

# Assurance Report

## Absolute Training Ltd

**Address:** Ty Cynon, Navigation Park, Abercynon, CF45 4SN

**Date of Assurance Visit:** 08<sup>th</sup>-09<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**NSAR Assurance Manager:** Jan Hindhaugh

**Quality of Provision Observer:** Alan Brockbank

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### Overall Effectiveness of the provider:

**Previous Inspection:** **Outstanding**

**This Assurance Visit:** **Gold**

Capacity to Improve: Gold

Learner Outcomes: Gold

Quality of Provision: Gold

Leadership & Management: Gold

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### Description of the Setting:

Absolute Training Limited is an independent company formed in 2011 to provide safety and skills training for staff employed by companies associated with the rail industry. Training takes place in premises which is leased from Venture Wales on a local business park and the practical elements delivered at a Track Induction site in Pontyclun & HMP Cardiff and an OTP site in Cwmbran South Wales. The centre is located in modern serviced building well served by roads and there is a rail station close by. The provider's premises have 5 classrooms large enough to accommodate up to 12 learners, an IQA room, a large office, a large canteen, Showers & changing rooms and Accessible lift access and ample space for one to one sessions. The provider delivers track safety and On Track Plant [OTP] courses.

## Key Findings of the Assurance Visit

### **Capacity to Improve**

### **Grade: GOLD**

The capacity for the provider to maintain and build on its high quality training is GOLD standard because of the skills, knowledge and experience of trainers alongside clear management and efficient administrative support. The provider's areas of specialism are on track plant alongside its capacity to deliver safety critical training meets the needs of the railway industry. The Self-Assessment [SAR] has been used effectively in conjunction with the Quality Improvement Plan [QIP] to build a solid foundation to enable ongoing improvements as the business continues to grow and expand, with plans to be a centre of excellence for Wales and South West.

Learner's opinions are sought at the end of each training session and an exceptionally high percentage are positive, the evidence was readily available and seen during the visit, this is also an agenda item and the minutes of the meeting were also seen. Feedback is carefully analysed including reference to gender, age, ethnicity and learning difficulties. The managing director's knowledge and reputation within his specialist areas results in him supporting others across the industry and the provider is successfully delivering the SWM training to major principle contractors in the region.

The provider has introduced the use of Omnicom which is a GPS enabled system to validate the location, date and time of assessments. This is used in conjunction with the current NWR assessment documentation.

The provider has a Mission Statement and proudly display it within the classroom and training centre.

## Quality of Provision

**Grade: GOLD**

The quality of provision meets GOLD standard. The provider has continually monitored and responded to recommendations from audits and where necessary sort advice from consultants to improve their provision. For example, ED&I specialist's consultants Business Wales who have delivered training and qualifications to all staff and specialists consultants.

This has resulted in a clear vision which is set, reviewed and communicated regularly and effectively to all staff in and out of meetings, which has had an impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for all learners. Communication is evidenced in team meetings emails, standardisation meetings and the monthly magazine which are displayed around the building.

Senior managers have secured and sustained improvements to training learning and assessments through robust performance management and professional CPD. Regular meetings with staff by managers and peer assessments observations external teaching observers ensure that CPD is relevant and actioned with SMART targets which was evidenced in documents presented in audit.

Any areas identified as requiring improvement are tackled quickly and effectively to improve the learner experience. There was clear evidence of feedback from learners in the you said we did posters and also in the learner feedback forms.

Self-assessment is accurate and uses the views of learners, employers and other stakeholders to secure sustained improvement across the provider's work, which includes a lot of work with the prisons, Princes Trust and local providers to ensure that the range of provision is aligned to local and regional needs. Data is collected in a number of ways achievements, attendance, learners feedback forms employer feedback via emails and verbal. All feedback is analysed by managers and recorded and actioned in meetings.

The sessions observed during the audit was the last day of the COSS course. There were eight learners that started the course but unfortunately one failed to get through

to the last day, this learner had personal problems at home but wanted to continue and start the course. The trainer explained that he had sat with him during breaks and at the end of each day to go through work again. The sessions observed were a mixture of theory and practical activities.

The sessions aim and objectives were clearly set and understood by the learners. A recap using questions based on previous work carried out during the week consolidated learning showing learners had made progress during this time.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion [EDI] is actively led by the EDI Champion and the session was started with an explanation around Equality and Diversity.

There was an excellent range of activities planned to meet the different learning styles. This created a professional learning environment wholly relevant, fit for purpose and excellently and safely executed using appropriate PPE.

The pace of the day clearly matched the subject and learner level. The activities in the classroom and on the track, were timed maintaining the interest and learning for all learners.

Excellent support provided through differentiated resources and activities – extension work, structured group/individual work and in-class customised support.

Highly effective clearly focused questioning skills in the classroom and on track were used to check all learners' knowledge and progress throughout the day.

Previous knowledge and experience was used throughout which helped to reinforce and promote learning especially in relation to linking theory and practice in the Rail Industry. There is a continual drive to produce new materials to promote learning, staff share these resources effectively.

Although the trainer was slightly nervous and spoke at times a little too fast he still used inclusive language, attitudes and terminology which combined very well with his passion for rail which motivated and aided concentration.

Learners worked effectively by themselves and in groups demonstrating high mutual respect between learners and the trainer. One learner did swear but was corrected to which he immediately apologised.

Managers and trainers monitor achievement progression and could show many examples of learners that have enrolled on courses and have returned. There were also many examples of learners who have been in prison or with the Princes Trust and have enrolled with Absolute Training and have continued to progress in the Rail Industry. Managers have used this progression to improve the provision having built up an excellent rapport with HMP Cardiff and the Princes Trust and have collated a data-base recording achievement data. They keep in touch with these organisations and current data shows over 60% of these learners have gained and are still in employment. These learners are monitored for 12 months. Absolute have won national awards for this work and are displayed around the building, in the SAR and with staff in meetings.

The company provides extensive support for learners with particular needs. It provides access to suitable computer facilities at the training centre to enable learners on the PTS (initial) and the Industry Common Induction [ICI] to complete the required e-learning sections.

The feedback from learners confirms that they have a very high regard for the quality of training they receive. Many state they would return as it's the best experience they have had. The provider considers this feedback, along with that it receives from its customers during routine communication, carefully to identify any required improvements to its provision. I spoke to the learners who were on the course observed who confirmed this, some learners were managers and could speak for the other organisations. I was presented with an audit file with this information in.

## **OUTCOME FOR LEARNERS      GRADE: GOLD**

The outcomes for learners meet GOLD standard. The provider confirms the identity and eligibility of every learner before they start their training. The provider records all of the checks completed, the testing undertaken and the outcomes of the training. Learners' pass rates have been consistently high each year. The provision has grown over the last few years to over 3,700 learners. In addition, 1250 ICI and 600 e-learning events. All courses have remained above 97% ensuring quality of provision.

Data is analysed in the IQA meetings, Managers analyse the data regularly in meetings and it shows that there are no differences between the achievement rates for different groups of learners. However, it should be identified and recorded how this happens in more detail and to make sure that trainers contextualise the progress learners make from one session to another. These records will show that all learners make excellent progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. Each trainer plans this progress but it should be recorded, which will help when other trainers train the same learners and evidence progress within written documents for example the self-assessment.

Learners engage fully with the training they undertake. Learners were pleased with their progress and are confident that they have the potential to make further progress and consolidate and improve in their current roles. Learner feedback from courses and especially the community work with learners from the prisons and NEET learners who would not otherwise have the qualifications to progress. Verbal feedback from learners on the course observed and also from the data base which shows how learners have progressed.

The learners felt that the classroom activities and the practical activities were excellent ways of learning. Learner feedback forms verbal feedback and interviewing learners all believe that the training structure of delivery is an excellent way of delivery.

Learners also develop personal, social and employability skills, including English, math's and ICT, this was detailed in minutes of meetings and was seen in the delivery of sessions. English was used effectively in correcting spelling discussions and reading and presentations. Opportunities were used in the classroom and on track to improve math's.

The standard of learners' work is monitored effectively by regular IQA meetings. This ensures that their level of work meets, and for more able learners exceeds the relevant industry standards. This is enhanced by monthly trainer's meetings which identify areas for improvement and good practice. This is also recorded in IQA, team meetings staff reviews and QIP effectively monitored by SMART

Learners fully understood health and safety which was delivered effectively in the classroom and in the practical on the track which included a signal box visit. This gave the learners confidence when using the phone in emergencies on the track. Working cooperatively with the signal man and others in different settings promotes productive working relationships. Communication between learners and the signaller is an area for improvement and is an area highlighted in every course observed and agreed by learner feedback. In this instance it was used very effectively to show the workloads the signaller has which is why communication has to be clear. It is a regular agreement with the signaller and is written as part of the course.

The trainer organised the sessions very effectively. In both group and individual assessments clear expectations were set for expected behavior, health and safety, and the quality of work. This helped build mutual respect between learner and trainer.

Learners were highly motivated and interested and were willing to participate and take responsibility when asked or when appropriate.

Learners displayed commitment to learning through excellent records of attendance and punctuality. Learners in the observed course enjoyed their time with this provider, learner feedback from previous courses were also very good.

During the audit data was analysed. and discussions took place regarding learners who required support. Data shows that learners who have been identified with these needs passed the courses they enrolled on. Further discussions revealed that trainers have received training and qualifications in how to support these learners gain skills and progress to become more independent in their everyday life and/or progress to positive destinations such as employment. There were many examples of trainers who have broken down difficult problems for learners and stayed behind to help learners overcome areas they don't understand.

## **Leadership & Management**

**Grade: GOLD**

Leadership and Management are GOLD standard. The managing director models best practice and leads by example, he also acts as the training director. He is effectively supported by an experienced training manager who is also the sentinel co-ordinator and an experienced Internal Quality Assurance Manager, together they work to ensure that training is of the highest quality and that learner's needs are at the forefront of thinking for all the trainers. Clear policies and procedures have been developed to inform practice and ensure consistency of quality. Organisational systems are very well planned, with staff clearly informed to ensure they understand the company aims for growth and development. Regular review meetings are held to ensure that all staff are aware of, engaged in and can contribute to the ongoing development of consistently high quality training. Minutes of the meetings were evidenced during the visit.

Thorough pre-course procedures are in place, including identification checks and joining instructions, enabling sponsors and trainees to receive them in good time. Internal Quality Assurance procedures are effective and are based on 100% IQA strategy through a combination of Peer & IQA reviews as is the observation the trainers.

A thorough observation guide structure which mirrors the NSAR assurance framework ensures that the feedback provided from the observations are detailed and leads to on-going improvements.

Premises and physical resources are excellent. Equality and diversity is well promoted.

## Recommendations for Improvements

### Leadership & Management

None

### Capacity to Improve

Consider collaborative relationships with other providers to help each other with assessments and upskilling in OTP.

### Quality of Provision

Detail the starting points of learners to support planning and show progression during sessions and over the course of study. This will help in differentiation and setting challenging targets. This will also enable some aims and objectives to be individualised to stretch and challenge learners.

### Learner Outcomes

Record the support given to learners this will help to evidence the high achievement rates and will also show the focus on the learners that trainers have so that they are able to reach their potential.

## WHAT THE OVERALL JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Judgement	Description
Platinum	<p>The Provider is exceptional in all areas.</p> <p>This is 'best in class', the provider demonstrates an exceptional commitment to sharing best practice within the training community. Leaders act as role models for integrity, social responsibility and ethical behavior both internally and externally to enhance the organization's reputation.</p>

<b>Gold</b>	These features are highly effective.
<b>Silver</b>	There are positive features present.
<b>Bronze</b>	There are features which must be improved. N.B. The provider will be suspended from delivery until it can demonstrate to NSAR that the areas for improvement have been addressed, which must be within 4 months. Where corrective actions are not implemented within 4 months Assurance to deliver training and/or assessment will be permanently withdrawn.
<b>Inadequate</b>	The Assurance to deliver training and/or assessment will be permanently withdrawn.
<b>Next Steps</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The provider will receive their next Assurance Visit 12 months from the date of their last visit.</li> <li>2. NSAR operates an unannounced visit regime whereby the provider can be visited without notice at any time between assurance visits.</li> </ol>	

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