

Quality Assured Care Learning Service – case study

Coleman Training

Coleman Training is a specialist training provider in the health and social care sector. With a broad client base that includes local authorities, national care providers, independent care homes, domiciliary care services, learning disability services, personal assistants and social workers, the organisation is well known for its comprehensive and tailored learning offer.

Their training covers a wide spectrum of provision, from mandatory and funded training, to leadership development programmes and specialist courses in areas such as dementia and autism. Coleman Training developed the dementia awareness course now used by the Care Quality Commission to train its inspectors, and they deliver both Tier 1 and Tier 2 Oliver McGowan training as well as train-the-trainer sessions. They also offer a wide range of Skills for Care funded leadership programmes and a suite of in-house leadership courses.

For Caroline Coleman, who leads the organisation, applying to become quality assured through the Quality Assured Care Learning Service (QACLS) felt like a continuation of a long-standing commitment to quality. “We were previously a Centre of Excellence with Skills for Care,” Caroline explains. “Demonstrating our standards is important to us, but even more so to the services we support. We know how variable the quality of training in our sector can be, and QACLS offers a way for services to feel confident they’re investing in training that genuinely improves outcomes.”

The QACLS framework also gave the Coleman Training team an opportunity to reflect and develop. “We always strive to do better,” says Caroline, “and QACLS gave us an excellent structure to assess where we are and how we can improve.”

Preparation for the application was a whole-team effort. Something Caroline felt was essential to reinforcing the shared responsibility for quality across the organisation. “We scrutinised the guidance together, and each team member contributed. Once we had all the information available, we reviewed it against the criteria. We all cheered when we finally submitted it!”

While initially daunted by the process, Caroline found it to be straightforward and well-supported. “The guidance was very helpful. It made us question some of our procedures, and we actually improved a few of them along the way.”

Overall, Caroline describes the QACLS experience as a positive and constructive one. “It gave us a great opportunity to focus as a team on how we manage quality. That alone has had lasting benefits for our business.”

Since achieving quality assured status, the impact on Coleman Training has been noticeable. “We’re proud to have been quality assured, and we’re now Oliver McGowan quality assured. The next step is to submit the rest of our LDSS-funded qualification portfolio for quality assurance” Caroline notes that because the team was involved from the beginning, everyone has a greater understanding of what quality assurance really means, and how they contribute to it. “Staff now take more ownership of quality across the business.”

In terms of external perception, Caroline believes that being quality assured has a significant effect on commissioners and partners. “Having what we call ‘the government tick’ gives commissioners peace of mind. It offers a commercial advantage, especially compared to providers who aren’t quality assured. Learners don’t always understand what it means, but for those buying and commissioning training, it really matters.”

Caroline’s advice to other providers, particularly smaller ones, is simple and encouraging: “Go for it. Even if you don’t have every system in place yet, going through the process will help you build a solid foundation to grow from.”

For anyone beginning their QACLS journey, she recommends starting with the guidance documents. “They’re comprehensive and make it easy to understand what’s needed.”

Looking ahead, Coleman Training plans to expand its portfolio of quality assured courses and continue raising the bar for training standards. “We’re working towards ISO 9001 next,” says Caroline. “QACLS has strengthened our foundations, now we’re building even further.”