

Rewards Training Recruitment Consultancy Limited

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Rewards Training Recruitment Consultancy Limited (Rewards), based in West Sussex, was established in 1989 and for many years delivered programmes on a subcontracting basis. In 2008/09 it contracted with the Skills Funding Agency for Train to Gain programmes and apprenticeships. The previous inspection took place in June 2011. At that time 160 learners were in Train to Gain programmes and 245 learners on apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit learners on adult learning programmes had increased to 350 and the number of apprentices had reduced slightly to 217.

At the previous inspection the overall effectiveness of Rewards' provision was inadequate. Rewards had not demonstrated satisfactory capacity to make improvements; however, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management were all satisfactory. Business administration and law and transportation operations and maintenance were both satisfactory; however, health, public services and care was inadequate.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Rewards made in developing its self-assessment process to assure the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of subcontracted provision?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection the self-assessment report was insufficiently detailed to inform improvement and did not take account of subcontracted provision. Arrangements to ensure the quality of the subcontracted provision were unsatisfactory. Rewards has undertaken a complete and effective review of its structure, strengthened the senior team and significantly improved quality processes. The current self-assessment is based on the Common Inspection Framework, includes the views of staff and covers all areas of provision. Action planning clearly addresses those areas identified for improvement and staff at all levels use it well as a working document. Rewards has made good progress in achieving the targets set out in the action plan and has well managed the pace of improvement. It has put in place an improved system to manage the quality of subcontractors' provision, including better sharing of good practice, quality development targeted at areas identified through more effective quality monitoring and improved communication. Rewards has well-developed plans in place to implement a single self-assessment process, implement more effective systems to improve teaching and learning and improve the management of stakeholder views. Rewards has a clear understanding of those areas which require further development and well-considered plans are in place.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has Rewards made in improving success rates? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection apprenticeship success rates overall were satisfactory. Overall success rates for Train to Gain learners were very low in 2009/10 when one large group of health and social care learners failed to complete. Rates improved slightly, although too many learners took longer to complete than expected. Since then Rewards has managed good improvement and success rates and completion within the planned time frame are both 95%. On apprenticeship programmes, the good support for health and social care has led to improved success rates of 83%; however, success rates have reduced within business administration to just below 70% in 2010/11. Further strengthening of quality assurance processes to improve success rates is having a positive impact. Staff analyse data well and have realistic plans in place to address any identified differences in success rates between groups.

Quality of provision

What progress has Rewards made in developing the initial information, advice and guidance process to provide better communication with employers and a clear understanding of the framework requirements so learners can complete in the time frames expected? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection although programmes met employers' and learners' needs, employers did not always fully understand the apprenticeship framework. Employers were critical about the communication with Rewards at the start of the programme and subsequent information on learners' progress. Communication between all parties has much improved. Rewards has developed a revised enrolment procedure, which makes clear its eligibility and recruitment criteria, and has implemented a sales and employer engagement strategy which is used effectively across the whole organisation. The new senior management team has better defined staff responsibilities and has conducted a thorough review of all company marketing materials and strategies to ensure they are accurate, clearly written and fit for purpose. These are easily accessible to all staff and marketing information is shared with employers. A closer working relationship between accounts managers and the delivery team has been particularly productive in meeting learners' needs. Better initial contact enables a good match of learners' job roles to the content and level of qualification. Rewards has recently developed a particularly useful 'at a glance' pictorial chart which clearly shows learners their progress. Staff now routinely share progress reports with employers and make them aware of learners at risk of disengagement or making slow progress.

What progress has Rewards made in implementing initial assessment processes to provide an appropriate diagnosis of learners' needs to better plan learning programmes and any necessary additional learning support?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection, initial assessment was not always thorough or used to plan individual teaching and learning programmes for learners. Few learners with low levels of language, literacy and numeracy received specific support to develop these skills and achieve their full potential. Since then Rewards has developed a more comprehensive and rigorous initial assessment process which includes diagnostic assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills, a skills scan and an assessment of preferred learning styles. Initial enrolment discussions, to ensure the opportunities for evidence generation match the learners' job roles, add to this process. Staff now identify additional learning needs and arrange appropriate support; this is clearly recorded on a newly devised individual learning plan which meets individual learners' needs. A Skills for Life manager has provided specific training in functional skills and offers a supportive point of contact for assessors, giving them greater confidence in providing literacy and numeracy support and directing learners to specific activities and tasks to help their development. The personalised learning plan better reflects the learners' prior knowledge and is proving a useful tool to ensure learners' length of stay accurately reflects their capabilities.

What progress has Rewards made in developing the assessment process to ensure successful delivery of the health and social care apprenticeship programme?

Reasonable progress

Rewards has obtained the support of a local outstanding health and social care provider to share good practice with trainers and assessors and to support them in developing helpful policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and effective approach to teaching, learning and assessment. This work is now having a beneficial impact on success rates. Rewards have increased its number of assessors to ensure workloads are more manageable. Learners at risk of disengagement or those making very slow progress are targeted for additional support, more frequent assessment visits and closer monitoring of progress. Previously there was an over-reliance on digitally voice-recorded assessment. The evidence generated by learners is now more diverse and assessment methods better meet the wide range of learners' individual needs and preferred learning styles. Assessment plans and feedback to learners are generally clear and useful. The pace of learners' progress has increased and the current learners are on target to achieve within their planned end date.

Leadership and management

What progress has Rewards made in developing a more structured approach to gathering, analysing and utilising the views of users and subcontractors more effectively to identify and action plan for areas requiring improvement? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection Rewards did not have a clear strategy to involve learners and employers. Staff are now better informed and feel more able to influence action through improved communication and a well-structured meeting schedule. Rewards now better engages subcontractors in quality development and has an improved process for monitoring performance which also acts as an effective platform for gathering their views. Rewards has improved employer engagement through a more structured approach and employers are better informed of both learner performance and the requirements of the qualifications. Staff have worked well with a few learners, involving them in the development of the new academy and innovative electronic communication. However, formal systems to gain systematic feedback from learners are planned but not yet in place. Rewards are developing a virtual learning environment to engage users better which, although on line, is still at an early stage of development.

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