

# Kettering Borough Training

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Type of provider:** Local authority

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

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

Kettering Borough Training (KBT), established for more than 30 years, lies within the human resources service area of Kettering Borough Council (KBC) as a separately funded business with governance from KBC.

KBT provides apprenticeship training in health and social care, engineering, building craft and mechanical engineering services, hairdressing, administration, customer service, accounting and finance, and provision for foundation learning. KBT contracts with the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency. KBC carried out a major reorganisation of KBT about a year after the previous full inspection. The provision is managed by a training manager who reports to KBC's human resources manager, and 10 other staff, five of whom have been in post for fewer than 12 months. The deputy chief executive of KBC provides an oversight of the provision.

This monitoring visit follows the previous inspection in February 2010 at which inspectors judged KBT's overall effectiveness, capacity to improve and leadership and management, including equality and diversity and safeguarding, to be satisfactory. Provision in construction was judged satisfactory and good in business administration. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### **Themes**

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

**The provider's quality improvement arrangements, including self-assessment and development planning, were relatively new at the time of the inspection. How much progress has KBT made in establishing these procedures?** **Reasonable progress**

KBT's quality improvement arrangements are now much more established. Staff understand the quality assurance and quality improvement procedures well. Self-assessment is rigorous, honest and inclusive. The quality improvement plan is challenging and addresses the key strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The improvement plan places appropriate emphasis on KBT's strategies for improving overall success rates. However, these strategies have not yet had a sufficient impact on overall success rates. Data are now much more accurate and accessible to staff. Managers and assessors use data well to monitor performance, retention and learners' progress. The observation of teaching and learning process is effective. Observers make clear and well-supported judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. Grades are realistic. Appropriate action plans are in place to help staff improve. Procedures for gaining feedback from learners, employers and subcontractors are effective. KBT staff take prompt action to respond to concerns or issues raised by users. The provider now monitors the quality of subcontractor performance much more rigorously.

## Outcomes for learners

**How much progress has the provider made in improving outcomes, especially in relation to the proportion of learners completing within the planned period of study?** **Reasonable progress**

Overall success rates have remained broadly satisfactory since the previous inspection. In construction and hairdressing, success rates in 2011 improved to well above national rates. However, business administration success rates were below national averages in that year. The proportion of learners completing within the planned period of study has improved and is now satisfactory or better in most subject areas. The proportion of learners completing within the planned period in 2011 was high in construction, satisfactory in hairdressing and health and social care, but low in business administration. The provider now has a much better understanding of overall success rates for the programmes it offers. However, managers have only recently begun to use data to identify the performance of different groups of learners. Consequently, KBT does not have secure procedures in place for narrowing the achievement gap between groups of learners.

## Quality of provision

**How much progress has the provider made in including employers more in the planning of programmes and in using reviews to monitor learners' progress more systematically?** **Reasonable progress**

KBT staff now carry out regular visits to employers and learners in the workplace to monitor employer satisfaction with the programme and to review learners' progress. Employers report that they are involved in the three monthly progress reviews and that they receive a record of each review. Assessors understand the needs of employers well and they are flexible as to when they carry out an assessment or a review visit in order to meet employers' needs. Employers comment very favourably on the professionalism and accessibility of KBT's staff. Employers make satisfactory use of the outcomes of progress reviews to plan learners' programmes and to organise opportunities for assessment. Most learners are making satisfactory or better progress.

## Leadership and management

**The inspection found that the provider's arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision delivered by subcontractors were insufficiently effective. How much progress has KBT made in tackling this issue?** **Reasonable progress**

KBT has formalised its procedures for dealing with subcontractors. Detailed service level agreements are now in place. A newly appointed member of staff has specific responsibility for liaising with subcontractors and monitoring their performance and dealing with issues that they raise. Subcontractor staff comment favourably on these

new arrangements. They receive frequent visits from one of KBT's learning and development coordinators. All aspects of performance receive detailed scrutiny and appropriate actions are taken to ensure that subcontractors comply with KBT's requirements. The partnership with Tresham College, who deliver a significant proportion of KBT's off-the-job training for the apprenticeships, is working effectively.

**How much progress has KBT made in implementing the recommendation made at the previous inspection to improve the management of training by implementing governance arrangements with Kettering Borough Council?**

**Significant progress**

At the time of the previous inspection, KBT did not have any governance arrangements; the training manager had no formal reporting responsibility to a senior officer within KBC. The provider has carried out several initiatives to tackle this weakness. The training manager now reports regularly to KBC's deputy chief executive who provides close oversight of the provision. They meet monthly to discuss all aspects of KBT's performance. Retention and success rates are carefully scrutinised. Challenging targets are set and priorities negotiated. Detailed performance management reports receive particularly careful consideration. The relationship between the training manager and the deputy chief executive provides much needed challenge and support for KBT's management team. As a senior officer, the deputy chief executive has a good strategic overview of KBT's role and position within the council. He has been particularly effective in ensuring that KBT's business plan, which is closely allied to the council's human resources service plan and to the council's over arching aims and objectives, addresses local employment and training needs.

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