

# Anne Clarke Associates Limited

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Inspection date

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision, and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health, public services and care
- Retail and commercial enterprise
- Preparation for life and work
- Business, administration and law

## Description of the provider

1. Anne Clarke Associates Limited (ACA Ltd) is a private training provider based in Downham Market, Norfolk, which delivers Train to Gain, apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes in a range of sector subject areas, the largest of which is health, public services and care. Over the past three years, the company has significantly expanded from working with 654 learners in 2006/07, to 1606 learners in 2008/09.
2. At the time of the inspection there were a total of 1458 learners. Of these, 849 were taking a qualification in health, public services and care, 192 in retail and commercial enterprise, 287 in preparation for life and work, 123 in business, administration and law and seven in information and communication technology.
3. ACA Ltd contracts with the East of England LSC. It delivers training and assessment across a large geographical area, which includes Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire.
4. In 2008, the unemployment rate in the areas covered by ACA Ltd ranged from 5.7% in Norfolk, which was at the national average for Great Britain, to 4% in Hertfordshire. In 2007/08 in the East of England region, 64.7% of 16-year-olds achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, which is close to the national average. However, the proportion ranged from 60.1% in Norfolk to 71% in Hertfordshire. In the 2001 census, 1.6% of the population of Norfolk were from minority ethnic groups, which is significantly lower than the national average. ACA Ltd has not been inspected previously.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Retail and commercial enterprise	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. The provision in health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise, preparation for life and work, and business, administration and law is satisfactory.
6. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall; success rates are high on many Train to Gain programmes in 2008/09. However, for many learners, progress at the beginning of their programmes was slow.
7. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching, training and learning are generally satisfactory, although planning for learning is insufficient in some sector subject areas, as is the monitoring and recording of individual learners' progress. Assessment is satisfactory. The range of programmes meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well and employer engagement is good. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are generally appropriate.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity. Programme development is well managed, business planning is effective and ACA Ltd has strengthened performance monitoring. Quality assurance arrangements are underdeveloped.

### Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. ACA Ltd's capacity to improve is good. Although many learners were making slow progress completing Train to Gain qualifications in 2007/08, very effective action by managers has ensured that the pace of learners' progress significantly improved in 2009. Success rates in Train to Gain have also significantly improved in 2008/09 and are now high in many programmes across the provision. This was achieved in the context of a significant expansion in learner numbers and included the further development of relatively new areas of work, for example in hospitality and catering and in apprenticeship programmes. From January 2009, senior managers have introduced much improved processes to monitor performance across the organisation. An effective programme of staff development also contributed to improvements in staff and learner performance. ACA Ltd has successfully met its challenging targets for learner recruitment. Employer engagement and links with employers continue to be good.
10. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and the development plan satisfactorily identifies actions that support quality improvement.

## Key strengths

- High success rates in Train to Gain in 2008/09
- Good development of learners' personal and workplace skills
- Good employer engagement
- Very effective management of programme development

## Areas for Improvement

- Some slow progress by learners
- Insufficient planning, monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- Underdeveloped quality assurance

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Despite the significant growth in learner numbers between 2006/07 and 2008/09, success rates on Train to Gain improved in 2008/09 and are high across many programmes. It is too early to make judgements on apprenticeship framework completions, as the apprenticeship programmes are still relatively new.
12. Learners develop good personal and workplace skills. They demonstrate increased confidence in the workplace and develop a good range of work-related skills and knowledge. In literacy and numeracy in particular, learners also confidently apply their new skills at home and in their local communities.
13. ACA Ltd does not sufficiently monitor the extent to which there is any substantial difference in learners' achievement by age, gender or ethnicity. The standard of learners' work is generally satisfactory.
14. Progress for some learners in Train to Gain across most of the sector subject areas was slow in 2007/08. In some instances, learners exceeded the planned end date of their training programme. However, learners' progress on Train to Gain improved significantly in the second half of 2008/09. Progress for some apprentices is slow, with too much emphasis placed on learners working to achieve key skills and technical certificates at the beginning of their programmes, and thus not making sufficient progress with the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) until late in their programme.

### Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are generally satisfactory, although teachers do not pay sufficient attention to planning for training and learning in some sector subject areas. The involvement of employers in learning ranges from satisfactory to good.
16. The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall. It takes place in the workplace, with assessors demonstrating considerable flexibility over the timing of assessments to fit round differing work patterns. Most assessors/trainers have good recent occupational experience and a thorough understanding of the qualifications.
17. Staff do not always monitor and record learners' progress and achievement sufficiently. Target-setting is ineffective in some instances and progress reviews

for some learners are poor. The recording on individual learning plans and progress reviews is not always sufficient.

18. The range of programmes to meets the needs and interests of learners and employers is good, as is employer engagement. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are generally appropriate.

## Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

19. Leadership and management are satisfactory. ACA Ltd has managed the rapid expansion and programme development of both its Train to Gain and apprenticeship provision well, in response to the needs of learners and employers throughout the east of England. The organisation has significantly developed its programmes to offer a very wide range of qualifications in different subject areas, at different levels and across an extensive geographical area. The organisation has met its challenging contract targets for 2008/09 and this well-managed development has ensured that a satisfactory quality of programmes has been maintained during a period of substantial growth and change.
20. Business planning is very effective. Managers have improved performance monitoring in 2009. Staff now have key performance indicators which are clearly linked to the success of learners and which senior managers closely monitor. Assessors/trainers meet very frequently on an individual basis with their managers to undertake a detailed review of learners' progress. The staff structure is well devised and supportive and extensive staff recruitment and development is making a good contribution to effective programme development. Learners' success rates in Train to Gain have improved in 2008/09 and are high in much of the provision.
21. The provider meets government requirements for providers of work-based learning for the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. ACA Ltd has a safeguarding policy, has conducted recent staff training on safeguarding and has appointed a health and safety officer with specific responsibility for the safeguarding of learners. ACA Ltd's staff have appropriate criminal record bureau checks. However, associate staff who are subcontracted are not yet adequately checked.
22. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Programme arrangements are very flexible and ACA Ltd places great emphasis on ensuring that learners can fully access its programmes. There are good adjustments to ensure that learners

can access assessment and training at times which suit them and their employers.

23. A recently reviewed equality of opportunity policy includes all aspects of legislative requirements. A recently formed equality and diversity steering group has already identified improvements that ACA Ltd wishes to make in the development of equality of opportunity. Learners receive good training at induction which is further reinforced during the review process, although the latter is often cursory. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The analysis of recruitment and success data are insufficient to monitor the extent to which all groups of learners are sufficiently represented and succeeding in their programmes.
24. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The process is suitably inclusive of employers', learners' and staff views. The report is broadly accurate and staff awareness of the content is generally good. However, the commentary regarding the leadership and management of the provision and ACA Ltd's approach to equality of opportunity is insufficient. The quality improvement plan identifies the key areas for improvement across the provision, who is responsible for the actions and realistic timescales for achievement. Actions are not yet formally reviewed.
25. The planning of training and learning is insufficient, both at programme level and for individual learners. Where gaps in learners' skills have been identified, it is not always clear how the training is planned to meet learners' needs. The recording of training is also insufficient. These issues are not identified in the self-assessment report.
26. Quality assurance arrangements are underdeveloped. ACA Ltd has identified this and has recently appointed an additional member of staff to coordinate quality assurance. Many of the formal quality assurance arrangements are new and it is too early to judge their impact. ACA Ltd does satisfactorily collect and analyse learner feedback and complaints are swiftly acknowledged and resolved. However, observations of induction, assessment, training and reviews are insufficient. The analysis and use of management information data are also currently insufficient.

## What learners like:

- The approachable and supportive assessors
- The opportunity to develop work-related skills for the future
- Getting a qualification to help improve job prospects
- Gaining self-confidence and increased confidence in the job role
- Learning how knowledge links to practice
- The fact that it's never too late to gain a qualification
- The literacy courses helping with the NVQs
- The literacy and numeracy courses helping at work and in their everyday lives

## What learners think could improve:

- The time it takes to start the programme after the initial sign-up period
- Explanations about what the training programmes involve
- The continuity of assessor
- The frequency of contact with assessors
- Feedback on assessments
- The time their workplaces give to work on NVQs
- 'Maybe helped me too much, could have challenged me more'

## Sector subject areas

### Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

#### Context

27. At the time of the inspection, 739 learners were enrolled on Train to Gain programmes in the health and care sector, which include NVQ levels 2 to 4 in care, levels 2 and 3 in children's care, learning and development and level 2 in health and social care support services. Thirty-two apprentices and 78 advanced apprentices were also enrolled on relatively new health and care apprenticeship programmes. All learners are employed in settings across the east of England, which include residential homes for the elderly, nursing homes, domiciliary care agencies, health clinics, pre-school provision and nurseries. Overall 80% of learners are female and most learners are White British. All training takes place in the workplace, with 22 assessors/trainers and three vocational coordinators.

#### Strengths

- High success rates in Train to Gain health and social care level 2 in 2008/09
- Good development of personal and workplace skills

#### Areas for improvement

- Some slow progress by learners
- Poor progress reviews

#### Achievements and standards

28. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The success rate for Train to Gain learners in health and social care at level 2 in 2008/09 to date, is high at 88%, which is an increase from the success rate of 82% in 2007/08. In 2008/09 to date, success rates for learners in health and social care level 3 and children's learning and development levels 2 and 3 are broadly satisfactory. The success rate for support services level 2 is low at 54%. Apprentices and advanced apprentices are at an early stage of their programme, with few completions of frameworks to date. Success rates for technical certificates and key skills, completed at the beginning of the programmes, are satisfactory.
29. The development of learners' personal and workplace skills is good. Learners become more confident and can clearly describe positive changes in the way they work. Most employers observe an improvement in learners' understanding of their job role, increased confidence and development of a good range of work-related skills and knowledge. The standard of learners' work in their portfolios is satisfactory.

30. Progress for some learners was slow. Many learners on Train to Gain programmes experienced a delay between enrolment and the start of training and assessment. While apprentices are working towards technical certificate and key skills at the beginning of their programmes, they are not encouraged to gather evidence for their NVQ at the same time. For some apprentices, there can be a long gap after they complete the technical certificate and key skills, before actually starting the NVQ. However, learner progress improved significantly in the last four months of the 2008/09 contract year.

### Quality of provision

31. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Training and individual coaching are satisfactory. Learners are able to relate clearly what they are learning to improvements in their practice. They can choose optional NVQ units that provide opportunities to follow personal interests and to develop new knowledge and skills. Employers are satisfactorily involved in learning. Most provide an interesting range of in-house training, with some examples of extensive training and with assessors liaising with employers to ensure that coaching and employer training are effectively coordinated. However, coaching is sometimes insufficiently planned and ACA Ltd does not always sufficiently record all the training and coaching that takes place.
32. Assessment practice is satisfactory overall. Most assessors use an appropriate range of assessment methods, and plans are generally clearly written and fit well with workplace routines. Assessment requirements are well understood by most learners. For a minority of learners, poor assessment practice is adversely affecting their progress.
33. The identification and delivery of support for additional learning needs are satisfactory. Basic skills screening takes place routinely and all learners receive written confirmation of results. Learners requiring support are clearly signposted to additional sources of support and in some cases receive support from assessors. Learners demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity and most can give basic examples of how they apply this to their practice.
34. Progress reviews are poor, which ACA Ltd recognises in the self-assessment report. A small number of learners use electronic portfolios, which provide clear information on progress. However, staff undertaking reviews do not enable learners to identify clearly their ongoing progress and achievement. Action points are often unclear and sometimes without completion dates. Staff's recording of learning about health and safety and equality and diversity is insufficient. Many reviews do not include written comments from employers and sometimes no comments from the assessor. The standard of recording in individual learning plans is frequently poor. Target dates for the completion of specific training are often the same for all learners or merely a learner's expected end date. Individual learning plans for apprentices do not always include all the required components of their framework.

35. The range of programmes satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners and employers. The provision is responsive to the needs of employers and the local community. To the mutual benefit of learners and employers, learners develop skills and gain qualifications which support them well in doing their job and progressing in their work. Employers ensure that learners carry out a variety of tasks with a range of service users. Often they increase learners' responsibilities as they progress in their training.
36. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Induction is memorable and effective in informing learners about the key aspects of their programmes. Assessors/trainers usefully discuss career ambitions with learners and assist them in choosing appropriate optional units.

#### Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers and staff effectively monitor key performance indicators and learners' progress, on a regular basis. Internal verification is effective. Staff are experienced and appropriately qualified. Newly appointed staff receive a thorough induction to the organisation, followed by extensive and supportive shadowing arrangements. There are early indications that changes in management arrangements in 2009 are leading to significant improvements in learners' progress and success.
38. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and learners have at least a satisfactory understanding of key equality issues. All staff take part in the self-assessment process and the self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

## Retail and commercial enterprise

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

39. At the time of the inspection, 179 learners were enrolled on Train to Gain programmes, 120 in hospitality, 54 in warehousing and five in retailing. Learners are working towards a variety of NVQs, including level 2 food and drink service, level 2 multi-skilled hospitality services and level 2 distribution, warehousing and storage. Ten apprentices and three advanced apprentices were also enrolled on relatively new apprenticeship programmes. All learners are employed and work in a variety of organisations across the east of England, ranging from large national retail and hospitality companies to small, family-run catering businesses. Overall 56% of learners are female and the majority are White British. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace, with 11 assessors/trainers.

### Strengths

- High success rates in Train to Gain
- Good individual support for learners from assessors and employers
- Highly responsive programmes to meet learner and employer needs

### Areas for improvement

- Some slow progress
- Insufficient planning for learning
- Ineffective target-setting

### Achievement and Standards

40. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes are high. This was identified in the self-assessment report. In 2007/08 the overall success rate in hospitality was 84% and in 2008/09 it is currently 87%. In warehousing and distribution, with five learners in 2007/08 the success rate was 100% and with 106 learners in 2008/09, it is currently 85%. No apprentices have yet completed their programme of learning.
41. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and learners' portfolios meet the requirements of the qualifications. Most portfolios are satisfactorily structured and organised, although not all are well presented. Some learners rely too much on their assessors to lead the production of evidence for their portfolios. Most learners understand their qualification and are appropriately motivated to achieve.
42. The progress of some learners was slow, with many learners continuing in learning beyond the planned end date of their programme. Some learners

experienced a significant time period between signing up for their programme and receiving their first assessor/trainer visit. However, learners' progress did improve significantly in the last three-months of the 2008/09 contract year.

### Quality of Provision

43. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Support for individual learners from assessors and employers is good. Assessors/trainers visit learners frequently, with considerable flexibility over the timings to make the most effective use of assessment opportunities, for example in the evenings, at weekends and during busy shifts. Most assessors/trainers have good recent occupational experience, which they use to good effect with learners. Employers actively encourage their employees to undertake the qualifications, with examples of in-house training directly linked to the NVQ. Many employers have a good understanding of their employees' programmes and contribute well to learner assessment feedback.
44. Induction is satisfactory. Learners gain a correct understanding of the NVQ, of the assessment process and of equality and diversity. Initial assessment is satisfactory, with the appropriate identification of learners' literacy and numeracy needs. ACA Ltd also assesses learners' preferred learning styles, but does not use this information sufficiently to inform individual learning plans. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors use an appropriate variety of methods, including observations, product evidence and questioning.
45. Staff do not plan learning sufficiently well. It is not clear how the training needs analysis, undertaken with all learners, links with planning for the actual training learners receive. Learners are not always sufficiently aware of the training they will receive to develop their skills and knowledge. Learning is not sufficiently individualised, and learners often have identical learning hours and planned activities, regardless of previous experience and qualifications. Assessors do not have sufficient access to occupationally relevant training resources to use with learners.
46. Staff do not always set learning targets effectively with learners. Individual learning plans are not always completed at the start of a learners' programme and many remain incomplete. The plans do not always identify the expected completion date for learners or identify specific targets for the completion of aspects of their programme. Targets set on assessment visits and reviews are not sufficiently specific. Reviews are sometimes late, with insufficient focus on identifying learners' progress, which is not always fully documented.
47. ACA Ltd provides a highly responsive range of programmes, which meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. The range of provision in hospitality is good, with a variety of NVQs offered across the breadth of the sector. Assessors/trainers make good use of optional units to match learners' job roles and working environments. In warehousing, learners are offered an additional qualification in lift truck driving, to support their skills development

and employability. ACA Ltd have responded positively to direct approaches from employers, to provide specific programmes which meet their needs.

48. Guidance and support are satisfactory overall. However, mid-programme and exit information, advice and guidance are not always sufficiently well implemented.

### Leadership and Management

49. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers have significantly improved performance monitoring in 2009, with all assessors/trainers working to key performance indicators, which managers regularly review. On Train to Gain programmes, this is beginning to improve the pace of learners' progress, particularly from April to July 2009, and overall success rates. Staff induction is satisfactory, as is communication within the organisation. Staff and learners have at least a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity, and some learners' understanding is good. The monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace is satisfactory.
50. Internal verification of assessments is generally satisfactory and meets qualification requirements. Arrangements to ensure sufficient quality monitoring of all aspects of the learners' programme are not yet fully established. Assessors/trainers are not routinely observed carrying out inductions, training and progress reviews and ACA Ltd staff do not sufficiently check the quality of employer training in the workplace. The use of data to monitor performance is beginning to improve, but is currently underdeveloped.
51. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and is sufficiently inclusive of staff and learners. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and identifies many of the key strengths and areas for improvement.

## Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

52. At the time of the inspection, 287 learners were enrolled on Train to Gain programmes in literacy and numeracy. Learners work towards national Skills for Life qualifications at levels 1 and 2. All learners are employed and work in a wide variety of settings across the east of England. Overall, 76% of learners are female and most learners are from White British backgrounds. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace, with six assessors/trainers.

### Strengths

- High success rates in literacy level 2 in 2008/09
- Good development of personal and work skills
- Good individual coaching

### Areas for Improvement

- Slow progress in level 1 literacy
- Insufficient planning, monitoring and recording of learning
- Underdeveloped quality assurance

### Achievement and standards

53. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2008/09 to date, success rates are high in literacy level 2 at 85%, a significant improvement from 74% in 2007/08. Success rates in literacy level 1 are satisfactory. Success rates in numeracy level 1 are high at 81%, but the number of learners participating is low. Success rates for numeracy level 2 are satisfactory.
54. Learners develop a good range of personal and work skills in literacy and numeracy and greatly increase in self-confidence. They use these skills confidently at home, particularly in helping their children and in their local communities. One learner now applies these newly developed skills by helping out in a mathematics club in the local primary school. Learners also usefully apply their skills in the workplace. For example in a care home, case study and report writing is now more thorough and team leaders in a warehouse are able to write and communicate more effectively. Learner progression is good, with many learners progressing from literacy to numeracy qualifications at both levels 1 and 2.
55. Some learners made slow progress in 2007/08 and in 2008/09, going beyond the expected completion date of their programmes. However, learner progress improved significantly in the last three-months of the 2008/09 contract year.

## Quality of provision

56. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Individual coaching is good. Staff develop productive and highly respectful relationships with learners. Assessors/trainers provide effective individual support which enables learners to feel secure in learning. Learners greatly value this support and are comfortable to discuss openly their development needs. Learners further enhance their skills through independent study and research. Assessors/trainers make good use of practical, work-related activities to reinforce learning. However, the training is over-reliant on workbooks and the use of past papers.
57. Initial assessment is satisfactory and appropriately identifies learners' levels of literacy and numeracy. However, the diagnostic assessment does not sufficiently identify learners' specific individual needs. Assessment is satisfactory overall and assessors/trainers provide constructive feedback to learners.
58. The planning, monitoring and recording of learning are insufficient. When planning learning, assessor/trainers make insufficient use of the results of learning style questionnaires. Staff do not always set appropriately detailed targets with learners in their individual learning plans, and targets are insufficiently linked to vocational work areas. Individual learning plans do not take sufficient account of prior achievement for some learners. The frequency of reviews is inconsistent; some learners do not have sufficient reviews, while others have too many. Employers are not always sufficiently involved in the review process. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.
59. The range of provision satisfactorily meets the needs of learners and employers and is available across a wide geographic area. Assessors/trainers meet with learners at times to meet a variety of shift patterns. Learners from a wide range of vocational sectors access these qualifications in literacy and numeracy.
60. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance from ACA Ltd staff about the range of qualifications and progression routes available. Learners receive a satisfactory induction to programmes.

## Leadership and Management

61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have monthly performance management meetings with staff, to monitor the progress of learners. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the pace of learners' progress and on improvements in success rates, particularly from April to July 2009. Staff induction and staff development are satisfactory. However, not all assessors/trainers have appropriate teaching/training qualifications. The Skills for Life strategy is not sufficiently well developed or implemented.

62. ACA Ltd successfully promotes equality and diversity and provides learners with good opportunities to develop their potential. Arrangements to ensure that employers and learners are aware of health and safety and equality and diversity are satisfactory.
63. Quality assurance is underdeveloped. Processes to assure the quality of all aspects of the learners' journey, such as induction, assessment, training and reviews, are not yet fully in place. Managers do not systematically analyse and use data to inform planning or to monitor the provision. The sharing of good practice is not yet systematic across the provision.
64. Staff, learners and many employers are involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is detailed and generally accurate and, together with the quality improvement plan, is supporting the development of the provision well.

## Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

### Context

65. At the time of the inspection, 94 learners were enrolled on Train to Gain and 29 apprentices on business administration, customer service and management programmes. Learners are based with employers across the east of England, in a range of organisations in retail, manufacturing and health services. All learners are employed. Overall 72% of learners are female and 8% are from a minority ethnic group. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace, with seven assessors/trainers.

### Strengths

- High success rates in team leading and business administration in Train to Gain in 2008/09
- Particularly well-matched programmes to meet learners' needs
- Good employer engagement

### Areas for improvement

- Some slow progress by learners
- Insufficient planning for individual learning
- Underdeveloped quality assurance

### Achievement and standards

66. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates in team leading and business administration in Train to Gain are high in 2008/09. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Success rates in customer service and management are satisfactory in 2008/09.
67. Learners develop skills in carrying out their work roles more effectively and gain a better understanding of their work routines and practices. Some of the learners develop their literacy and numeracy skills and achieve additional literacy and numeracy qualifications.
68. Progress for many learners on Train to Gain was slow in the first half of 2008/09, with too many learners continuing in learning beyond their planned end date. Some learners experienced a significant delay between signing up and initial assessment and receiving their first assessor/trainer visit. However, learners' progress did improve significantly in the last four-months of the 2008/09 contract year.

69. The apprenticeship programmes have been recently introduced. Many apprentices are making slow progress in achieving their frameworks. Too much emphasis is placed on working towards achieving the key skills, technical certificate and completing the employer rights and responsibilities workbooks at the beginning of learners' programmes. Learners do not make sufficient progress with the NVQ until too late into the programme.

#### Quality of provision

70. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Assessment takes place in the workplace by competent assessors using a range of methods, and assessment is well recorded. New assessors are well supported and working towards their assessor awards. ACA Ltd is using e-portfolios for some learners and the traditional portfolio approach with others. The e-portfolio and tracker system benefits learners through the effective communication with their assessors between visits, and the feedback they receive on the evidence submitted.
71. On-the-job training and coaching are generally delivered by employers and complement the NVQ. Assessors/trainers pay insufficient attention to planning for individualised training and learning. Although learners complete a training needs analysis, it is not sufficiently clear how this links to planning for learners' individual training. Assessors/trainers do not plan the off-the-job training and coaching sufficiently well, and many learners are unclear about how they will receive their training. Learning resources which are mainly paper based are satisfactory.
72. Programmes are particularly well-matched to meet the needs and interests of learners, through the provision of a good range of programmes at different levels, in a very wide geographical area across the east of England. Learners fully understand the potential benefits of their learning to the success of their company and are keen to progress further.
73. Employer engagement is good. ACA Ltd works with a wide range of companies and is proactive in finding new organisations to work with. ACA Ltd has good links with employers and many referrals come on personal recommendations. Communication with employers is very effective. Some employers receive weekly progress updates which they find very helpful in monitoring learner progress. Most employers are effectively involved in learners' programmes.
74. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory and adequately meet learners' needs. The induction process is satisfactory. Initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs is timely and appropriate. Where ACA Ltd is not able to meet individual learners' needs, learners are signposted to other specialist providers. Vocational tutors give adequate additional support to learners during workplace visits. However, the assessors/trainers are not sufficiently well qualified or experienced to support learners with complex learning needs.

## Leadership and management

75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessors/trainers have relevant and current vocational experience and a good working knowledge of the qualifications they are assessing. New team members receive a good induction and are well supported in settling into their job role, which includes a period of work shadowing. Continuous professional development for staff in the main focuses on assessment, with insufficient emphasis on teaching and learning. At the time of the inspection, not all staff have an appropriate teacher training qualification, but there are plans for these staff to take an award in preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector.
76. Communication is effective throughout ACA Ltd, with individual meetings every six weeks between the assessors/trainers and their line managers, three monthly standardisation meetings, regular team meetings and a number of planned training days per year. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements.
77. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory through induction and reviews, and learners have at least a satisfactory understanding of key equality issues, particularly in relation to their working environment. The monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace is satisfactory.
78. Quality assurance is underdeveloped. Staff have a number of key performance indicators, and improved, regular performance monitoring has recently been introduced. Staff do not use data sufficiently well to monitor the provision and to secure improvements. ACA Ltd does not record the reasons for learners leaving their programmes early. This is identified as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. Processes to observe induction, assessment, on- and off-the-job training and reviews are not yet fully in place. The sharing of good practice is not systematic across the provision.
79. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, with the identification of many of the key strengths and areas for improvement.