

Professional Training Solutions Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

24–26 April 2018

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders have rapidly established Professional Training Solutions Limited as a good-quality independent learning provider, building on their experience of being a subcontractor.
- Managers and assessors monitor apprentices' progress very closely. As a result, the very large majority of apprentices make good progress.
- Leaders and training staff develop and maintain excellent relationships with employers and partners. They ensure that learning programmes closely meet the needs of employers, apprentices and adult learners in management, early years and health and social care.
- Current learners on recently introduced teaching assistant and care programmes for adults make very good overall progress, and the vast majority achieve their qualifications.
- Adult learners and apprentices develop very good work-related behaviours and skills in care and management programmes. Their attendance and punctuality are good and they are highly motivated to learn and achieve.
- Trainers and assessors have a detailed knowledge of their subjects, which they use well to motivate learners and apprentices.
- Trainers and assessors plan a wide range of interesting teaching and learning activities that help learners and apprentices to make good progress.
- During their observations of training activities, managers focus too much on teaching and process, rather than on the impact of learning.
- Trainers do not always ensure that all adult learners in group training sessions make the progress they should.
- A minority of apprentices receive insufficient support to make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills beyond framework or standards requirements.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Professional Training Solutions Limited (PTS) was established in 2006 and is a small independent learning provider based in Farnham, Surrey. PTS has offered apprenticeships since 2009 in early years, supporting teaching and learning, health and social care, business administration, customer service and leadership and management. Until 2017, when it gained its own contract, PTS delivered these apprenticeships as a subcontractor for other providers. Since November 2017, PTS has also provided a range of employability programmes, functional skills and distance-learning courses for the care sector, through the adult education budget. There are currently 126 intermediate, advanced and higher-level apprentices and 254 adult learners.
- PTS offers courses in Surrey, the Home Counties and London, with a small amount of provision nationally. Teaching and learning take place at community venues, at employers' premises and at the training centre in Farnham.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers need to focus more effectively on learning during observations of learning activities. This will better support them in developing outstanding teaching and assessment practice.
- Tutors need to make sure that all adult learners are able to contribute in learning sessions, so that they achieve their planned learning.
- Managers should ensure that all trainers and assessors support apprentices and adult learners to make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have rapidly and successfully built on the experience gained through several years working as a subcontractor for other providers. As a result, the large majority of apprentices and adult learners make good progress. Managers monitor very closely those apprentices and learners who are at risk of falling behind. They then agree with assessors suitable interventions to help apprentices and learners catch up with their work.
- Managers use thorough quality assurance and performance management systems. They observe and provide improvement-focused feedback on a range of activities, including standardisation meetings and all learning activities. Managers use this information, alongside learners' achievement rates, well to support improvement. Staff benefit from frequent supervision meetings and agree personal development plans, against which they and their managers can measure performance.
- In their observations of tutors' and assessors' teaching and assessment, managers identify many of the improvements needed and they generally identify where good practice exists. However, managers do not always focus sufficiently on the learning that takes place. The focus of observations remains too much on what tutors and assessors do, rather than the impact this has on apprentices and learners and how they are learning.
- Managers have developed excellent relationships with employers and with a wide range of relevant partners. Employers consistently describe very strong professional partnerships with PTS managers and teaching staff, which they value highly. These relationships ensure that learning programmes very closely meet their employees' needs. As a result, employees develop exactly the right skills, knowledge and workplace behaviours.
- Managers design adult employability courses that they tailor closely to prepare learners to become strong candidates for employment. As a result, a very high proportion of adult learners are successful in gaining employment. Managers ensure that tutors and assessors provide equality of opportunity through the flexible way they train and assess apprentices and adult learners. They organise learning and assessment activities around individual and employment needs.
- Managers use a wide range of data very effectively to monitor and manage the provision. They monitor closely apprentices' progress and, during frequent supervision meetings with assessors, agree the actions necessary to remedy slow progress by any apprentices. Managers and teaching staff ensure that any apprentices or adult learners from disadvantaged areas or with particular needs receive the support required to succeed.
- Leaders and managers accurately self-assess the quality of the provision, ensuring that they take into account the views of all stakeholders. They are aware of the strengths of the provision and most of the areas that need further development.
- Leaders and managers have placed insufficient emphasis on improving the pass rates of apprentices taking functional skills examinations. This includes first-time pass rates and overall pass rates of a minority of apprentices, who tutors do challenge beyond the standards and framework requirements, but who have insufficient preparation to pass functional skills tests at level 2.

The governance of the provider

- Governors are effective in providing support and challenge at all levels of the organisation. The effectiveness of the board of directors has recently been augmented by the appointment of a non-executive director with broad management experience, a role which had been carried out informally for several years. This appointment has improved the levels of support and challenge to senior leaders and managers.
- Directors review a wide range of performance reports at well-documented monthly board meetings. They also make good use of the expertise of other providers, with whom managers continue to work, in order that learners complete their training, even when subcontracts are due to be completed. Leaders recognise that they would benefit from another non-executive director who has experience in teaching and learning, particularly when the very small amount of existing subcontracted work is completed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers make sure that recruitment processes are thorough and result in the selection of appropriately checked staff. Leaders ensure that staff and learners have a good understanding of safeguarding. Learners know who they can talk to if they have any concerns. Managers record any concerns in a safeguarding and welfare log and they take appropriate action in response to any concerns. Designated safeguarding managers have good contacts with local authority safeguarding staff. Managers and staff check carefully the health and safety arrangements at learners' workplaces.
- Apprentices and adult learners have a good awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Managers frequently review the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan to ensure that risks are minimised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The vast majority of learning sessions are stimulating and motivate learners and apprentices well. Learners work very well in small groups and discussions and engage in mature debates. Trainers manage these sessions very well.
- Trainers and assessors use the initial assessments of learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills effectively to set targets to improve these. In a small minority of adult learning sessions, staff do not check that all learners fully understand the topic at hand, and a few of the more vocal learners are the most successful in gaining the trainers' attention. As a result, in these sessions, a few learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Adult learners enjoy the opportunities they have to develop their skills and gain useful qualifications through well-designed activities and work-related, short distance-learning courses. These include courses on dementia, autism, infection control and dealing with challenging behaviour. Employers value these qualifications highly.
- Learners on adult learning employability programmes benefit from the close and effective partnerships between PTS and external organisations which include Jobcentre Plus. PTS

staff often use employer and local community premises to ensure that the learning programmes are available in hard-to-reach areas.

- The majority of learners and apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity and know how to meet the different needs of their clients and customers. For example, those on early years care and on health and social care programmes receive good information about professional boundaries and show high levels of respect for others.
- Staff are very well qualified and experienced and use their professional relationships with employers to good effect. Learning sessions in care homes take place away from residents to ensure that learners have time to concentrate and share experiences.
- Trainers and assessors plan apprentices' activities in the workplace extremely well. These are well designed and meet employers' needs very effectively. Experienced workplace staff support apprentices very well, and this helps the apprentices to achieve their full potential. For example, recently recruited apprentices on management apprenticeships play a significant and effective role in recruiting staff for their organisations and provide good support to senior managers.
- Trainers and assessors give learners and apprentices detailed feedback on assignments and assessed work. This helps learners and apprentices to understand what they need to do to improve. Most use the feedback well and extend their learning beyond the programme requirements. Trainers and assessors make useful comments on the content to make sure that learners and apprentices have a good grasp of their subject areas. However, a minority of staff do not correct spelling and grammatical errors in written work.
- Most learners and apprentices adopt safe working practices and know how to keep themselves safe. For example, trainers and assessors in care settings reinforce the importance of working safely with medicines and maintaining high levels of infection control. Learners and apprentices understand fully the risks associated with these aspects of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners and apprentices are well behaved, respectful and courteous and they demonstrate good attitudes to their studies. Attendance and punctuality are very good, and the vast majority produce high standards of work. As a result, they make good progress.
- Learners and apprentices receive effective and impartial guidance that helps them make well-informed decisions about their next steps. Many learners and apprentices go on to higher-level qualifications and are given higher levels of responsibility. Adult learners on employability programmes gain good employment skills and participate in work experience with employers looking to recruit staff. Learners have guaranteed interviews for jobs and most gain employment after completing their courses.
- Trainers and assessors use learning sessions very well to promote British values. They are adept at using group discussions to help learners and apprentices understand concepts and put them into practice. For example, one adult learner showed confidence and maturity in respectfully challenging others to explain their values and compare them with

values from other communities.

- Learners and apprentices feel safe. They are very clear about personal safety and potential risks when using social media and the internet. PTS staff reinforce these topics and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism very well through group discussions, prominent displays and posters.
- Most learners and apprentices improve their skills in English and mathematics in workshops, learning sessions and through distance-learning courses. However, trainers and assessors do not provide enough guidance to a small minority of apprentices on how to practise and develop their English skills in the workplace.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- PTS took up its apprenticeship contract in late 2017, and so no apprentices had yet completed their programmes at the time of inspection. However, all apprentices have remained on their programmes and the vast majority make very good progress. Many are ahead of their individual assessment targets. Apprentices also make very good progress in developing the skills and knowledge required in the workplace.
- Senior managers place a strong focus on improving apprentices' English and mathematics skills. All apprentices already had, or have now gained, the required functional skills English and mathematics qualifications for their apprenticeships. However, of those apprentices taking functional skills or other qualifications in mathematics at level 2, around a third have not passed. This qualification would help prepare apprentices to move on to courses at the next level.
- Most learners on the recently introduced adult learning provision achieve well. The small minority of learners on distance-learning provision have completed their courses and achieved their qualifications. Those following the year-long teaching assistants programme are making expected progress, although some are waiting for the work experience element to start. Adult learners achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics well. There are no discernible differences in the achievements of identifiable groups of learners and apprentices.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Good

- At the time of inspection, there were 254 learners on employability programmes, distance-learning provision up to level 3 and functional skills courses up to level 2. Managers have made sure that the recently introduced adult learning courses align closely with the needs of employers and practitioners in the care sector. PTS managers provide a wide range of short vocational courses through distance learning and diplomas for learners. Managers also provide other successful courses, such as training teaching assistants.
- Employers value the employability courses. Learners receive good and impartial careers advice and have guaranteed interviews for jobs. As a result, most learners gain jobs in

the retail, customer service and care sector.

- Well-qualified and experienced trainers and assessors make good use of their knowledge, skills and highly effective relationships with employers and national bodies. They work very closely with employers, who make sure that learners have sufficient time for learning activities in the workplace. As a result, learners make good progress with assignments and workbooks and with their qualifications.
- Trainers use a wide range of well-planned practical activities on courses for teaching assistants. For example, they devise activities that help learners understand how young children may think and act when creating displays of their own work. Staff help learners understand fully the implications for health and safety and the importance of risk assessing activities when using a range of resources with young children. These may include using adhesives, drawing pins, staples and paper clips.
- Trainers use effective questioning during individual and group learning sessions to help learners reflect and extend their answers. In a small number of group sessions, the more able and vocal learners occasionally dominate the sessions and trainers do not always check the learning and understanding of all learners well enough.
- Staff help learners to develop their English skills well. Trainers and assessors generally correct spelling and grammar mistakes in learners' written work and help them to phrase text so that their statements are clear. Assessors do not help a small minority of learners on distance-learning courses to improve their spelling and grammar skills and to progress at a faster pace.
- Trainers and assessors ensure that learners develop a very good understanding of British values and modern life in Britain. Learners know how to apply such concepts to their work settings. They have a good understanding of safeguarding and health and safety in the workplace.

Apprenticeships

Good

- At the time of the inspection, 126 apprentices were studying on intermediate, advanced and higher apprenticeships. Approximately one third are on the new standards and the rest follow frameworks. Most apprentices study health and social care, childcare and management.
- Managers and staff plan all the apprenticeships well and they fully meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship programme. Apprentices benefit from very good training in the workplace and in the classroom to develop effectively their practical skills and their knowledge of theory.
- Managers make sure that apprenticeship programmes meet the needs of employers well. Employers value the contribution of their apprentices. For example, they rightly comment that apprentices in early years settings work very well with staff, parents and carers and children and work well in teams. Most employers are fully involved in the planning and review process for their apprentices and help support their progress well.
- Apprentices make good progress. The very large majority of apprentices are on target to complete their programme on time. Apprentices work hard, grow in confidence and demonstrate professional attitudes in the workplace. For example, early years apprentices are very enthusiastic and work confidently and competently when leading children's

activities. They work well with children, such as when planning and undertaking a 'going on a bear hunt' activity. They make good use of a soft play area to encourage children to act out a story successfully.

- Assessors have high expectations of their apprentices. They make good use of their industrial experience to enliven learning, with examples that help apprentices to link theory and practice. Assessors are effective in identifying opportunities for apprentices to gather evidence efficiently, through their work, to meet the criteria of the qualifications. As a result, apprentices make good progress in completing their qualifications and understand their job roles well.
- Assessors review apprentices' progress frequently. They are careful to involve employers in the process and gather useful information from them on the progress that apprentices make in the workplace. In reviews, assessors encourage apprentices well to reflect on progress they have made. They then use the information gained from such discussions to set clear targets for learning. These targets include a focus on improving skills as well as achieving qualification outcomes.
- Assessors provide detailed feedback on assessed work that helps learners to improve. For example, in response to an assignment on equality and diversity, an assessor provided detailed feedback on how it could be improved by not using generalisations when referring to ethnicity. However, a few assessors place insufficient focus on developing apprentices' English skills.
- Staff provide good initial information, advice and guidance. Apprentices' induction covers the requirements of the qualification and possible career routes thoroughly. This ensures that apprentices make well-informed choices about their programmes and their destinations afterwards. For example, an assessor skilfully inducted a learner into an apprenticeship, carefully establishing an understanding of the learner's background, qualifications, ambitions and the make-up of the qualification to be studied. Assessors ensure that they explain clearly the course content, assessment requirements and the use of the e-portfolio.
- Apprentices are aware of their next steps and progression opportunities and are articulate about their career plans. Most are confident about remaining in permanent full-time positions.
- Assessors ensure that apprentices develop a very good understanding of British values and know how these apply to their work settings. Assessors also help apprentices to keep themselves safe and work in a safe environment. Staff cover safeguarding topics thoroughly at induction and reinforce them in reviews. Learners are fully aware of the dangers they may face from radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58562
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	49
Principal/CEO	Jackie Denyer
Telephone number	01252 712945
Website	www.protrain-solutions.co.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+
	-	114	-	126	-	12	-	2
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	12	4	25	69	-	16		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by a director as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; 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

Bob Cowdrey, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Shackleton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector

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