

# Urban Futures London Ltd

## Not for profit organisation

<b>Inspection dates</b>		1–3 June 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider requires improvement because:

- too many apprentices leave without achieving their apprenticeship
- around half of the current apprentices are making slower progress than expected towards completing their qualifications
- reviews of apprentices' progress are not used effectively to plan learning and do not involve employers sufficiently
- quality improvement arrangements are not fully developed
- initial assessment does not provide enough information to plan learning and support to meet apprentices' individual needs and maximise opportunities to develop their skills
- apprentices are not clear about their next steps after they have completed their apprenticeship or what opportunities are available to them
- the promotion of aspects of equality and diversity, and safeguarding, particularly the development of apprentices' understanding, requires improvement.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- good development of apprentices' personal, vocational, English and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and high standards of theory and practical work
- good customer service apprenticeship programme at a large airport which is well planned, with good training and involvement of the employer
- a clear strategic vision, shared by senior managers and staff, to support young people to develop the skills needed for employment
- good development and use of partnerships to ensure training meets the needs of employers
- good on-the-job training and support provided by employers.

## Full report

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

- Improve apprentices' achievement of their qualifications by ensuring that staff monitor their progress more effectively and take effective action earlier to support those at risk of leaving early.
- Ensure all employers are involved in, and have a good understanding of, the requirements of the apprenticeship programme by making sure they take an active part in reviews of their apprentices' progress.
- Develop quality improvement arrangements to include: observations of the quality of training, learning and assessment, better use of feedback from apprentices and employers, better use of data about apprentices' progress, and more critical self-assessment to identify all areas for improvement. Ensure that self-assessment leads to a comprehensive action plan to address areas for improvement and set targets to allow monitoring and evaluation of actions taken.
- Review and improve safeguarding arrangements to ensure that employers and apprentices have a better understanding of safeguarding and provide staff with further regular training to build their knowledge and understanding. Keep better records of any concerns.
- Better identify all apprentices' individual learning and support needs at initial assessment by using assessments which identify the gaps in their knowledge, including those who are exempt from functional skills tests, so that trainers can maximise the opportunities to develop functional skills.
- Improve apprentices' awareness of opportunities for progression by providing good careers advice and guidance.
- Provide more staff training in equality and diversity to build staff's confidence in discussing these in teaching sessions and at progress reviews, to ensure all apprentices develop a good understanding, particularly in regard to equality and diversity in the workplace.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Urban Futures London Ltd (Urban Futures) is a not for profit company providing employability training as a subcontractor for other providers, and this constitutes the majority of the training the organisation offers. In 2013, Urban Futures contracted directly with the Skills Funding Agency to provide a small number of apprenticeships. Apprenticeship provision comprises less than five percent of the provider's work and was the focus of this inspection. There are currently 11 apprentices, 10 in business administration and one in customer service. All but one are on intermediate apprenticeships. Urban Futures also manages a small number of customer service apprentices employed at a large regional airport under a subcontractor arrangement with a college; the quality of this provision was not inspected.</li> <li>▪ Around half of the 11 apprentices currently training are making good progress but the remainder are making slower progress than expected. First apprentices completed their programmes in 2013/14 and two out of the three leavers achieved their apprenticeship. However, in 2014/15 too many apprentices have left their programme without completing their apprenticeship.</li> <li>▪ Most apprentices develop good English skills, including grammar and spelling, and good ICT skills in their job roles. The majority of apprentices start with qualifications in English and mathematics which mean they do not need to take functional skills tests, but staff do not encourage them to work towards functional skills at a higher level.</li> </ul>	

- Although only a small number of apprentices have completed their programme so far only one has progressed to a level 3 qualification. Around half of those completing have had to seek employment elsewhere as they have not gained permanent roles with the employer which provided their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and knowledge, and become more confident in their job roles. Apprentices, most of whom are new to the world of work, improve their administration skills significantly, learning new skills at work such as telecommunication skills and data manipulation through the use of spreadsheets. They carry out their job roles to a good standard. Apprentices improve their team working and customer service skills as well as increasing their knowledge of subjects such as health and safety and data protection.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in the slow progress being made by about half of the current apprentices. Although nearly all apprentices are exempt from taking the functional English and mathematics tests, most are making slow progress towards achieving their ICT functional skills tests.
- Initial assessment for apprentices requires improvement. Although the initial assessment identifies apprentices' existing levels of skill in English and mathematics there is no further assessment to identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding, which impedes further development of their skills. Initial assessment does not include ICT. Although assessors do discuss the choice of suitable optional vocational units with apprentices and employers, they do not carry out an initial assessment of the apprentices' job-related skills to identify and plan for individual training needs.
- Employers provide good on-the-job training but assessors do not plan enough individual coaching. The standard of apprentices' practical and theory work is good. Assessors have good occupational experience and set interesting and relevant assignments which lead to apprentices developing good research skills. Assessors provide good verbal and written feedback to apprentices on their work, but a minority of apprentices do not know how to access the written feedback on their electronic portfolios.
- Employers provide good support and are committed to developing their apprentices. This strongly motivates apprentices so that they develop wide-ranging personal and business skills such as independent thinking, research and presentation skills. Apprentices are employed in good quality workplaces where their workplace duties are clearly linked to the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. Where some workplaces have previously been unsatisfactory and not met the needs of the apprentices, or where there have been concerns about apprentices' welfare, managers have taken prompt action to transfer them to job roles within Urban Futures so that they can complete their apprenticeship.
- The reviewing of apprentices' progress requires improvement. Progress reviews do not always include line managers, assessors and apprentices and this hinders the monitoring of apprentices' progress and the planning of their training. Records from the reviews lack clear, specific, measurable and achievable targets that apprentices can work towards and that staff can monitor.
- All apprentices have a work mentor and staff are developing this new role well. The mentors are inspiring apprentices and providing good personal support. Mentors monitor apprentices' progress effectively to identify those at risk of not achieving and liaise well with assessors but assessors are too slow to act on this information.
- Apprentices improve the standard of their written and spoken English during their apprenticeship. Assessors ensure apprentices receive good and timely feedback on the quality of their written work and correct spelling and grammatical errors. However, assessors do not focus sufficiently on developing apprentices' mathematics skills.

- Staff do not ensure that apprentices have sufficient advice and guidance to plan their progression to further learning or employment.
- The promotion of equality and diversity, and of safeguarding, requires improvement. Business administration apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity is very varied, from having little understanding to a good appreciation. Most apprentices are aware of internet safety protocols. At review visits, staff check on apprentices' welfare, but this is too cursory and they do not explore apprentices' knowledge thoroughly enough to ensure that apprentices have sufficient awareness of aspects such as bullying and harassment.
- Urban Futures has recently introduced a very well-planned customer service apprenticeship programme, which it is providing in partnership with a large employer. The apprenticeship programme coordinates well with the employer's own training programmes. Assessment is good in customer service and the programme is designed to support apprentices to progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships. Trainers and assessors place a strong emphasis on developing apprentices' knowledge and understanding of health and safety, and equality and diversity. Apprentices on this programme have good opportunities to learn, they attend well-planned group sessions that foster learning effectively. Sessions incorporate a wide variety of teaching methods, including imaginative use of PowerPoint, discussion, debates, flip charts and questioning. Trainers teach effectively and use up-to-date material that is directly relevant to apprentices' job roles.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement as not enough apprentices are achieving their full qualification, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet of a high enough standard.
- Directors, senior managers and staff share the organisation's clear vision to support young people into employment, and are strongly committed to developing apprentices' skills to achieve this goal. Leaders provide good strategic leadership with a strong focus on planning and developing the business to ensure its sustainability as well as to meet apprentices' and employers' needs. Urban Futures has good links with local strategic partnerships and managers have a good understanding of local employers' needs. Urban Futures plans to expand its apprenticeship programme to include more subject areas to meet employers' needs better, for example at the airport where a strong relationship is being built with employers.
- Training, assessment and support staff have good vocational experience and appropriate qualifications, and managers have recruited a new specialist trainer for ICT to provide better support for apprentices. Managers carry out regular reviews to monitor apprentices' progress with assessors and trainers, but these are not effective in ensuring that all apprentices make the progress expected.
- Quality improvement arrangements are not yet fully effective. Managers do not routinely collect the views of staff, apprentices and employers to contribute to self-assessment. The self-assessment report does not accurately identify all of the key areas for improvement. Managers are not using data well enough to monitor apprentices' progress and achievement. Although Urban Futures has well-established arrangements for observing teaching and learning on its employability provision, this is not yet fully replicated on the apprenticeship programmes. Managers do not routinely observe all aspects of the apprenticeship programme or give staff sufficient feedback to help them to improve their practice.
- The quality improvement plan identifies some key areas to improve, such as achievement of functional skills, ensuring training meets apprentices' individual needs, and earlier action for apprentices at risk of not achieving, but it does not include dates by which actions should be completed.
- Managers are beginning to take action to improve the apprenticeship programme. For example, trainers have recently started to provide workshops for ICT and the customer service

apprenticeship, and workshops for business administration apprentices are at an early planning stage. Staff are also taking action earlier to support apprentices at risk of not achieving. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes on apprentices' achievement and retention on the programme.

- Senior managers have recently formed a new operations and quality committee, and the committee has had its first meeting. The committee is aiming to develop a coherent quality strategy by November 2015, but progress to date is slow.
- Safeguarding arrangements require improvement. All managers and staff have had appropriate vetting checks. However, some staff would benefit from training to up-date their knowledge and understanding, and records of staff training are not clear enough. Staff do not ensure apprentices receive sufficient information on safeguarding to build on that provided at the start of their apprenticeship; they do not always check apprentices' experiences at work thoroughly enough. Suitable policies and recording mechanisms are in place, and staff take action if concerns are raised. However, subsequent recording does not contain sufficient detail. Staff carry out appropriate health and safety checks on employers at the start of an apprenticeship, and discusses safeguarding requirements, but they do not provide sufficient written information to support employers' understanding. The designated training officer has attended safeguarding training at level 2, and has recently attended training to raise awareness of radicalisation, although this has not yet been disseminated to other staff.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Although these topics are included at induction staff do not pay sufficient attention to developing apprentices' knowledge and understanding during their programme. Assessors and support staff have not attended any recent training to ensure their knowledge is up to date. There are no differences in the rates of achievement between apprentices according to gender or ethnic heritage.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Urban Futures London Ltd

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	<b>3</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Outcomes for learners	<b>3</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>3</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>3</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>3</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16-18							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	14							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Steve Delaney – Chief Executive							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	N/A							
<b>Website address</b>	www.urbanfutures.org.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+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<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+		
	10	-	1	-	-	-		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	-							
<b>Part-time</b>	-							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	-							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	-							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	None							

## Contextual information

Urban Futures is an urban regeneration company working to support people and communities across London. One of their key areas is young people's services and the large majority of their provision aims to help young people develop skills and gain employment. The company provides employability training and a small number of apprenticeships on behalf of other providers as a subcontractor. Urban Futures gained its first contract to provide apprenticeships with the Skills Funding Agency in August 2013.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Gary Adkins
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One lead inspector and one additional inspector, assisted by the training and quality 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. Inspectors also used data on apprentices' achievements since 2013/14 to help them make judgements. Inspectors used 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, reviewed assessments and progress reviews and sampled learners' work.

## 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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