

SSP (Select Service Partner)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 59042

Name of lead inspector: Richard Beaumont HMI

Last day of inspection: 9 March 2012

Type of provider: Employer

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Information about the provider

1. SSP (Select Service Partner UK Limited) is a leading food and beverage operator in travel locations. It offers a broad range of services in airports, train stations and other leisure locations. SSP has operated for more than 60 years and employs over 30,000 people worldwide and some 12,000 in the United Kingdom. It serves 5 million customers every day in 32 countries around the world. SSP's annual turnover is over €2.5bn.
2. In July 2010, SSP contracted with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to offer a range of apprenticeship programmes. At the time of the inspection, SSP was providing food and beverage and retail apprenticeships, and an advanced apprenticeship in management, mainly at major SSP sites across England. SSP piloted the apprenticeship programme in the north and is gradually introducing the training across the country. The company's learning and development vision is linked to 'actively encouraging and supporting employees to gain the skills and qualifications that will support their future employability and meet the needs of the organisation'. The apprenticeship training is fully integrated into SSP's own in-house training programmes.
3. At the time of the inspection, 178 learners were enrolled, with around 70% of these funded by the SFA. SSP employs a very diverse range of staff with less than 30% declaring themselves as White British. This is SSP's first inspection. The subject area in scope is retail and commercial enterprise, although the inspection team included evidence gathered from the advanced apprenticeship in management to form its judgements.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	80 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Area	
Retail and commercial enterprise	3

Overall effectiveness

- SSP has achieved much in the short period since starting the apprenticeship programme. Learners enjoy the training and their aspirations and self-confidence are greatly improved. Success rates are around the national average. Company in-house training has been developed well to closely match the needs of the accredited qualifications. However, for some learners, the training lacks sufficient challenge. Partnership arrangements to benefit learners are good. Managers have high expectations and they support and track learners' progress effectively. However, arrangements to support learners with additional learning needs are not good enough.
- Staff have a good understanding of the company's vision to improve its business performance through a broad range of accredited programmes. Managers are particularly supportive, but not all have the same understanding and skills to deliver effective training for all. The use of data to improve performance is under developed. SSP has a particularly good understanding of the quality of its training, although the views of managers and learners are not used systematically to develop programmes further. Value for money is good.

Main findings

- Success rates are at national level and are satisfactory. Overall, progress for learners in gaining their qualification in the agreed time is satisfactory. Many make rapid progress because they have previously been through much of the training, although some learners make slow progress.
- The development of learners' confidence, motivation, and social skills is good. For some learners, the apprenticeship programme is the first real opportunity to gain an accredited qualification. The development of learners' vocational skills is appropriate to meet the needs of the business.
- All learners enjoy the apprenticeship programme and many are encouraged well to consider future career opportunities. However, given the short period between learners completing the programme and the inspection, it is too soon to judge the progression of learners into first-line management positions within SSP. Learners' understanding of health, safety and hygiene is good.
- Training and learning are satisfactory. Trainers have a good knowledge of SSP products and procedures and have high expectations of learners. The company uses well-developed learning materials effectively and these link particularly well with the accredited qualifications. However, the quality of training that learners experience is too varied and the programme is not sufficiently challenging for those learners who, before enrolling, have already gained the appropriate work skills with SSP.
- Assessment is satisfactory. SSP has clear processes for recording evidence and tracking progress effectively. However, the quality of assessment varies too much and the written feedback available for learners on ways to improve is not sufficiently specific. Staff do not always correct learners' poor spelling and grammar.
- SSP has designed a good range of accredited programmes to meet the needs of learners and the business in a clear, flexible and structured way. Progression routes from apprenticeships to degree level have been well planned. However, as the company continues to develop more line managers and introduce the apprenticeship programme to all regions, not all eligible staff currently have access to the training opportunity.
- Links with a broad range of partners are particularly strong. SSP's trade, training and social responsibility links are well established and add much value to the learners' experience. SSP is further consolidating its brand profile by linking well with other organisations to promote careers and establish a more effective way of externally monitoring the effectiveness of its training.
- Line managers at SSP support learners well to help them achieve. Learners receive good guidance in how to progress at work towards first line management or specialist roles. However, the process for the regular review of learners' progress varies too much. Arrangements to support learners with additional learning and language needs are under developed and, when available from line managers, are not always sufficiently effective.

- SSP has a clear vision to develop and train staff to enhance its business success. Managers involved in the training process are enthusiastic, very supportive and promote high standards. They monitor learners' progress rigorously. However, SSP's use of data and information is insufficient to review all aspects of the provision's effectiveness and take appropriate actions to improve.
- SSP has a strong focus on health and safety and learners have a very clear awareness of its importance to the business and themselves. Learners have a clear understanding of how to report any concerns while at work. Procedures to protect those learners under the age of 18 years are appropriate.
- The company benefits from employing a very wide range of staff from different social and ethnic backgrounds. All staff are actively encouraged to access learning and promotion opportunities. Equality and diversity policies and procedures meet current legal requirements. However, SSP is currently unaware of how effective its training is for all groups of learners.
- The apprenticeship management team has been successful in developing and improving the apprenticeship provision. A key focus has been the establishment of an effective internal verification process. However, SSP recognises that as the programme has been progressively 'rolled out', managers have not been systematic in developing quality assurance arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the learners' experience.
- SSP has a very clear understanding of the quality of its provision and has an appropriate strategy of gradually broadening the provision within its developing resource base and capabilities. The self-assessment report is critical and accurately matches the findings of the inspection team. However, the subsequent action plan targets and the contribution of learners and operational training staff to the self-assessment process are not always sufficiently clear.
- SSP manages its learning resources well. The development and introduction of a range of accredited and progressive training programmes over a short period of time are particularly noteworthy. SSP funds all staff who would benefit from the programme regardless of government funding criteria. SSP has developed learners' skills effectively to meet business needs and to give learners greater opportunities to progress.

What does SSP need to do to improve further?

- Improve training and assessment by ensuring that all line managers have sufficient understanding of what constitutes good practice, and that best practice is shared effectively.
- Develop broader and more challenging additional training activities for those learners who have a good understanding of SSP work roles and give them greater opportunities to gain a wider perspective of the industry.
- Ensure that targets set at progress reviews are specific, measurable and time bound and that they are effective in developing all aspects of the learners' vocational, personal and social skills comprehensively, within an agreed timescale.

- Develop and implement procedures that fully identify and support those learners with additional literacy, numeracy and language needs and ensure that support staff have the appropriate experience and knowledge to provide such support.
- Develop a systematic and full range of opportunities to gather data and information and use this information effectively to improve all aspects of the quality of provision and to raise learners' achievements.
- Ensure that apprenticeship training opportunities are available for all staff and that the quality of such provision matches that of the highest performing sites.
- Further develop formal procedures for gathering learners' and managers' views and use these actively to consistently improve provision.
- Develop a comprehensive quality cycle that reviews all key aspects of provision effectively and links these to challenging targets and detailed action planning.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the opportunity to gain an accredited qualification and better career chances
- the opportunity for those on lower grades to train and be valued by the company
- the way in which training improves their knowledge of business even further
- the very approachable line managers
- the range of courses and workshops
- the high level of health and safety practice
- gaining confidence and improving customer service skills
- developing key skills.

What learners would like to see improved:

- fewer delays in progress due to changing line managers
- the access to online learning materials
- being more selective when choosing those who would really benefit from the training opportunity
- the amount of help with literacy and language needs
- questions in workbooks
- a greater focus by managers on recognising the need for learners to develop wider industry skills/knowledge over and above those of SSP.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- learners' increased motivation and business focus
- the extra confidence that training gives staff

- the improved customer service
- the improvements to staff retention.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the amount of time available to train and support staff
- greater clarity in how training fits into SSP learning and development
- their understanding of 'what good looks like'
- their understanding of how to be a good trainer.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. SSP sets high standards for its business and this is reflected in the development and introduction of the apprenticeship and other accredited programmes. Learning materials are particularly well linked to the company's training standards. In the short period of time since starting the programme, SSP has made effective improvements to many aspects of its provision. Success rates in the first year of operation are at the national average. Managers at all levels have a strong commitment to learning and development and are effective in supporting learners to achieve.
7. SSP carefully manages the training resources to deliver training that meets the needs of the business and maintains, or improves, the quality of provision. SSP uses pilot training programmes particularly well to measure and raise standards in a systematic, challenging and coordinated way. While the self-assessment process may not be fully inclusive, the report is critical and accurate. Quality improvement plans link well to the findings of the inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

8. In 2010/11, the success rate for the food and beverage programme was 74% and around the national average. SSP success rate predictions for recently introduced apprenticeship programmes are positive. Some learners make good progress while on their programmes and complete early. However, for others, progress can be too slow and learners do not complete within the agreed time, although SSP is now much more able to track and support these learners effectively. Overall, learners make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Inspectors were unable to make judgements on the performance of different learner groups as insufficient data were available.
9. Learners enjoy the opportunity to develop their skills further. They are highly motivated and build good levels of self-confidence. For many learners, poor attainment at school has resulted in low levels of self-esteem. For these learners the 'added value' of the training is significant. All learners' customer care skills are much improved and learners display greater awareness of company expectations related to staff conduct and business performance. Many learners are enthused by opportunities to progress into team leader roles with SSP. Although, at the time of the inspection, it was too soon to judge the impact of apprentices' career progression. Learners develop the appropriate vocational skills to meet SSP business operational standards successfully and they have good awareness of health, safety and hygiene.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

10. Training and learning are satisfactory. The company has developed its training well and has integrated and cross referenced the apprenticeship programme successfully within this. SSP links key skills effectively to learners' job roles. The company has high expectations of learners, and trainers have good SSP product knowledge. However, there is too much variation in the quality of training. For example, some trainers are very capable and demonstrate high levels of very effective coaching skills, whilst others are not sufficiently confident in the role and miss opportunities to allow the learner to reflect clearly on what they have done well and what they need to improve.
11. The planning of training recognises learners' prior knowledge and experience appropriately. The training programme for new recruits is well planned and learning materials are particularly good. For learners who have been employed by SSP for some time, the programme reinforces their knowledge and understanding of company procedures effectively. However, for these learners the training is not sufficiently challenging and they miss out on opportunities to develop their skills further.
12. Assessment is satisfactory. Most line managers/assessors have a good understanding of the skills learners develop. Clear processes are in place for recording evidence and tracking and monitoring progress. A new framework of assessor support is starting to help those learners making slow progress, although it is too soon to assess its impact fully. The range of assessment methods used and the recording of progress vary too much. More able and confident assessors use a wide range of interesting ways to recognise learners' competence and to record in detail the progress they make. Some assessors fail to mark learners' work accurately for spelling and grammatical errors.
13. SSP's range of accredited programmes meets the needs of learners and of the business effectively. The company is planning further developments to extend the qualification range from intermediate to degree level. Training is effectively integrated within SSP's learning and development framework and this links well to accredited qualifications that provide clear, flexible, and structured opportunities for progression. Learners value the personal benefits of the training as well as their increased effectiveness as employees. SSP encourages staff to undertake additional training, including additional workbooks for specific skills, specialist roles, or wine training. However, at the time of the inspection, SSP's focus on developing its capabilities to deliver the apprenticeship programme effectively across all sites has meant that this training is not available to all eligible staff.
14. Particularly strong links with trade, training and community groups enable learners to benefit well from these arrangements. For example, as a member of the hospitality employers forum, SSP actively seeks to ensure that the needs of the company are fully represented in its qualifications framework. SSP is developing good links with local partners to promote the hospitality industry and its services. For example, learners at Manchester Airport have been attending

schools to promote career opportunities. SSP operates a recruitment process that actively encourages employment to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

15. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. The induction process enables new staff to settle in quickly and line managers offer good levels of support that makes learners feel valued. However, the quality and frequency of individual learners' progress reviews vary too much. Target setting is not sufficiently precise to enable learners to develop a wide range of employability and personal skills with clear actions for improvement in a specific, time-bound and measurable way. Too few learners take appropriate ownership of their own skills development. Careers guidance and planning, linked to the apprenticeship programme, are good.
16. Support arrangements for learners with additional learning needs are under-developed. Initial assessment arrangements are satisfactory and learners are directed to online learning resources to help them improve their numeracy and literacy. However, SSP recognises that learners rely too much on assessors for support and that this is not sufficiently effective in helping learners to make progress. For example, English is not the first language for some line managers/assessors and, while their levels of literacy in speaking and listening may be sufficient to meet company needs, the standard of their written English is not always good enough for them to support others.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

17. SSP has set a clear vision to develop its staff through a comprehensive range of training and accredited qualifications. Staff throughout the organisation have a good understanding of this and many of those managers involved in the introduction and management of the training programmes set high standards. Recent improvements to the system for tracking learners' progress towards completing the apprenticeship programme within agreed timescales have involved effective communication at all levels to ensure prompt actions to improve take place. SSP has not developed its use of data and information sufficiently to improve all aspects of the quality of provision. The company gives too much emphasis to the overall performance of the provision without sufficient review of individual aspects of the training, for example variations in regional or site success rates.
18. Health, safety and hygiene are strongly promoted at SSP. Policies and procedures are clear and regular audits confirm that learners have good awareness of the importance of these aspects to the company. SSP complies with its statutory responsibility towards staff under 18 years of age. Staff have a good understanding of how to raise concerns.
19. SSP's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. The company recruits a very broad range of staff from different cultures and backgrounds. Staff work in an harmonious working environment with equal access to training regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Policies and procedures are clear and appropriately

understood by learners. However, trainers do not always take opportunities to promote equality and diversity in training sessions. Learners' awareness of the subject is limited and data to monitor learner group performance are not available.

20. The use of learners' and managers' views to improve the quality of training is satisfactory. For example, line managers' views on the introduction of the retail apprenticeship resulted in many changes to the programme in order to better meet the needs of learners and the business. New staff have regular opportunities to discuss their progress and give their opinions on the quality of the training. However, the current systems for the coordination of all views are not sufficiently well developed to influence self-assessment effectively.
21. Since the outset of the apprenticeship programme, many of the processes to monitor performance have relied mainly on key staff. Significant improvements have been made to these processes, many of them in a very short period of time. SSP uses pilot programmes effectively to introduce improved ways of working and extend opportunities for more learners to access training. The self-assessment report is critical, accurate and clearly captures the inspection findings. The quality improvement plan is detailed. However, some action targets are not always sufficiently clear as to what would constitute success. The company has not fully established arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of all aspects of the learners' experience and make any necessary improvements. For example, SSP has no clear overview of the quality of training taking place and ways of sharing best practice are not sufficiently developed to reduce the variability of provision between sites.
22. Value for money is good. SSP offers the apprenticeship programme to all those staff in areas where it is available, regardless of government funding criteria. The management of resources is good. SSP has developed learning materials to a high standard and the matching of in-house training to accredited qualifications is good. The strategy to develop and introduce apprenticeship opportunities across the organisation is well founded on ensuring that standards of quality are maintained and improved.

Information about the inspection

23. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's National Apprenticeship Manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the programmes started.
24. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and telephone calls, to gain the views of learners and line managers. They also looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments, and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

SSP

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	92	92
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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