staff and learners demonstrate a good understanding of equality and diversity. Profound collects and monitors data on participation and outcomes and uses them to set demanding targets which are usually achieved.
- Profound has introduced and successfully established highly effective arrangements for quality assurance. However, these are new arrangements and Profound has not yet had the opportunity to incorporate them into a formal quality cycle which is fully documented as a standard operating procedure.
- Staff carrying out observations of teaching and learning do not have sufficient qualifications or development in teaching and learning.

## What does Profound Services Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Provide better and formal support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs.
- Improve the initial assessment and monitoring of learners with literacy and numeracy needs.
- Improve induction by developing more imaginative learning materials.
- Improve the observation of teaching and learning by using appropriately qualified observers.
- Develop a formal quality cycle setting out key dates and activities.

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

#### What learners like:

- the fact that the national vocational qualification (NVQ) will help when negotiating contracts
- the idea of moving towards professional driver status
- having a better awareness of customer service
- the good support from trainers
- the enjoyable learning.

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

- No improvements suggested.

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

#### What employers like:

- Profound staff are very helpful and supportive
- Profound is responsive to employer and learner needs
- the good working relationships with Profound
- the fact that having trained staff is helpful in winning contracts.

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

- the theoretical approach to disability awareness which misses some of the more useful and practical skills that directly benefit learners.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 2

5. Profound is a new provider and does not have a history of success rates from which trends can be identified. In its first year of operation, Profound achieved very high overall and timely success rates. The senior management team has identified a clear strategic direction and ensured that staff understand this through very good and inclusive strategic planning. Directors have set and met realistic and challenging targets for all key processes and outcomes. Arrangements for quality assurance have been in place from the outset and used by all staff to ensure consistently high standards of teaching and learning. Early indications are that the high success rates will continue into 2010/11.
6. Managers successfully incorporate learners' and employers' views into self-assessment to bring about improvements in the quality of provision. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and self-critical and has identified many of the strengths of the organisation and some of its areas for improvement. The action plan resulting from self-assessment is managed carefully and is regularly reviewed and updated.

### Outcomes for learners Grade 2

7. Success rates are very high. The timely success rate on Train to Gain provision for 2008/09 is 83%, which is 12 percentage points above the national average. The overall success rate for the provision is also 12 percentage points above the national average. It is not possible to make a judgement on trends over time as the provider is new and only has one year of achievement data available. Early indications are that success rates for 2010/11 are likely to be equally high. There are no significant differences in achievement between different groups of learners.
8. The standard of learners' work is broadly satisfactory. Learners develop good customer service skills and increase their employability and confidence through participation in the training programme.
9. Health and safety are appropriately promoted throughout the organisation. Learners report that they feel safe.
10. Teachers encourage learners to reflect on their own health and well-being. They provide effective help and support to allow learners to make informed choices about healthy lifestyles.
11. Profound and its learners make a valuable contribution to the community through various sponsorships and community activities.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good. Assessors and tutors have substantial occupational expertise and use their skills effectively to plan and facilitate learning for individuals. Many of the learning materials are imaginative and are used to good effect. Broader aspects of the training, such as health and safety, safeguarding and equality and diversity, are reinforced throughout the training.
13. Induction sessions are unsatisfactory. The learning materials currently being used during induction are underdeveloped and unimaginative. Teachers' skills are not used effectively at induction and some learners are insufficiently challenged.
14. Initial assessment arrangements are not effective in identifying learners' additional learning and support needs. Learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs do not receive formal specialised support. Learners needing support are often referred to local colleges but none is followed up by managers.
15. Assessment and internal verification are good. Assessment planning is good and assessment arrangements are flexible to meet the needs of learners and employers. Internal verification is thorough and well documented. Sampling plans indicate high levels of evidence checks and assessor performance is carefully monitored. Assessment recording is thorough and internal verifier reports are clear and informative.
16. The training is highly effective in meeting the needs of learners and employers. Profound is responsive to employers' and learners' needs and provides a suitable range of provision. Good, impartial advice is available on the options and choices. Learners are informed of progression routes and specialist courses which are available on a commercial basis, such as first aid and economical driving.
17. Profound has developed effective working partnerships with local colleges and employers. It provides colleges with a good service and both benefit from shared good practice. Provider staff work closely with employers to ensure that off-the-job training and qualifications meet the needs of each employer. Most learners benefit from employer involvement in training.
18. Learners receive highly effective personal support from assessors and benefit from the good working relationships with them. Staff visit learners regularly in the workplace to assess, train and support them and further develop effective working relationships with employers.
19. Progress reviews are good. They include good discussions of topics such as health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding. Reviews make an effective contribution to learners' understanding of these matters. Learners are set clear and achievable targets which are challenging and help them to progress.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Leadership and management are good. In the short time that the company has been in existence the management team has established a clear strategy and priorities for improvement and development. Staff are well informed and are particularly effective in developing and implementing the robust company policies and procedures. Outcomes are good and success rates are particularly high. Strategic and operational planning is thorough and the process makes particularly good use of data and targets. Directors work well with staff to agree challenging but realistic targets for the provider as a whole and for individual staff members. Profound has an appropriate and productive focus on quality improvement and, in particular, on achieving high levels of success for its learners.
21. Arrangements for safeguarding are particularly good and meet current legislative requirements. Profound has established contacts with a number of local safeguarding bodies which are useful in sharing and spreading good practice. Training is particularly good and staff understanding is comprehensive. All staff have received training in safeguarding at an appropriate level and employers and learners also benefit from this training which is offered as an option alongside NVQs. Learners have a good understanding of issues such as bullying, harassment and discrimination.
22. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and is a high priority for the company. The proportion of learners from different ethnic heritages is very high. There are no discernible differences in achievement between different groups of learners. Profound manages its data very effectively. It collects and evaluates data on the performance of different cultural groups, males and females and learners with and without disabilities. Profound is successful in promoting equality and diversity within and outside the organisation. Directors set challenging targets to ensure that their policies and procedures on equality and diversity have an impact on the provision. Learners demonstrate a very good understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace. They are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are confident in how to deal with bullying and harassment. Staff training in equality and diversity is good and is often offered as an option to learners and employers. Training in disability awareness has been particularly well subscribed to by learners and employers. Training facilities are carefully assessed for accessibility for people with restricted mobility and other disabilities. Policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive. They are reviewed regularly and impact assessments are carried out appropriately.
23. Profound has satisfactory arrangements to engage with its users. Links with employers are good. Most employers have a detailed knowledge of the qualifications offered and are effective in supporting the training. The views of learners and employers are collected, analysed and acted upon and stakeholders have made a contribution to improving the quality of the provision through their feedback.



24. Profound has made significant progress in embedding robust quality assurance and improvement arrangements in a very short space of time. Staff and learners benefit from detailed policies and procedures for learning and assessment. Consequently there is a consistent approach to training and assessment across the organisation. However, Profound has not yet set out a consistent cycle of quality assurance and improvement activities with dates for key processes throughout the year.
25. Internal verification is good and the observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Further training for observers is necessary to help them give comprehensive and helpful feedback to staff on all aspects of teaching and learning.
26. Profound's use of self-assessment to improve the provision is good. The self-assessment process is inclusive and takes into account the views of learners and employers. The use of data is good and the improvement plan arising from self-assessment is monitored carefully and updated regularly. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, having identified most of the strengths and many of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors.
27. The management of staff performance is good. The appraisal system is thorough and supportive for staff. Managers set clear targets for staff which are related to key performance indicators. Targets are monitored effectively. Staff development is good.
28. Teaching and learning resources are broadly satisfactory. Profound's approach to sustainability is underdeveloped. However, Profound uses and manages its resources effectively to provide outstanding value for money.

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## Information about the inspection

29. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's director of corporate services 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 Skills Funding Agency (SFA) or other funding bodies and data on learners and their achievement.
30. 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)**  
**Profound Services 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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	504	504
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
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?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2	
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?	2	
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?	3	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
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?	2	
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?	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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