

Sheffield Independent Film and Television (SHIFT)

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Sheffield Independent Film and Television (SHIFT) is a registered charity based in Sheffield city centre. It provides vocational training in interactive media at level 1 and foundation learning to 28 learners funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). Training for 13 of the learners in music technology is subcontracted to another provider, Darnall Education Centre Associated Training Co-operative Ltd (DECAT), based in a suburb of Sheffield. Learners spend about 22 weeks on the programmes. Many learners progress to further education courses at a local college and some of them progress into employment. SHIFT is now located in premises housing small enterprises in the media sector. It has four staff and a board of six trustees. DECAT has four staff.

SHIFT was reinspected in November 2009 following an inspection in the previous year. At the reinspection, overall effectiveness of the provision, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, leadership and management, and preparation for life and work were graded satisfactory. Quality of provision, safeguarding and equality and diversity were graded good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made to increasing the proportion of learners who gain qualifications and progress to employment?	Insufficient progress
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At the time of the reinspection, inspectors identified the need for SHIFT to improve outcomes for learners and increase employment opportunities. In 2010/11, only 46% of learners gained a qualification in arts, media and publishing or in preparation for life and work compared with the national average of more than 80%. SHIFT has set itself a target of 60% qualification success rate in the current year and is making good progress towards reaching it.

In 2010/11, only 17% of learners progressed into employment. SHIFT still arranges too few placements for learners. The economic downturn has reduced the ability of media and music organisations to offer placements to the learners that SHIFT trains. Some learners find jobs in other vocational areas. The subcontractor, DECAT, is well placed to offer support to learners seeking work in motor vehicle engineering but neither SHIFT nor DECAT have links with employers in other vocational areas, such as retail, care or hospitality. Learners receive employability training and engage in jobsearch activities but the breadth of job opportunities they are encouraged to consider is too narrow.

What progress has been made to enable learners to gain other positive outcomes and to progress to further training?

Reasonable progress

At the time of the reinspection, SHIFT had increased the number of learners who achieve a positive outcome from their training. Over the two years since the reinspection the proportion of learners who achieved their key objectives, such as improved time-keeping or attendance, has increased further. In 2010/11, 74% achieved their key objective compared with 63% in the previous year and 35% in 2008/09.

At the time of the reinspection, learners were found to gain good transferable and specialised employability skills. The proportion of learners who progress into further training is good. The Foundation Learning Programme gives learners a solid basis for entry into level 2 courses in media or music at local further education colleges. They achieve sufficient literacy and numeracy skills to progress to the next level of vocational qualification. Many learners are helped to overcome significant personal barriers that had prevented them from making progress.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to further improve the quality of teaching and learning?

Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, staff observed the tutors and reported on their performance but did not use this information effectively to plan or monitor improvements in teaching and learning. Since then, SHIFT has made reasonable progress in its arrangements to improve teaching and learning. SHIFT has invested in new resources. It has obtained teaching and learning materials that meet the needs of the learners and match their qualification aims. SHIFT has been successful in maintaining an enjoyable and effective teaching and learning environment through the use of a blend of teaching methods personalised to meet learners' needs, including personal tuition and team teaching, group work, assignments and project work. Initial assessment quickly identifies learners' support needs and good use is made of this information to provide support tailored to individual learners. Teaching sessions are planned satisfactorily and are lively, interactive, interesting and supportive. Learners' skill development in a creative and encouraging environment is good. Feedback to learners about their work and assessment results is not always recorded and does not lead to an effective and structured progression plan for learners as they move towards completing their programme.

What progress has been made to improve the support and guidance given to learners?

Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, learners benefited from satisfactory support and guidance but it was recognised that SHIFT needed to ensure that support was relevant to meet learners' needs. Reasonable progress has been made to improve support and guidance arrangements since the last inspection. SHIFT provides a satisfactory level of ongoing guidance to learners about their future prospects and career

opportunities in the media sector. Parents are now more involved in the programme of learning through open-day events and, where possible, by involving parents in learners' progress reviews. Initial assessment is effective and supports the development of individual and personalised learning for the benefit of learners. Tutors work effectively in teams to support learners as their confidence and skill levels grow. SHIFT quickly responds to meet specialist support needs and address welfare issues that are identified but it is aware of the need to improve its referral arrangements in other specialist areas including support for learners with dyslexia. SHIFT is working to ensure its support and teaching staff are qualified to teach adult literacy and numeracy and provide information, advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve self-assessment and other quality improvement activities? Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, SHIFT did not have effective processes for monitoring and evaluating performance and tackling weaknesses. Since then, SHIFT has made reasonable progress in making self-assessment more inclusive and evaluative. The self-assessment process is now a team activity where contributions from all staff and learners are used when making judgements. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to observe teaching staff and SHIFT uses these outcomes to support their personal development and improve staff performance. SHIFT has moved into a new training centre, providing learners with an improved learning environment. SHIFT has an active student forum that raises action points for improvement. For example, following feedback from learners, SHIFT revised the way the courses are planned to ensure that learners are clear about how well they are progressing. SHIFT also responded positively to learner requests for additional resources. The quality improvement plan however, is too narrow in its scope and misses the opportunity to recognise satisfactory and good features of the provision and highlight the associated actions needed to further improve and maintain these aspects.

What progress has been made to improve the strategic planning for the organisation and the use of targets? Significant progress

At the time of the reinspection, the board of trustees was not communicating effectively with the managers and staff at SHIFT. Inspectors recommended that further improvements be made to develop and focus strategic planning. SHIFT was also advised to identify accurately and monitor targets to raise standards throughout the organisation. The effectiveness of the board of trustees has improved significantly since the reinspection. Two new board members have been recruited. The board is now much better informed about the financial position and it regularly monitors a range of key performance indicators such as progression rates and qualification success rates. Targets are set for the current year and the next year in terms of these key performance indicators. The subcontractor is now more formally and effectively managed. The board has a strong strategic view and gives direction to the organisation. It is active in identifying progression opportunities for learners and in seeking new sources of funding to support the facilities used by the learners.

The board was instrumental in arranging for the transfer of SHIFT to better accommodation.

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