

NVQUK

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. NVQUK is a privately owned national training company. The head office is based in Winkfield, Berkshire. NVQUK provides training in health and social care and skills for life for learners working in the care sector. NVQUK delivers training and assessment to four major care sector organisations and operates on 158 sites throughout England. NVQUK contracts with all Learning and Skill Councils (LSC) in England, with the LSC for the South East taking the lead role. Contracts are currently in place for Train to Gain and work-based learning (WBL). WBL includes apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship training. Government funded training is approximately equivalent to 50% of NVQUK's income. The company currently has 107 staff, most of whom are full time.
2. At the time of the inspection, NVQUK had 490 directly funded learners. Three quarter of learners are Train to Gain and the remainder are work-based learners enrolled onto either an apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship programme. Some Train to Gain learners enrol onto literacy and/or numeracy skills for life qualifications followed by the national vocational qualification (NVQ). In 2007/08, 15% of learners were male and 70% registered their ethnic group as White.
3. NVQUK provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - BUPA Care Homes

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	367 learners
Apprenticeships	123 apprentices

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	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Health and social care	2

Overall effectiveness

4. The overall effectiveness of NVQUK is good. Senior staff provide good leadership. They have managed effectively the introduction of a new management structure and made considerable changes to the way training is delivered, both of which are a response to increasing learning numbers and the need to make further improvements to the quality of provision. Between 2005 and 2007/08, the number of Train to Gain learners achieving their qualifications steadily declined. In 2007/08, the numbers of learners achieving their qualification and completing in the agreed timescale was low. However in 2008/09, overall learner achievements have much improved. Since the introduction of the changes to the delivery of training, achievement rates and completion within the agreed timescale are very high. Learners are motivated well and enjoy the training. They develop good work skills and apply these effectively. Many learners progress further in employment or further study.
5. Training and assessment arrangements are good, although the quality of learning resources varies across regions and there is insufficient availability of learning resources for those who want to study independently. The arrangements for identifying and supporting learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs is underdeveloped. The range of health and social care programmes offered meets learners' and employers' needs well. Support for learners is good.

6. Learners feel safe and arrangements to safeguard them are good. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. NVQUK has worked well with employers to improve training, although there is insufficient involvement by them in the monitoring of learners' progress and the quality of the training. NVQUK has good capacity to improve further.

Main findings

- Overall, outcomes are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, success rates have been declining and in 2007/08 were low. However, success rates in 2008/09 have much improved and in the second half of the year are particularly high.
- Since the previous inspection, many learners have made slow progress and not completed within the agreed timescale. However in 2008/09, completion rates within the agreed timescale have much improved and within the second half of the year are particularly high.
- Learners are motivated well and enjoy the training. They develop and improve their work skills and confidence and effectively apply the knowledge gained from the training. Many learners completing the awards gain promotion and/or continue onto higher levels of study.
- Learning is effectively developed through a flexible, challenging and learner focused approach. Training coordinators visit learners frequently and offer effective individual coaching. Small group training sessions support the development of knowledge and help learners share their experiences. However, the quality of learning resources varies between training coordinators and regions. Resources for independent learning are not readily available.
- Assessment practice is good and learners have a clear understanding of the progress they are making. The use of technology effectively supports learners' recording of evidence gathered towards gaining their qualifications.
- NVQUK recognises that the planning and support for all learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs is insufficiently developed. However, those learners in receipt of additional learning make good progress.
- NVQUK offers a good range of health and social care programmes. Training coordinators work well with work supervisors to ensure that learners are working towards qualifications that meet their personal development needs and enhance the organisation's business requirements.
- Managers provide good leadership and plan well to meet the needs of the learners, employers, sector and NVQUK. Changes to NVQUK's management structure and the implementation of a new training approach has significantly improved learners' chances of succeeding.
- Partnerships with health and social care organisations and major care employers are good. Such links have led to effective developments in the planning of training. However, not all employers are involved in the monitoring of learners' progress and the quality of provision.

- Learners feel particularly safe and clearly understand their rights and responsibilities. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good.
- Overall, NVQUK's procedures for evaluating and improving its programmes are good. NVQUK has a clear understanding of its current position. The use of comparative data to inform improvements in performance is not fully developed.

What does NVQUK need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the completion of learners' training in the agreed timescale.
- Improve resources for independent learning that are clearly signposted for learners at the start of the programme and readily accessible. Increase standardisation and improve the quality of learning resources. Improve their use by training coordinators.
- Improve arrangements for the identification of and support for learners with additional learning needs in literacy, numeracy and language.
- Make better use of comparative data to inform quality improvement and performance.
- Further improve the involvement of employers in quality improvement and the monitoring of learners' progress.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- Individual training sessions with their training coordinator
- The good support they receive from training coordinators
- The accreditation of prior learning and achievement
- Gathering evidence with the use of recordings and/or video
- Learning more about legislation and company policies
- Producing care plans and learning about risk assessment
- Thinking about the job more and improving confidence.

What learners would like to see improved:

- The number of learning sessions
- The use of NVQUK's STARS Choices toolkit
- Integration of learning, instead of a unit by unit approach
- Finding ways of covering for absent training coordinators
- Returning learners' folders and certificates more quickly.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- Regular feedback to manager about learners' progress
- Quick start to the NVQ or apprenticeship programmes
- Very helpful, supportive and flexible training coordinators
- Learners becoming more aware of their job role.

What employers would like to see improved:

- Their involvement in learners' progress reviews
- An increase in the number of assessments by observation
- Ensuring that training coordinators are flexible and work around learners' shift patterns
- More opportunities for learning.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. NVQUK has a clear vision for improving and developing the company. The aims and objectives are conveyed well to all staff and communication across the company is effective. Staff feel valued and they contribute well towards securing sustained improvement in outcomes for learners. In 2007/08, success rates and the completion of qualifications within the agreed timescale were low. The impact of the introduction of NVQUK's STARS Choices programme in 2008/09 has been significant. Success and completion rates have much improved and are now very high. Overall achievement targets for 2009/10 are appropriately challenging, although the use of data to guide improvement planning and target-setting is insufficiently developed.
8. NVQUK has made steady improvement since the previous inspection. The management have a clear understanding of the quality of training offered. Findings from planned observations of induction, assessment, teaching and learning are used well as performance indicators and contribute effectively to the company's quality improvement plan. Recommendations from the inspection are generally already underway and at various stages of development or implementation. The use of feedback from learners and employers is satisfactory.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Overall outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, prior to 2007/08, success rates had been declining. In 2007/08, success rates were low with Train to Gain success rates at 56% and overall apprenticeship success rates at 40%. However, Train to Gain success rates during this period were adversely affected by many Train to Gain learners being transferred from another training provider, many of whom failed to achieve. Success rates for Train to Gain at period 9 in 2008/09 are much improved at 77%. Skills for life success rates are high at 84%. Overall, apprenticeship success rates at period 12 in 2008/09 are 65%. Success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices are 72% and 53% respectively. NVQUK closely monitors learners' progress and forecasts final success rates for 2008/09 will be higher. Success rates for learners enrolled onto NVQUK's STARS Choices programme in the second half of 2008/09 are very high.
10. Learners' progress to complete the qualifications within the expected timescale are low. In 2007/08, only 41% of Train to Gain learners and 39% of all apprentices completed on time. In 2008/09, completion rates for Train to Gain learners have improved slightly to 43% and declined significantly for all apprentices to 22%. Completion rates within the expected timescale for learners enrolled onto NVQUK's STAR Choices programme in the second half of 2008/09 are very high.

11. Learners effectively develop their work skills and confidence. They improve the way they interact with and care for clients. In particular, learners are able to clearly demonstrate better understanding of health and safety procedures and are able to show better ways of meeting clients' needs. Employers are particularly pleased with these improvements. Many learners completing the awards gain promotion and some continue onto further study. Learners feel safe and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Learning is developed through a particularly effective, flexible, challenging and learner-focused approach. Training coordinators effectively take account of learners' previous achievements and employer feedback to appropriately plan learning. Agreed timescales for completion of the programme are challenging. Training coordinators meet learners on a weekly basis either individually or in small group training sessions. Learners enjoy opportunities to share ideas and learn from other learners' experiences. Learning is much improved through the use of good individual coaching techniques offered by training coordinators. Overall, learning resources are good. Training coordinators are a key learning resource. They have good subject knowledge and pass their knowledge on to learners well, although the quality and use of other forms of learning resources and access to resources for independent learning varies.
13. Assessment practice is good. The use of e-portfolios to plan and record learners' achievement is particularly effective. Learners have a good understanding of the progress they make, although many work supervisors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring learners' progress.
14. Most of those learners in receipt of additional learning make good progress. However, NVQUK has recognised the need to further improve the identification and provision of support for all learners with additional learning needs. The outcomes of initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not sufficiently used to plan individual learning. Additional needs and vocational training are delivered independently and training coordinators have insufficient knowledge of learners' literacy and numeracy progress.
15. NVQUK offers a wide range of health and social care qualifications relating directly to learners' working practices and professional progression. Experience at work is well integrated into the training programme. Training programmes have been developed well with employers and are carefully planned to ensure learners succeed. Learners are enthusiastic about the opportunities to achieve the qualifications with NVQUK. Care, guidance and support for learners is good. Learners have a clear understanding of how they will achieve the qualifications. Training coordinators and employers are supportive and encourage learners to achieve. Many learners are promoted and of those, many also continue into further training. Insufficient account is taken of learners' personal goals at the start of the programme.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. NVQUK has clear strategies to develop the organisation with a strong focus on improving the quality of its services. The senior management team provides good leadership. The restructuring of the company to improve the lines of responsibility and accountability has been managed well. The monitoring of learners' progress is good. Quality improvement arrangements have recently been improved and procedures are now effective. NVQUK is working well to raise the quality of provision to a consistently high standard for all learners, for example the introduction of a new training approach. Senior staff maintain good communication with staff through a series of planned meetings. Training coordinators are well supported by their managers. Team meetings provide good opportunities for staff to meet and share good practice.
17. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. NVQUK works closely with all its employers to ensure learners are safe. As part of the learner's industry induction, employers promote safeguarding arrangements well. This is further reinforced by training coordinators throughout the NVQ programme. Learners have particularly good awareness and understanding of safeguarding in relation to their own safety and that of vulnerable adults within their charge. NVQUK routinely completes thorough risk assessments of all places of employment. Enhanced disclosure checks on all training and assessment staff are completed routinely and details held on a central list. NVQUK is making appropriate preparation to implement vetting and barring procedures required by the Independent Safeguarding Authority. A senior manager is responsible for safeguarding who has recently completed Home Office training. However, while staff have a good awareness of safeguarding, the arrangements for the training of all staff are not fully in place.
18. Arrangements for promoting equality and diversity are satisfactory. Procedures are well supported through detailed policies and these provide good guidance to staff. Procedures to reinforce learners' awareness of equality and diversity are satisfactory. Induction covers NVQUK's policies and procedures, although few learners could adequately recall this. However, learners do have an adequate knowledge of matters relating to respect and dignity of care home residents as well as understanding their own rights and responsibilities. Questions asked at progress reviews are insufficiently challenging and do not adequately test learners' knowledge of current law and company policies and procedures, although the complaints procedures is well promoted and understood. Managers take prompt and appropriate action in cases where complaints have been made. Equality and diversity training for staff is satisfactory and staff have an appropriate understanding of the subject.
19. There is little variation in achievement outcomes for different learner groups, although NVQUK has recognised there were lower completion rates within the agreed timescale in 2007/08 for male learners and learners from non-White groups. Latest 2008/09 data confirm that such variations still exist. The recruitment of male learners onto NVQUK programmes is comparable to sector norms. NVQUK's approach to monitoring learner groups is insufficiently

developed to inform managers to trends over time. For example, equality data compare performance by different ethnic groups by White and non-White.

20. NVQUK's partnerships with health and social care organisations and its major care employers are good. These links have led to effective developments in the planning and delivery of training. However, the use of employers' views as a resource for improvement are not fully established.
21. Self-assessment effectively improves the quality of provision. The latest report closely matches the findings of the inspection. Self-assessment is leading to effective drafting and implementation of a quality improvement plan. The views of key stakeholders are used to inform the self-assessment report. Staff have a clear understanding of and involvement in the self-assessment process. The views of learners and employers are sought primarily through questionnaires, although they are generally unaware of their involvement and get limited feedback.
22. Value for money is satisfactory. Outcomes for learners in 2007/08 were low. However, significant investment has been made in the recruitment and development of good quality staff. The implementation of improved training and assessment procedures are good, the impact of which has led to significant recent improvement in outcomes.

Information about the inspection

23. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Quality and Performance Director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent position paper, self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
24. 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 the programme subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
NVQUK

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	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners					
Part-time learners					490
Overall effectiveness	2				2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	3				3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3				
How well do learners progress?	3				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>					
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>					
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?	2				
Leadership and management	2				2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>					
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?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
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?	3				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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