



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Rathbone Training
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United Kingdom**

Date of inspection: December 2014

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Rathbone Training merged with Newcastle College Group (NCG) in January 2012, and is a national provider delivering provision through 47 training centres across the UK. In Wales, there are currently eight training centres in South East, South West and Mid Wales.

There are currently 526 learners on work-based learning programmes in Wales; there are 193 learners on Engagement programmes, 193 on Level 1 programmes and 140 on Apprenticeship programmes. The provider uses four sub-contractors for the delivery of apprenticeship training. They are:

- Vivisum Solutions Ltd
- Kwik Fit (GB) Ltd
- Intraining Group Ltd
- Enhanced Care Training Ltd

Rathbone Training Cymru deliver the following work-based learning programmes and qualifications across Wales:

- essential skills
- health and safety
- employability
- level 1 national vocational programmes in retail, business administration and childcare

This provider works in a context where many learners have significant barriers to learning and have dropped out of the learning offered by other providers. Many have negative experiences of education, training or employment.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Adequate
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Overall, the rates at which learners are successful in attaining their learning activities or their progression routes are improving. The rates at which learners attain their framework qualifications are below the national comparator.

Learners enjoy their learning and many make progress from engagement programmes on to a level 1 national vocational qualification.

The quality of teaching, training and assessment is good. Tutors skilfully and sensitively stretch and challenge learners to work towards achieving their full potential. They use a wide range of resources to engage and keep learners motivated in taught sessions. All tutors and assessors understand the many barriers that learners face and give them very good support.

The Director for Wales, with support from NCG, provides clear strategic direction. The provider sets effective targets for Youth Programme Managers (YPM) and holds the managers to account for their delivery. Quality improvement strategies are in place, which are starting to show improvements in all aspects of the provision.

Prospects for improvement

The provider's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Learners' standards are improving
- The senior leadership team have a clear vision for quality improvement across the whole provision
- There is open and effective communication across the provider
- There are good strategies in place further to improve teaching, training and assessment
- The Leadership Academy training function supports new and existing managers with a wide range of skills
- There are a number of planned refresh strategies to upgrade information technology and accommodation

Recommendations

- R1 Further improve the rates at which learners achieve their learning activities, qualifications and frameworks
- R2 Make sure that all learners have better opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills
- R3 Provide more opportunities to develop learners' Welsh language skills
- R4 Improve the use of progress reviews to develop learners' knowledge and understanding.
- R5. Make better use of milestones and smart targets in all quality development plans

What happens next?

The Estyn link inspector will monitor the progress made against the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

A high proportion of the provider's learners have to overcome significant barriers to learning. Many have dropped out of the learning offered by other providers and have negative experiences of education, training or employment. Many have not yet developed the social or essential skills that enable them to take advantage of opportunities. Whilst with Rathbone, many overcome problems that threaten their ability to make good progress.

The success rate for Foundation Apprentices is improving, but still unsatisfactory, rising from 45% in 2012-2013 to 74% in 2013-2014. However, there are very few of these learners and most have progressed from Engagement programmes into employer-based provision. These learners have, therefore, made good progress from low starting points.

Over the past three years (taking account of 2013-2014 data that has been submitted to, but not yet published by the Welsh Government), there has been an upward trend in learners' positive progressions. Overall, positive outcomes have improved by 17 percentage points during this period. Last year, Level 1 progression was at 61%, which is just below the national comparator of 65%. Positive progression from Engagement provision was good at 80% compared with a national comparator of 69%. Provider data for the current year indicates that the early cohorts of this year's learners have continued to progress at improved rates.

Over the same period, success rates have also improved considerably and overall are adequate. The success rate for engagement learners has improved by 10 percentage points to 88%, and that for Level 1 learners has improved by 38 percentage points to 80%. Across the provider's centres, there is still inconsistency in the rates that learners succeed, but this, too, has improved in the last year.

Most learners, including those from vulnerable groups, make good progress towards their learning goals, and they are clear how much progress they have made. Many of those based in employers develop good levels of practical skills and show a good understanding of the demands of the workplace, putting into practice what they have learned in sessions at Rathbone's centres. This helps them to develop self-confidence. A few produce high-quality work for employers and many receive positive feedback from workplace supervisors.

Learners at all levels develop good communication skills. There is an increase in the number of learners who improve their essential skills. Those entering the programme with very poor basic skills are aware of the support available, and those who access this support improve in their standards of reading, writing and numeracy. Not all learners who need to improve accept the help needed to develop these important employment skills.

Most learners produce work of a good standard in learning sessions and they take a pride in their work. They focus well on the tasks that tutors set and support each other well in class. They learn to work independently and in teams. In many sessions, tutors are successful in encouraging learners to make decisions together.

In one centre, Welsh speaking learners have adequate opportunities to use incidental Welsh in work. All learners have the opportunity to be assessed through the medium of Welsh. However, across the provider, learners do not consistently develop an appreciation of the value of Welsh as an employment skill.

Wellbeing: Good

Learners feel safe and confident in their training and learning environments and pay good attention to health and safety.

Learners have a good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating. They participate in creating lively wall posters in their centres. Many learners keep food diaries to measure the difference between healthy and non-healthy food. Learners who attend sessions without food or money are well supported and are able to attend a breakfast club at each training centre.

Learners value the high levels of support from their assessors, and this helps them to attend regularly.

Learners demonstrate good behaviour and show respect for staff and their peers. They enjoy their programmes and show a strong commitment and a desire to succeed.

Most learners fund raise and support local community initiatives and international charities. These include a community garden, painting and decorating, supporting local food banks, filling shoe boxes with items for a charity and sponsored cycling miles.

Learners contribute to decisions in their centres well. They attend learner forums and work with tutors to identify their concerns. They receive full feedback on their input.

Many learners have considerable barriers to learning and speak of their unsuccessful education and training in the past. Their current experience with the provider has given them renewed confidence in themselves and their ability.

All learners demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. Most improve their learning and progress well. Many develop their self-esteem and learn skills that help them when they attend job interviews.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The provider delivers a wide range of programmes that meet the needs of learners, employers and the community. They make good use of local labour market information and this process is supported well by Youth Programme Managers (YPM). The provider engages well with employers to design and inform curriculum planning.

The provider has developed, over many years, a wide range of good quality employment placements across Wales. Most employers are supportive and work well with the provider and learners to plan and deliver learning in the workplace. Employers confirm that many learners have improved their skills over time.

The provider works closely with Careers Wales to provide learners with the most suitable programmes for them. The YPMs work very closely with Careers Wales to tailor programmes for individual learners. The provider encourages learners to undertake community projects as part of their learning programme, such as the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal.

The provider delivers Essential Skills Wales (ESW) by embedding the programme into the learner's normal activities whether in the classroom or on work placement. The provider offers additional one to one sessions to maintain learners' progress in ESW. The provider encourages learners to use their newly acquired skills during their participation in community programmes such as supporting food banks, where they develop their team working skills. Tutors use current themes during discussion sessions with learners to deliver ESW. For example, they use the Band Aid song to raise issues about poverty and inequality.

The provider has recently reviewed its Welsh language scheme. The new version has a clearer focus on targets for staff and learners. The provider is starting to make progress in developing learners' knowledge and understanding of the culture of Wales. Educational visits are arranged to St Fagan's to extend learner understanding of the history of Wales.

A few tutors deliver taught sessions through the medium of Welsh. There are good wall displays designed by the learners, which include Welsh words and the history and culture of Wales, in most centres.

Learners have the opportunity to learn about global citizenship and sustainable development. For example, learners discuss the Ebola crises in Africa. Many assessors discuss the principles of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) with learners during reviews, but these are too often at a superficial level.

Teaching: Good

Overall, the standard of training, teaching and assessment is good. Tutors and assessors have good subject knowledge, suitable occupational skills and industry knowledge. They use these skills well to plan their training sessions. Almost all tutors use detailed schemes of work and lesson plans. Tutors and classroom assistants have very high expectations for their learners. They work well together to give learners effective support during taught sessions. Tutors skilfully and sensitively stretch and challenge their learners to work towards achieving their full potential. Almost all tutors design their taught sessions to be stimulating and enjoyable. They deliver very high quality teaching and training sessions that embrace and enhance learning. Tutors use a wide variety of interactive resources to engage and keep learners motivated in class. Almost all learners behave well in taught sessions, attend regularly and show respect for their peers and tutors. They learn a variety of new skills that equip them well for the world of work.

All tutors and assessors are starting to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. However, in a very few cases, staff do not always correct spelling and grammatical errors in learners' written work.

Tutors and assessors have very good relationships with employers, who are supportive to learners' needs. Most training staff carry out regular progress reviews with their learners. They give good attention to reviewing the targets set at the last visit and are able to discuss with learners the new skills they have learnt.

Assessment practices are variable. Generally, learners understand how they will be assessed and have a good standard and variety of work in their NVQ portfolios. Assessors use good questioning techniques and give learners constructive feedback at the end of their assessment.

Assessors complete their individual tracking systems to make sure that learners are on target to achieve. These systems feed into a central electronic tracking system to monitor learner progress. The internal verification process has been recently improved and internal verifiers are visiting training centres on a regular basis to support assessors and YPMs with the assessment processes.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provider promotes health and wellbeing well through a good range of methods. These include induction and information sessions given by external agencies, for example in sexual health and drug awareness. Learners design posters and other wall displays, showing a good understanding of healthy eating and lifestyles. Learners' work shows evidence of this understanding. Learners, some of whom live independently on low incomes, benefit from the provision of breakfast clubs at all centres, where healthy foods are available for all learners.

The provider has a good induction process for its learners. As a result, learners understand the support available to them from the provider and external agencies. A comprehensive learner induction pack reinforces this information.

The provider is committed to ensuring a healthy working environment for all its learners and staff, and the senior leadership team have recently signed a statement of principles on health and safety, which underlines this commitment. The provider has clear policies and procedures for health and safety and monitors health and safety of work placements systematically. Learners receive a comprehensive induction on health and safety, and a discussion of procedures relevant to the learner's work placement takes place during progress reviews.

The provider has appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding. All staff know what to do if they are concerned about a learner's safety. The provider records the progress of safeguarding incidents clearly and reports these appropriately. In a few cases, review documentation encourages tutors to discuss health and safety and safeguarding as related issues.

Learners undertake a useful assessment of potential barriers to learning when they join their programme. YPMs, tutors and assessors share this information and use it well to develop individual learning programmes. Tutors emphasise strongly the need for good behaviour, attendance and punctuality in centres and on work placement and monitor this closely. The provider supports learners effectively if they are experiencing problems with their attendance and punctuality. In a few instances, this has included adjusting learners' timetables to allow for external influences such as caring responsibilities. Such support enables these learners to complete their programmes.

All learners undertake initial and diagnostic assessments when they start on their programme. Basic Skills support is available at all centres and learners are aware of this provision, although very few have chosen to use this support. The provider ensures that specialist support is available for learners with identified additional learning needs.

Learners nearing the end of their programme receive good advice and guidance on their next steps from Careers Wales. They also attend jobs clubs at the provider's premises. These clubs are successful in helping learners to increase their employability skills, for example helping with writing curriculum vitae and application letters, and with interview skills.

Learning environment: Good

The provider has a strong ethos of equality and diversity, which is demonstrated through effective policies and procedures. YPMs and staff monitor and eliminate all forms of discrimination in training centres and in the work place.

Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity and know whom to go to if they have problems. An anti-bullying week was arranged at all centres to highlight these types of issues.

Equality and diversity are good features at many training centres. Staff and learners are actively involved in a range of community programmes, for example a community garden, food banks and painting and decorating for the elderly.

Training centres are generally in good locations such as town centres and high streets, and are easily accessible for learners. Generally, training centres are well resourced. However, some centres are small and have limited accommodation. Classroom accommodation is clean and well maintained. Two training centres have recently undergone upgrading as part of a programme of planned refurbishment.

Almost all training centres display good examples of learners' own work and projects. Examples include work on healthy eating, Welsh culture, ESDGC and health and safety. In one training centre, learners have completed a decorative wall art feature in the rest area. Classroom walls include posters and information boards, and have good displays that relate to literacy and numeracy skills and bilingual posters that provide a stimulating and vibrant learning environment.

Work placements offer learners good opportunities to develop their vocational and practical skills. They are generally of a good standard with well-furnished training rooms and good access to ICT.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

Rathbone Training Cymru is part of Newcastle College Group (NCG). The NCG support the provider well and has centralised a number of its key functions to make sure its managers can benefit from expertise within the group and reduce duplication, for example human resources, building acquisition and maintenance functions. For these services, Rathbone Training Cymru pays the group a fee that represents a considerable cost saving against employing their own staff and gives them the benefit of in-house expertise.

Over the last three years, NCG has been particularly effective in supporting Rathbone Training Cymru to manage its way out of a significant financial deficit. The Director for Wales, MD and NCG executive developed and implemented a comprehensive recovery plan that resulted in a current financial stable position.

The Director for Wales is responsible for the strategic direction and management of the DfES work-based learning contract. He provides clear leadership in Wales and receives a good level of support and robust challenge from the MD. Rathbone Training Cymru recently undertook a staff re-structuring that resulted in the appointment of a performance director and head of teaching, learning and assessment. The appointment to these roles is starting to drive improvement in these key areas.

YPMs and their staff have roles and responsibilities that are clearly defined and understood. They demonstrate a clear understanding of what they need to do to secure improvement in key strands of the business, including the standards that learners achieve.

The provider has introduced and uses a comprehensive staff performance review process to monitor and improve the performance of managers and staff. The provider uses the process to assess individual performance accurately, sets clear

objectives for improvement, and identifies training and development needs. Senior managers and YPMs have used this review process particularly well to identify, challenge and address staff underperformance.

Communication across the provider has significantly improved over the last two years. YPMs and staff receive regular and comprehensive information about the Welsh provision and the UK national performance, in the form of newsletters and bulletins.

Managers place a sharp focus on the use of accurate and timely data relating to learners' performance. These reports include comparative information about how well each of the training centres is performing as against other training providers in Wales.

The provider has responded well to Welsh and national priorities for education and training. It effectively contributes to a wide range of local and national initiatives, such as the National Training Federation for Wales and the Welsh Government "Lean Working" project.

The provider's governance is robust and influential. The Board of Governors and Trustees have a clear vision for the provider. They give effective support and rigorous challenge to the Welsh provision on many key performance indicators, including standards and finance.

Improving quality: Adequate

The provider has robust self-assessment processes in place. Staff are involved in producing local self-assessment reports (SARs), which feed into a regional SAR for the provider's operations in Wales. The SAR correctly identifies strengths and areas requiring improvement and corresponds well with the findings of inspectors. Areas for improvement feed through to the quality development plan (QDP) effectively and are also identified in strategic planning documents. In the SAR, data is used effectively to monitor trends in performance against key performance indicators, although its main benchmarking focus is against DfES categories, with less importance given to the national comparators and performance of other providers.

The provider has good processes for listening to its learners. Monthly learner forums gather learner feedback about programmes and ideas for improvement, which are passed to the Youth Participation Advisers. A national youth conference, organised annually by the provider, takes learners from its centres across the UK away for five days to identify priorities for improvement. The senior leadership team are held accountable by learners for progress on delivering these improvements through regular quality review meetings, where they discuss reasons why action has or has not been taken to address these improvements.

The Learner Voice Wales survey indicates an overall learner satisfaction rating slightly above the sector benchmark. However, learner responses are below the sector benchmark for 'very good' in the majority of questions. The provider utilises an additional learner survey commissioned from an outside organisation and used a

different set of questions for learners; this indicates a high level of learner satisfaction.

The provider has recently strengthened observation processes for teaching and learning; these are extended to cover workplace reviews and assessments. All delivery staff are observed annually to assess their performance in teaching, training and assessment roles. Guidance for grading is very clear, with characteristics for each grade published for each feature of the observation. All observations result in an action plan; these link effectively into staff continuous professional development (CPD) and performance management processes. QDPs are well informed from local and regional SARs. However, QDPs do not focus sharply enough on SMART targets. They do not always include milestones and interim targets and a number of deadlines for improvements have been missed in the current QDP. Progress is monitored monthly and findings are shared appropriately throughout the organisation via a regular hierarchy of meetings, involving managers and staff at all levels. Learner outcome trends are improving overall, but progress is variable between centres and training programmes.

Quality processes are shared with sub-contractors and performance of sub-contractors is monitored well.

Partnership working: Good

The provider has developed good working relationships with its partners. These consist of a small number of sub-contracted training providers, and a wide range of community partners, and local and national businesses. The Director for Wales and YPMs have taken full advantage of the relationship and membership with NCG following the merger.

The provider maintains formal and effective arrangements to monitor the business performance of all sub-contractors in addition to the quality checks on learner performance. It involves sub-contractors' staff in all appropriate professional staff development and has effective processes in place to maintain active communications. This includes regular meetings and easy access for sub-contracted providers to the provider's management information system.

The provider has started to develop links with the university sector. These include some joint projects in the area of social sciences, where university students work within the provider to gain work experience. The university students arranged a presentation ceremony at the university for the provider. This provided good role models for its learners.

The provider partnership activities operate well at each training centre. Many YPMs are part of local consortia for 16-19 learners. In one case, the provider's training centre staff delivered a work-based learning awareness raising session at local schools.

The provider has been able to develop a very wide range of effective community partners. These include Careers Wales, a large number of voluntary organisations,

charities and special projects such the Crimes and Consequences project operated by the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

The provider makes good use of these organisations for the benefit of their learners. It takes an active local role at each of its training centres to support programmes for learners at risk through lack of employment, education or training opportunities. The provider is proactive, open and inclusive in its general approach to other partners.

Resource management: Adequate

The provider has a clearly defined management structure in Wales, well supported by NCG. This recent merger is starting to improve and enhance the quality and effectiveness of the training programmes. It has enabled a number of key functions, such as human resources and staff training, to be centralised so that the financial savings can provide better provision for the learners.

The provider uses key performance indicator data well to benchmark against the national comparators and other training providers in Wales. This includes monthly financial reporting to executive and board level. These reports are used to review the focus and allocation of resources, processes and procedures. For example, the provider has a number of refresh strategies in place, including for accommodation and ICT.

The provider has a comprehensive training and development strategy in place for all staff. The Leadership Academy and Excellence Academy provide training for staff at all levels. Newly appointed staff and managers can attend these training sessions to learn about such topics as effective teaching, decision-making, risk management influencing and negotiation.

The Director for Wales has full responsibility for managing the budget in Wales. Each Youth Programme manager is accountable for their own portion of this budget and has responsibility for managing costs and resources, and for maximising occupancy within their centre.

The standard of accommodation and resources at training centres is variable. The provider monitors this effectively and has strategic plans in place to review accommodation requirements across Wales.

The standards achieved by learners are adequate. The provider gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

We use the outcomes of the Welsh Government Learner Voice survey to inform all our inspections of post 16 education and training. Learner Voice is a learner satisfaction survey conducted by the Welsh Government between January and February each year.

The survey asks learners a range of questions about the following key themes:

- the information, advice and support provided to them
- provider responsiveness, learning environment and student wellbeing
- the quality of teaching and training
- overall satisfaction

Each theme contains a range of questions requiring learners to rate their provider's performance. There are 28 questions overall.

Two hundred and twenty nine learners completed the survey. This is just under 50% of the provider's learner population.

Sixty-one per cent of respondents rated the provider as very good overall. This is one percentage point lower than the sector average of 62%. A further 33% rated the provider as good overall. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents thought that their course was better than they expected. This is close to the sector average of 90%.

The provider achieved lower scores than the sector average for very good ratings in all of the five themes of the survey.

The provider achieves scores for 'very good' that are amongst the lowest in the sector across most of the 28 questions in the survey. Overall, 48% of respondents considered teaching and training to be 'very good' or 'good'.

The survey also analyses learners' responses by demographic information – gender, age, ethnicity and disability. In general, the provider achieves lower 'very good' scores than the sector average across all key demographics for each question.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Sandra Barnard	Reporting Inspector
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