

# Steadfast Training Ltd

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>30 June – 4 July 2014</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- The proportion of apprentices and learners on employability programmes who achieve their qualifications is very high.
- A very high proportion of teaching, learning and assessment sessions are good. Tutors and assessors challenge and support learners very effectively to ensure they achieve their qualification or equip themselves better for work.
- Apprentices and learners enjoy their learning experience and form good relationships with their assessors. A culture of mutual respect and understanding supports individual learners' needs and they benefit from frequent and productive learning and assessment visits.
- Arrangements to improve teaching, learning and assessment are having a positive influence on learners' experience and success. Managers use the outcomes of observations effectively to drive staff development, identifying particularly relevant actions to improve provision.
- Extensive partnership working and membership of an extensive range of working groups increases opportunities for apprentices and learners and improves the planning of programmes. Good and productive work with employers successfully results in employment opportunities for those on employability programmes and sustainable career opportunities for apprentices.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- A few apprentices and learners do not always fully understand what their programme involves or the progression routes open to them.
- Apprentices and learners are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets, informed regularly on what they need to do next or how they can improve their performance.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is insufficient in lessons and assessment activities to prepare apprentices and learners for working in a range of different communities.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring and management of performance by establishing more detailed and specific performance targets for programmes and staff. Ensure that managers use targets as an evaluative tool by providing them with information on the effectiveness of programmes, staff and learners' progress.
- Develop quality assurance systems that monitor all aspects of the time learners spend on their programme of study by systematically checking paperwork and practice to reduce inconsistencies and ensuring that quality assurance practices are consistent throughout teaching, learning and assessment.
- Widen learners' understanding of equality and diversity and its context within the workplace by ensuring that progress reviews and feedback to staff after observation covers this area and managers provide further training to develop staff confidence and understanding of equality and diversity.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The proportion of apprentices and learners who achieve their qualifications is very high. Success rates have increased in 2013/14 after dipping very slightly in the previous year. Adult apprentices achieve particularly well, but those aged over 25 do not always achieve in their planned timescales. Adult learners on short courses have high success rates and younger learners achieve well. Success rates for apprentices in health and social care and business administration are high and have been for the last three years.
- No significant variations exist in achievement between different groups of learners. Learners with complex learning needs achieve particularly well on employability programmes. However, young learners on short courses do not achieve quite as well as adult learners.
- Apprentices appreciate the need to improve their English and mathematics levels to improve their work skills and future work-place opportunities. They complete appropriate levels of qualifications to meet their aspirations. For example where appropriate, staff encourage apprentices in warehousing and distribution and health and social care to complete higher level functional skills qualifications as part of their apprenticeship programme.
- The assessment of learners' abilities at the start of very short employability courses is comprehensive and determines their starting points well. In partnership with Jobcentre Plus, tutors signpost learners to other education providers in order to further improve their English and mathematics skills.
- Apprentices develop good workplace practical skills, valued by their employers, for example, in areas such as web design and creative digital media. Apprentices gain recognition for developing their skills in local competitions. They enjoy their learning and make good progress with their qualifications.
- The vast majority of apprentices work in carefully selected and good work environments, with appropriate developmental opportunities. However, a small minority of assessors do not challenge apprentices sufficiently well to exploit these opportunities and develop their skills further. A minority of apprentices are not fully aware of the requirements of their programmes and too much concentration on assessment outcomes does not enable them to develop individual understanding, personal and social skills, or make the progress they are capable of making.

- A large majority of apprentices make good progress and subsequently continue in employment, many with high calibre employers. Progression into employment of learners on short employability courses is adequate and a small minority are successful in gaining suitable job roles on completion of their programme. Managers and staff are aware of the need to track learners' destinations more effectively.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The restructured senior leadership team have a strong focus on teaching, learning and assessment that ensures almost all learners achieve well. A large majority of learners and apprentices develop good personal and job skills through coaching and employer support. Progression opportunities are good.
- Tutors use their expertise to engage and stimulate employability learners well to complete their qualifications within short timescales. In many lessons, a large majority of learners develop good skills often related to specific work related skills specified by employers. Most learners in classroom-based activities are progressing well and they benefit from good teaching.
- Apprentices work to a high standard and most produce work above that expected of their qualification. A minority of assessors and tutors do not routinely stretch and challenge apprentices and those on employability programmes. The accessibility and range of learning materials available to learners and apprentices across the subject areas is inconsistent. Limited access to learning materials on health and social care courses occasionally slows progress and the development of good independent learning skills.
- The process of undertaking observations in teaching, learning and assessment results in accurate, robust and fair judgements. Good and informative verbal feedback clearly identifies key areas of strength and those that require improvement accurately. However, the written summaries of observations are too descriptive and do not give clear judgements and guidance on how to improve performance. Tutors and assessors use detailed individual development plans to aid improvements to their teaching, learning and assessment practices and support for learners.
- Most teaching and assessment accommodation is of a good standard and suitable for learning. However, a small minority is cramped and insufficient access to suitable information learning technology (ILT) reduces learners' ability to research jobs and work independently. Most assessors have good access to ILT. However, many are not able to access electronic portfolios due to poor internet access. Learners are not always able to use the system and update their portfolios.
- Staff identify accurately apprentices' skills and abilities at the start of a course. However, a small minority of assessors do not use the identified starting points of apprentices to plan and meet individual learner's needs. A majority of apprentices and learners are not involved in good target setting to meet their learning goals and a few assessors do not leave apprentices clear guidance on what they need to do next to complete their qualification or improve their understanding of occupational standards.
- In a large majority of lessons and assessment activities, assessors and tutors use questioning extremely effectively. Assessors encourage apprentices to use a diverse range of methods to gather evidence and apprentices are confident in producing appropriate written work with the support of their employer. However, in a small minority of sessions, questioning of apprentices and learners' understanding is ineffective and they do not receive sufficient time to answer or discuss various responses.
- Assessors and tutors give exceptionally good verbal feedback to learners and employers on progress made. Assessors are very skilled at encouraging them to gather evidence

independently. However, a few apprentices and learners do not receive good written feedback that enables them to correct errors and proceed to the next part of their qualification.

- Apprentices make very good progress and a large majority complete their qualification within planned timescales. However, the apprenticeship review process requires improvement. Assessors keep employers and apprentices well informed verbally, but do not always complete paperwork in a timely manner.
- The vast majority of apprentices and learners benefit from good support to improve their skills in English and mathematics in preparation for their examinations. The checking and correction of spelling and grammatical errors in submitted work is good in health and social care and business administration.
- Information, advice and guidance for learners on employability courses are substantial and well-developed. Learners have a clear understanding of progression opportunities and how to become more employable. Information, advice and guidance at the start of business apprenticeships provide insufficient detailed guidance on the qualifications to be undertaken. However, most apprentices have a good understanding of the requirements of the course that they are studying.
- Managers and staff are good role models for equality and diversity, showing respect and appropriate support for all learners. Tutors and assessors discuss equality and diversity issues during inductions. However, they often do not take opportunities to discuss subject related examples of equality and diversity when it arises in reviews, lessons and the work place.

<b>Health and social care</b>	
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	Good

- Outcomes for apprentices are good, reflecting the consistently high standard of teaching, learning and assessment. The vast majority of current apprentices are making good timely progress to meet their planned completion date.
- Apprentices develop improved levels of self-confidence and motivation to learn, often from a low starting point, through good assessor role models who provide regular support. They develop more effective analytical, critical thinking self-reflection skills, contributing to the completion and achievement of their qualifications. For example, where apprentices are particularly worried about achieving their English or mathematics qualifications, the assessors provides very good advice. As a result, apprentices are more confident in recognising and discussing their weaknesses in English and mathematics knowledge and skills.
- Apprentices benefit from highly qualified and very occupationally experienced assessors. They provide effectively planned and well-paced workplace activities, helping apprentices to build on existing good workplace care practice. Assessors visit workplaces regularly to support apprentices, providing good well-planned individual sessions that fit around working patterns and personal arrangements. As a result, apprentices acquire higher-level care skills and develop an aptitude for analysing case studies, real life incidents and scenarios very effectively.
- Apprentices engage in an appropriate range of professional development and industrial training courses offered by their employers which contributes successfully to their development of care planning and professional practice. For example, they attend courses in the areas of dementia awareness, health and fire safety and medicine dispensation.
- Employers are very supportive of their employees undertaking apprenticeships by providing sufficient time in their shift rotas and work patterns to undertake development of portfolios and produce evidence, meet with their assessor and take time to reflect on how their work practice contributes to their timely completion of their qualifications. However, employers are not

sufficiently involved in target setting or progress reviews to align with their supervision and appraisals of the apprentice.

- Assessors make good use of professional discussions to test individual apprentices’ knowledge through very probing questions and effective two-way dialogue. This approach challenges and extends individuals’ knowledge well and improves their ability to apply health care theory and legislation to professional care practice.
- Poor access to the internet in many care homes often prevents the use of the electronic tracking and recording systems to monitor and evaluate learners’ progress. Learners are not always able to view their progress during workplace assessor visits to support discussion of their next steps and to set targets based on the qualification units they have achieved to date.
- Assessors provide comprehensive verbal feedback to help learners make good progress. However, written feedback using the individual learning and assessment plan shows insufficient specific detail relating to how apprentices have met the criteria of a unit within a qualification or indicates sufficiently how they can improve.
- The apprentices’ starting points identified in the early stage of their learning are not always used effectively to plan some elements of more specialist learning. The provision of additional learning support is not routinely offered to help learners overcome their barriers to learning, particularly in English and mathematics, for example, poor spelling, reading levels or using mathematics skills to solve the more complex calculations when working in their workplace.
- Information advice and guidance for the vocational elements of the apprenticeship is of a high standard. Assessors, apprentices and their employers work together well to choose optional units during the induction process that will improve their workplace and professional practice.
- Assessors do not take sufficient opportunities to help apprentices develop a good understanding of equality and diversity. They do not ensure apprentices fully consider legislation about the needs and rights of service users, such as those residing in specialist dementia residential care homes and supported living environments for adults, when agreeing care plans.
- Apprentices develop high levels of workplace safeguarding practice and good adherence to health and safety statutory requirements. They use their knowledge very effectively to act as effective advocates for their service users, particularly those most vulnerable and themselves as frequent lone workers in rural locations.

<b>Employability training</b>	
<b>Employability</b>	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good as reflected in the very high qualification success rates on the majority of employability programmes. Learners achieve well in sessions, are enthusiastic, and develop good personal and work related skills such as confidence, communication, self-esteem and teamwork.
- Tutors use a wide range of learning activities to engage and coach learners to succeed in their chosen occupational area. Good activities link very well to different types of workplaces to support the development of learners’ skills and knowledge. For example, they learn how to deal with difficult customers, sell a variety of products and the role of trade unions.
- Tutors provide homework that motivates learners to achieve and develop independent learning skills well. However, in a minority of sessions, tutors focus too much on the completion of workbook activities and the use of learning technology to improve learning is underdeveloped.
- The development of occupationally specific work skills is very good. Training is available in a number of areas such as, retail, ICT, health and social care, customer service and business

administration. This enables learners to develop their knowledge of a range of occupational areas in relation to a variety of job roles they may not have previously considered.

- Staff are well qualified and have extensive vocational experience, which they use well to improve learners' knowledge of a variety of occupational areas. Tutors have very high expectations of learners which are effective in supporting them to achieve their qualifications. Many learners have a significant number of barriers to overcome to become work-ready.
- Individual interviews from Steadfast's career advice specialist provides learners with good information and advice to overcome personal and social barriers to move into work. Learners speak very highly of the support and encouragement provided by staff from Steadfast Training Ltd.
- Staff complete a very thorough initial assessment of learners' abilities which identifies their skills and competencies for the vocational area, learning styles, their literacy and numeracy support needs and career aspirations. However, staff do not record all this information in learning plans or use it effectively during the course. Learning goals and the discussion of short and medium term targets at the start of the course are insufficient and stops learners reflecting effectively on the skills and knowledge they have developed that would improve their curriculum vitae and make them more desirable to future employers.
- Verbal feedback to learners is good. Tutors provide very effective constructive feedback to learners in learning sessions which helps them to improve their performance. However, written feedback in workbooks is too general and does not provide sufficient detail on how they could further develop their answers.
- Learners develop adequate of English and mathematical skills. Appropriate initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills are effective. Tutors make good use of learners' identified needs to plan learning activities well and provide effective individual support as part of their lessons.
- Tutors routinely correct spelling and grammatical errors and use common miss-spelt word spelling lists which learners refer to these during activities to check they are spelling the words correctly. However, the development of learners' mathematical skills is limited. Tutors do not develop learners' mathematical knowledge relevant to the job role they desire.
- Learners receive thorough and effective advice and guidance at the start of their programme and throughout their course. Individual interviews with careers guidance staff identify learners' support needs, which additional qualifications to take and future courses that will improve their readiness for employment. Towards the end of their course tutors, provide good quality advice and guidance about learners' next steps into employment or further training.
- Tutors do not reinforce the understanding of equality and diversity issues adequately during most learning sessions. Learners do not develop a deeper understanding of the types of equality and diversity issues they could experience in their selected occupational area such as, discrimination, harassment or bullying. Teaching activities and learning materials do not promote and embed learners understanding of a number of these issues such as stereotyping in the workplace.

**Administration and customer service****Apprenticeships**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This reflects the high overall success rates of apprentices. However, the proportion who achieve within their planned timescales, although high, has reduced. Apprentices enjoy their learning experience and value how it supports them with their work.
- Assessors have appropriate expectations of apprentices and they motivate them well to develop research and independent learning skills. The assessors encourage apprentices to make good use of their workplace to develop and acquire appropriate evidence towards their qualification. The range of assessment methods provides good opportunities for apprentices to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Almost all apprentices make good progress.
- All of the apprenticeship programme takes place in the workplace, which meets the needs of employers and the apprentices very effectively. Assessors are flexible and support apprentices well. Apprentices appreciate that their assessors are easy to contact and are exceptionally responsive.
- Assessors and their apprentices maintain a flexible approach to target setting and provision of coaching and support. For example, when an apprentice had a significant period of sick leave, an adjusted learning programme and targets ensured the apprentice had the chance to catch up. Additional and extra assessor visits supported the apprentice well to ensure good progress.
- The involvement of apprentices and employers in the completion of the induction paperwork, including their individual learning plan, is good with committed support from assessors. However, despite the thorough induction, apprentices do not always understand the qualifications making up their apprenticeship programme. Timescales and targets for completion are not challenging for apprentices that are more able.
- Apprentices make good use of the electronic portfolio to upload their work, access their reviews and communicate with their assessors. For example, an assessor electronically recorded comments on an observation of the apprentice in her role on reception and uploaded it onto the system, which enabled the apprentice to listen to the feedback at a later date to aid her learning. Apprentices are clear about their short-term targets.
- Assessors have appropriate qualifications and use their industry experience effectively to develop the apprentices' knowledge and skills. Assessors accurately identify appropriate evidence linked to the apprentice's employment and help the apprentice to make full use of it to demonstrate their learning. This ensures that the apprentice sees the relevance to improving their performance at work.
- Assessors successfully keep employers aware of the apprentice's progress through regular verbal updates. Employers consider assessors as professional in the way they go about their work.
- Effective assessment of English and mathematics identifies apprentices who are required to take further qualifications. In preparation for external examinations, apprentices complete mock tests and use good quality revision materials well. However, apprentices often work on practice papers with little support from the assessor.
- Apprentices are fully aware of their targets and mostly complete the tasks within the required timescale. Assessors set specific measurable targets during reviews with apprentices and their employers. Assessed work is of an appropriate standard for the level of apprenticeship.
- Apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance in advance of starting their programme. Induction is thorough and detailed. However, it does not help improve the learner's

understanding of the framework or their learning experience. On the few occasions when the employer is present, induction is good. Apprentices found it helpful when the employer clearly valued the apprenticeship and helped choose the optional units of the main qualification.

- The apprenticeship induction includes a good introduction to safeguarding and equality and diversity. Staff include clear explanations and where to find relevant information on these topics. Apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of equality and diversity topics in their written work and in the workplace. However, equality and diversity subjects that arise during progress reviews or assessment visits do not inform discussion on these areas.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- A substantially restructured and larger management team has made a number of changes since the last inspection to bring about change and improve provision. They work with highly committed employers and experienced tutors and staff who together support apprentices and learners in realising their potential and ambitions.
- Managers and staff now respond quicker to issues relating to learners as they better understand their roles and responsibilities and those of colleagues. Managers and staff value the increased emphasis on improving teaching, learning and assessment. The staff recruitment process is more rigorous and support for new assessors and tutors is good. Managers and staff work effectively and as a team.
- Managers' use updated company policies and procedures to monitor and implement improvement actions to improve staff performance. The sharing of information within Steadfast Training Ltd has improved with clear lines of communication between those recruiting learners and assessors.
- Managers use data effectively to monitor learners' achievements and for financial planning. They use data systematically to evaluate the performance of particular programmes, and groups of learners. However, individual performance targets for staff are insufficiently detailed and they focus too much on the completion of compliance paperwork. Too often monthly performance meetings do not focus sufficiently on the learning experience or learners' progress.
- Arrangements to improve teaching, learning and assessment are sound. The quality manager monitors the improvement plan for those staff who require improvement. A small minority of observation reports describe the lesson rather than evaluating the learning taking place and the actions needed to improve are insufficiently detailed. The reports suitability inform staff development planning with actions that include, improving the support for literacy and numeracy, better promotion of equality and diversity, and the use of technology within teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers have implemented improvements, using the quality assurance procedures, which initially have had a good impact, but they require further improvement and consistent application to monitor provision rigorously and ensure that inconsistencies are resolved swiftly.
- Managers and staff systematically gather the views of learners and employers. Evaluations from employers and learners are particularly positive, with the reviews from classroom-based learners showing a trend of very positive feedback over the last few months.
- Self-assessment is inclusive and informed by staff, learners and employer evaluations. The report is evaluative and accurately identifies the strengths and areas for improvement. The accompanying quality improvement plan clearly reflects the areas requiring improvement and actions and improvement targets are rigorous and realistic.
- Managers and staff make effective use of their membership of a wide range of network groups and their understanding of local priorities to provide a range of subjects and programmes that meets local need and national initiatives.

- A large majority of learners successfully gain employment. The provider's productive partnerships with other organisations extend opportunities for learners. For example, in response to the need of a major employer to recruit large numbers of staff, Steadfast Training Ltd provided training on the ethos of the employer and its recruitment processes as learners prepared for a guaranteed job interview. In another example, working with the sixth form of a local school, staff from Steadfast Training Ltd very effectively arranged apprenticeships with a well-known employer for learners who want an alternative route to university.
- Managers and staff are responsive to learners' individual needs, build supportive relationships and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect. At the start of programmes of learning, staff effectively inform learners of their relevant responsibilities and those of their assessor.
- Managers monitor the performance of all groups of apprentices and learners well. When they identify the underperformance of learners they effectively intervene by providing additional support, resulting in improved outcomes for learners. Managers and staff have completed equality and diversity training, but the promotion of equality and diversity within teaching and learning still requires further development.
- Steadfast Training Ltd meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Policies effectively cover all aspects of safeguarding including safe use of the internet. Recruitment processes are robust. Appropriate training and good relationships with local agencies keep practices and policies current and relevant. Managers are very effective in dealing with any incidents of disclosure. Appropriate employer health and safety audits and inductions into the workplace are thorough.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

<b>Steadfast Training Ltd</b>			
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships	Employability
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Health and social care</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Employability training</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Customer service</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	1900							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Jason Parnell							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	August 2012							
<b>Website address</b>	www.steadfasttraining.co.uk							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	837	0	641	0	7	0	0
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	90	205	4	116		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	1218							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ N/A</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Steadfast Training Ltd provides apprenticeships and employability courses across the East of England and East Midlands. Steadfast Training Ltd Head Office is in Spalding, Lincolnshire. The company operates from two permanent training sites in Peterborough (Cambridgeshire) and Kings Lynn (Norfolk). A very small minority of the population have no qualifications. Those that leave school with five or more A\*-C GCSE grades is slightly below the national rate. Local unemployment is around the national rate for both male and females. The local area has a large population of non-English speakers

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Stephen Hunsley HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Quality Curriculum Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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