

# West Anglia Training Association

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 55306

**Name of lead inspector:** Gerard McGrath HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 11 January 2012

**Type of provider:** Work based learning provider  
West Anglia Training Association Ltd  
Old Houghton Road

**Address:** Hartford  
Huntingdon  
PE29 1YB

**Telephone number:** 01480 435544

## **FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Context and focus of visit**

West Anglia Training Association (WATA) is a non-profit making company and a registered charity. The company is based on the outskirts of Huntingdon. The youth training section manages apprentice training. As a group training association, the company has 52 member companies. The majority of the company's income comes from providing a variety of commercial training courses to member companies, publically funded training accounts for around 20 per cent of company turnover.

Since September 2011, WATA has established itself as the lead organisation within a provider consortium and has a formal sub-contract with Vogal training Ltd to provide apprenticeship training. There are currently 151 learners, of whom 127 are advanced apprentices. Learners are employed in 47 member companies located throughout Eastern England. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to 12 further education colleges and three private training groups.

Outcomes for learners, leadership and management, as well as the overall effectiveness of the provider, were all judged to be satisfactory and the quality of the provision was judged good at the previous inspection in July 2010.

### **Themes**

#### **Self-assessment and improvement planning**

**What progress has WATA made in improving its collection of feedback and self-assessment arrangements?** **Reasonable progress**

WATA has a well-established and structured approach to self-assessment, as identified at the previous inspection. Quality improvement procedures are consistently applied and further improvements planned to the self-assessment report writing process for the next report.

Regular surveys of learners, employers and staff are used to collect views about training. A new learner involvement strategy has recently been used to increase the collection of feedback and suggestions from learners. WATA has improved the company's website apprenticeship page and has begun to use social networking internet sites to promote learning and prompt feedback from current and previous learners. WATA has recently developed an employer's feedback handbook to provide employers with performance data and learner comments about their training.

The findings of regular observations of the teaching and learning of internal and sub-contracted training support judgements in the self-assessment report. It is too early to judge the full effectiveness of the process this year, as the report for 2010 - 11 has yet to be drafted. The improvement plans for 2010/11 contained an appropriate

range of actions to address successfully the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

## **Outcomes for learners**

### **What progress has WATA made in improving the achievements of learners?**

### **Reasonable progress**

Outcomes for learners were satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. Both overall achievement rates for apprentices and completion rates within the planned time have further improved, although not as quickly as the national averages.

Advanced apprenticeship achievement rates in engineering have been adversely affected by a further small number of learner redundancies in addition to those mentioned in the previous inspection report, and are now close to the national average. Achievement rates for intermediate apprentices in engineering are now a little above national averages. The achievement rates for the very small number of learners on business administration & law apprenticeship programmes are very high.

The proportion of learners who achieve within the planned duration of their programme have improved further since the previous inspection and are approximately 7% above the national average. Current learners make at least satisfactory progress and some learners are on target to complete their programme well within the planned duration of their training. As at the time of the previous inspection most learners also achieve a range of additional qualifications that improve their employability, including health and safety and specialist engineering qualifications.

## **Quality of the provision**

### **What progress has WATA made in improving the delivery and reinforcement of induction topics throughout apprenticeship programmes?**

### **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, inspectors judged that a few learners had poor recall of their induction programme content. Since the previous inspection, WATA has made reasonable progress in improving learner's induction.

The provider has effectively reviewed the content of the induction programme and developed new materials and approaches to reinforcing learners understanding of it. Induction on apprenticeship programmes is carried out over a number of weeks; it includes the structure and content of the training programme, safeguarding, health and safety as well as equality and diversity. Careers advice and guidance ensures that learners are on the correct training programme.

Many aspects of the induction content are also covered during technical certificate training. Learners' understanding of relevant topics is explored and reinforced

appropriately during formal progress reviews. Learner's recall of important issues such as a health and safety and equality and diversity is good.

**What progress has WATA made in improving the timely assessment and validation of learner's work?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, WATA has made reasonable progress in improving the validation of learners work. At the last inspection several apprentices nearing the end of their training had evidence in their portfolio validated and counter-signed by their employers. In some cases the assessors had not signed the work.

The provider has increased the early accreditation of NVQ units throughout the training, to ensure that on long programmes full unit accreditation is no longer left until the end. The provider has fully embedded an effective learner tracker, which clearly highlights learner's progress towards their qualification. Workplace supervisors and assessors more regularly ensure that they sign off the learners work as early as possible to recognise achievement and highlight areas for improvement in future work. Learners receive prompt feedback on written work and find this motivating. However, not all learners submit their work for assessment as soon as it is produced.

**Leadership and management**

**What progress has WATA made in improving the management of sub-contracted provision?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the beginning of the 2011/12 academic year WATA became the lead partner in a training provider consortium. In response to the need to increase learner numbers to meet minimum contract levels a formal partnership was formed with Vogal training Ltd to deliver apprenticeships.

A formal service level agreement and well-structured monitoring arrangements have been agreed and applied. The local further education colleges are still delivering off-the-job training for many learners across the East of England; all of these providers have the quality of their teaching and learning assessed by WATA staff. The outcomes of these observations support judgements in the WATA self-assessment report about the quality of teaching and learning. The progress of individual learners is closely monitored and slow progress and risks of dropping out of training are discussed by managers.

**How much progress has WATA made in improving the safeguarding of learners?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the time of the previous inspection the formal safeguarding arrangements were very new and staff had not received relevant training. Safeguarding was judged to be satisfactory.

All relevant staff have completed criminal records bureau checks and attended appropriate training on the safeguarding of children and the protection of vulnerable adults. Company safeguarding policies have been reviewed and improved company procedures introduced such as revised arrangements for staff working alone.

Health and safety has a high priority throughout the apprenticeship programmes, including the sub-contracted delivery. Safeguarding topics, introduced during staff and learner induction are reinforced effectively during formal progress reviews with learners. Staff, employers and learners have a satisfactory understanding of safeguarding. Learners report that they feel safe.

**What progress has WATA made in promoting training to under-represented groups of learners?**

**Reasonable progress**

As at the time of the last inspection the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is a little less than the profile of the population in the East of England. A range of new marketing materials with images of women and people from minority ethnic groups working in engineering and managerial roles helps promote the training to these groups.

The company website promotes learning well to a wide range of employers in engineering settings. WATA staff regularly attend school careers events to promote apprenticeships. WATA has recently been awarded a contract to work with young people not in education, employment or training in areas of socio-economic deprivation in Peterborough city to promote training and improve their employability and motivation for work. The number of female learners has increased, the majority of these are on business administration & law programmes. Three per cent of engineering learners are female and approximately 9% of learners have a declared disability.

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