

Cheynes Training

Focused monitoring visit report

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Cheynes Training (Cheynes) is a private training company with its headquarters based in Edinburgh. It is the training division of Cheynes Management Limited, which operates a group of salons in Scotland. Cheynes provides government funded work-based learning in hairdressing at salons and small academies across the United Kingdom. Learners in England are funded by the Skills Funding Agency.

At the previous inspection in April 2010, Cheynes' overall effectiveness was satisfactory. All aspects of the provision, including training in hairdressing, were found to be satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in ensuring that self-assessment is more closely linked with quality improvement plans and that progress against actions is more effectively monitored?

Significant progress

At the time of the last inspection, the main centres' quality improvement plans were insufficiently detailed and did not clearly link to the provider's overall self-assessment. Since then, Cheynes has introduced a process whereby each centre produces its own mini self-assessment report, which informs the company's overall self-assessment process. Regional training advisers (RTAs) work with the heads of centres to evaluate their provision against standard criteria, based on the common inspection framework. Cheynes ensured that staff received appropriate training in the new procedure. Self-assessment judgements are subject to reviews every six months. Individual centre analysis and, crucially, an annual overall analysis of centres' self-evaluation grades, provide managers with a clear overview of specific areas that require continuing development. Cheynes' quality training plan clearly indicates key improvement activities and is representative of the centres' judgements about areas for improvement. The plan is regularly monitored and updated and clearly informs the company's overall key objectives development plan.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving success rates, particularly within planned timescales?

Reasonable progress

The proportion of learners who complete their training within the planned timescale has improved significantly over the last year, although it is not yet quite up to the national average for hairdressing. There are no significant differences by age, gender or ethnicity.

One large employer now accounts for a third of the provider's learners in England. Cheynes has monitored and appropriately managed the effects arising from serious staff illnesses with this employer. However, a disproportionate number of learners have left early or have made slow progress and this has skewed the provider's data. The provider expects improved results to show in the data for 2012/13, but early leavers and the slow progress have had a significant and adverse effect on the success rates in the most recent contract year. The overall success rate fell slightly compared with the previous year, and is four percentage points below the national average for hairdressing.

Recent improvements are now in place to speed up learners' progress. Managers expect improved target-setting and tracking processes, and closer monitoring of the quality of provision in different salons, to lead to further improvements in the proportion of learners who complete their programmes on time. However, the processes have not been established for long enough for the full effect to be seen.

Quality of provision

What progress has Cheynes made in improving learners' progress reviews? How well does the provider identify and record targets to inform learners of what they need to do to achieve or improve?

Reasonable progress

A new system for setting and recording precise and measurable targets at every assessment meeting is now established. Staff review targets at quarterly review meetings. A 'client consultation plan' is now in place that provides learners with an easy-to-understand contextualisation of what they need to do, and understand, to achieve their qualification. Learners value the introduction of gaining certificates when they reach certain milestones of bronze, silver, gold and platinum levels of achievement. The provider has started to monitor the quality of reviews by extending the system for observing teaching. However, there are no clearly expressed criteria against which the content of reviews is judged.

What progress has been made in widening the availability of information and learning technology for learners and ensuring that staff have the confidence to use it?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, more learning resources, including the mandatory module on equality and diversity, are available on the company's website. The provider requires all learners to use the website for online assessment, and appropriate resources are available to enable them to do so. The company is piloting the use of electronic portfolios, building on the experience of one of its academies. Cheynes has improved the design of the system to be more attractive and relevant to hairdressing learners. Learners value being able to see instantly where they are on their programme, and exactly what they need to do to complete each unit. Cheynes is planning to complete a full evaluation of the pilot before deciding whether to use it

for all learners. The company has trained all staff to use the new electronic tracking system which provides up-to-date information on learners' progress.

Leadership and management

What progress has Cheynes made in improving its teaching and learning observation process?

Insufficient progress

At the last inspection, the documentation for observations of teaching and learning was of variable quality and did not always lead to actions for improvement. Cheynes has reviewed the process for monitoring teaching and training. New recording documents and a teaching and learning observation handbook are now in place. The handbook includes details about the process of observation but does not include standard criteria for any of the judgements and grades for the sessions observed. Cheynes has plans to introduce standardisation procedures and is currently piloting the revised scheme using paired lessons observations. However, recent completed observation records show that the content is still variable in quality. There is an over emphasis on making judgements about teaching and insufficient attention to learning. Grades awarded do not always match written judgements. Cheynes has developed useful train-the-trainer courses. They include a good range of guidance for trainers about lesson planning, use of resources, effective training techniques and information about the provider's teaching and learning observation scheme. A teacher handbook, recently developed, does not contain sufficient information about the teaching and learning observation process. It is too early in the process to gain an overview of any changes or improvements in the standard of teaching and training.

What progress has been made in developing the analysis and use of management information?

Significant progress

Since the last inspection, Cheynes has introduced a new data system that enables managers to monitor and track learners' progress much more comprehensively. The system uses a traffic light system to identify progress and to highlight any slow progress. Managers collate and analyse a good range of information that enables them to monitor learners' progress across the whole provision as well as tracking the performance of individual salons, hairdressing groups and individual RTAs. Managers have good knowledge about learners' performance rates and are able to evaluate comparisons relating to gender, ethnicity and disability easily. Managers analyse data thoroughly on a quarterly basis and use these data particularly well to inform staff. RTAs have a much clearer overview of the performance of the learners they look after. Each RTA receives an individualised letter providing a detailed data overview and summary as well as an overall programme analysis. This includes information about early leavers, overall success rates and information about learners who have successfully completed their programmes within agreed timescales. Managers clearly require RTAs to act on information about specific learners who are not meeting their expected targets.

What progress has been made in improving the promotion of equality and diversity? Reasonable progress

The company has recently developed and implemented the online training module about equality and diversity, using hairdressing-specific case studies. Staff and learners have received it positively. It is now a mandatory part of the training programme and managers monitor learners' completion of the module effectively through the online tracking system. New lesson plans and schemes of work for the hairdressing training all now include specific content on equality and diversity.

The provider has introduced a question bank to ensure greater consistency in checking learners' understanding of equality and diversity in reviews. However, the questions are very varied in complexity, with some being so broad as to be almost impossible to answer, and others being 'closed' questions requiring no more than a 'yes/no' answer. There is some guidance available about the type of answer that would be acceptable. However, the recordings of learners' answers or notes about their knowledge are very varied in quality. Cheynes has tentative plans to move to scenario-based questions, contextualised to hairdressing.

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