

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

28–30 November 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Inadequate	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Managers' self-assessment is not forensic enough to identify precise weaknesses in order to ensure that the improvement plan contains the right actions to rectify the areas that require improvement.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection but it is not yet consistently good.
- Tutors do not always use the information they know about each of their learners to ensure that each learner is set activities that enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- On too many occasions, learners do not understand exactly what they need to do to improve their vocational skills and knowledge.
- A minority of learners are enrolled on lower level qualifications that are not sufficiently challenging and this hinders their progression into work.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers set high expectations for learners and staff. Staff have established a culture in which learners respect each other and understand the importance of valuing diversity.
- Leaders and managers ensure that they manage the performance of staff effectively.
- The proportion of learners who achieve a qualification is now high.
- Effective coaching by tutors enables learners to become more independent and confident.
- Learners benefit from very effective behavioural, pastoral and specialist support that enables them to make considerable progress in increasing their self-esteem and improving their behaviour.
- Attendance is high for most learners.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Norman Mackie & Associates Limited, locally known as Work4U, operates from Stalybridge, in Tameside, Greater Manchester. The company offers provision to young people, many of whom have significant barriers to learning, very low prior attainment and often a record of disengagement from education, including repeated exclusions from schools and colleges. Significant numbers of learners are at a high risk of offending or anti-social behaviour. Learners attend the main centre and the farm for most of their education and training.
- Learners come from Tameside, Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Derbyshire. The company also holds contracts with a number of schools to provide alternative provision.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the self-assessment process and the associated quality improvement plan are revised to ensure that weaknesses are identified clearly and that measurable targets are set against each improvement action so that managers can make rapid progress in improving quality.
- Leaders should ensure that observers accurately assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that the outcomes inform staff development, and tutors know exactly what they need to do to improve their teaching practice.
- Tutors should use the information they know about what their learners can already do so they plan and deliver interesting and challenging lessons to ensure that every learner makes the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors should ensure that they set their learners clear and suitably demanding targets, and provide clear feedback on what they need to do to improve.
- Tutors should review their learners' progress regularly and ensure that they improve their vocational skills and technical knowledge to prepare them better for work.
- Leaders should ensure that learners are studying qualifications at the right level that is based on their starting points so that a greater proportion can progress to higher levels of study and/or into work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have improved many aspects of the provision but have not yet rectified all of the weakness identified in the previous inspection. For example, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet good.
- The most recent self-assessment report is not evaluative and lacks evidence to support the judgements made. Managers still do not use data well enough or analyse information to set challenging improvement targets. The self-assessment process and resulting report do not identify clearly the key strengths and weaknesses of the provider. The actions in the quality improvement plan do not align with the self-assessment report and do not provide a clear agenda to enable managers to make rapid improvements, particularly in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers do not accurately assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observers focus too much on the activities of the tutor and not enough on the learning taking place and the progress that learners make. As a result, while the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection, it is not yet consistently good.
- Leaders and managers set high expectations for learners and staff. Managers and staff have created a culture in which learners respect each other and understand the importance of valuing diversity. For example, staff engage learners in a range of activities such as project work for the homeless and working in homes for older people. This helps learners develop their understanding of the diverse society in today's modern Britain.
- Leaders, managers and staff have been successful in increasing the proportion of learners who achieve a qualification, including in functional skills in mathematics and English. However, leaders do not analyse the performance of different groups of learners. Consequently, they do not have actions in place to rectify the gaps in achievement between males and females.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders' strategies to improve the performance of staff are effective. Managers now complete appraisals of all staff. Staff performance is monitored regularly against their individual improvement targets. This has resulted in some staff leaving the organisation. Leaders have successfully implemented a 'grow your own' strategy to recruit staff with the right skills and qualifications. For example, during the summer, a voluntary internship programme for graduates has resulted in the appointment of two new staff.
- Tailored training and development equip staff with the skills to meet the special educational needs of their learners. As a result, staff are more confident and able to deal with the challenging behaviour and other social and emotional anxieties that learners often exhibit.
- Managers and staff make good use of their partnerships with external agencies to support learners. Specialist staff provide a range of services, including mental health support, counselling, sexual health support, and support to help learners avoid drug and alcohol misuse and self-harming. As a result, learners receive and benefit from good support.

- Leaders and managers have established good links with the local authority and external organisations to provide regular specialist impartial careers advice. Leaders work with the local further education college to ensure that well-managed transition arrangements are in place for learners progressing to further education and training.

The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, an advisory board has been established by senior leaders. Members of the board have a good range of skills and experience. They demonstrate ambition and commitment to provide high-quality courses in the locality for young people who have barriers to learning and special educational needs.
- Individual board members use their experience to provide support and advice in specific areas, for example, in supporting learners who have special educational needs.
- Board members do not yet receive detailed information on all aspects of education and training at the centre. As a result, they are not always able to challenge senior managers or hold them to account for the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for learners.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff and learners know how, and whom, to contact to report concerns. In a few instances, the recording of incidents is not always sufficiently detailed.
- Managers carry out appropriate safe recruitment practices. All staff have had relevant training and place a strong emphasis on keeping learners safe. As a result, learners feel safe.
- Managers have good and effective partnerships with external agencies such as the local safeguarding board and the police. This contributes to the safe and supportive environment for learners.
- Leaders and managers ensure that all staff receive appropriate 'Prevent' duty training. As a result, learners have a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There are currently 44 learners from four local authorities who have high-needs funding and education, health and care plans. Leaders and managers use funding appropriately for learners who have high needs. They provide them with the support they need so that they can attend their training and be better prepared for their future. Most learners study courses at entry level or at level 1 in employability skills. The remaining study entry-level or level 1 courses in catering, construction, animal care or art.
- Not all tutors make good use of the information gathered in the early stages of learners' assessments to plan and deliver challenging enough work. As a result, learners do not always make the progress of which they are capable. In a few cases, learners study on courses that result in a level of qualification that is too low. Tutors get to know learners

well and are able to provide relevant tasks to improve their behaviour and develop their confidence.

- Staff do not review learners' progress well enough. Learners are not fully aware of the range of vocational skills that they develop as they are not always accurately explained and recorded. Vocational targets are often too general and do not challenge learners to develop their skills to meet professional industry standards.
- Tutors do not always provide helpful feedback to their learners. Consequently, learners are unaware of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work or to develop their skills further. As a result, a minority of learners do not make good or better progress.
- In a minority of cases, vocational tutors do not place sufficient importance on improving learners' written English skills or developing the mathematical skills they need for work or progression.
- Effective coaching by tutors enables learners to become more independent. Learners make considerable progress in increasing their self-esteem. They learn to manage their anxieties better and are able to work well in new situations.
- Small-group and project work helps learners get used to working collaboratively with others. In cooking lessons, learners prepare simple meals that they can cook independently at home. Learners who at the start of their course rarely spoke or made eye contact are now starting to speak and are beginning to face people when communicating.
- In the majority of lessons, effective strategies enable tutors to assess accurately the progress their learners are making. In a few cases, tutors do not use assessment strategies effectively to ensure that learners understand new concepts or develop higher order skills.
- Learners gain confidence and develop valuable team-working skills in lessons. For example, construction learners build a stud wall and apply plaster to the required standards. In catering lessons, learners work together to prepare the ingredients for making pizza. In art lessons, learners skilfully design a mural for display in the local community.
- The majority of learners develop their speaking and listening skills well. They learn to participate well in group discussions. For example, in one session with the local police community support officer, learners confidently discuss different types of crime and their consequences. However, in vocational lessons, tutors do not develop learners' technical language well enough.
- Staff have established a culture in which learners respect each other and understand the importance of valuing diversity. Tutors ensure that learners behave well in lessons and encourage them to listen to each other and respect each other's opinions and contributions to discussions.
- Learners are safe and feel safe in their learning environment. They develop an awareness of health and safety practices in the workplace. For example, carpentry learners use equipment safely in workshops.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Attendance is high for the majority of learners. There are small numbers of persistently absent learners. Staff follow up non-attendance diligently and work with parents, carers and external agencies to get learners back into learning.
- Learners develop their self-esteem and confidence. They enjoy their learning and through a range of projects and activities they develop a better understanding of the wider world. For example, learners work collaboratively on a project in Manchester helping homeless people.
- Learners benefit from very effective behavioural, pastoral and specialist support. Most learners, including those who have challenging and complex behaviours, demonstrate increased confidence in managing their behaviours independently in a range of situations.
- Learners make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Most demonstrate good standards of behaviour in lessons, during breaktimes and when on work placements in the community. Most learners are tolerant, polite and friendly towards each other and are able to work well together. In a minority of instances, when learners' behaviour does not meet the required expectations, staff resolve the issues quickly and effectively.
- Most learners take part in appropriate work-placement or work-related activities, for example, in animal care, furniture renovation and in retail. Learners value their work experience, and most placements extend learners' understanding of the work ethic, such as the need to attend on time to sessions. Learners who want to work in animal care benefit from work placements at a local farm. They develop good practical skills, such as in looking after a range of animals.
- Learners feel safe, work safely and understand how to keep themselves safe in the centre and on work placements. Learners can explain what safety measures are in place; for example, catering learners handle knives correctly and safely.
- Most learners understand the dangers of using the internet and social media and they are careful when online. Most learners demonstrate a good understanding of radicalisation and extremism and the impact these may have on their lives.
- While learners make good progress in achieving functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, in vocational lessons tutors do not consistently develop the technical language and the mathematical skills they need for work.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Almost all learners who start on their courses have special educational needs (SEN) and/or personal difficulties and many have been out of education for a variety of reasons. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualification rose significantly in 2016/17 and is now high. However, a minority of learners study qualifications at a level below what they are capable of achieving and so are not challenged to make good progress.
- The proportion of learners who progress to higher level courses has improved since the

last inspection but it is still low. In 2016/17, just under half of learners returned to the centre to complete their qualifications or study another qualification at the same level. Around one third of learners progressed to supported internships in the local college.

- Most learners produce work that meets the requirements of the qualifications they are studying. Most learners' work reflects that they have an adequate understanding of the topics covered and in a minority of cases a good understanding.
- Learners develop an appropriate range of vocational skills when they first start on their courses; for example, they develop basic skills in catering or construction. Learners do not develop their skills to a higher level even when they demonstrate the ability to complete more demanding tasks.
- Most learners become more independent in their everyday lives, particularly in developing their self-confidence through attending internal or external work placements. Learners gradually reduce their anxiety and gain the confidence and self-esteem to attend more regularly and contribute in lessons.
- The proportion of learners who achieve a functional skills qualification in English and mathematics has improved since the previous inspection and is now high.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58507
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	26
Principal/CEO	Wendy Mackie
Telephone number	0161 303 1069
Website	www.works4u.org.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	44							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and parents; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Andrea Machell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Price	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

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