

# Skills Team Ltd

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 58340

**Name of lead inspector:** Jan LLOYD HMI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Brook House  
229–243 Shepherds Bush Road  
London  
W6 7AN

**Telephone number:** 020 3174 1100

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

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

Skills Team Ltd (STL) is a privately owned training company, which was formed in 2006. It has held a Train to Gain contract since August 2007 and a contract for apprenticeships since November 2010. It operates from offices in Hammersmith. Currently, 216 learners are on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in information and communication technology; 50 of these are apprentices. There are 135 learners on NVQs in business, administration and law, and 16 apprentices on early years and playwork. Most are employed in businesses in West, Central and South London, plus a few in other parts of London and the South East region. In addition, STL is a subcontractor to four other consortia led by the College of North West London, Kingston College, South London Business and Acton Training Centre. Of the 367 learners, 228 are under STL's direct contract. In late December 2010, STL acquired Metis Training that specialises in early years and playwork provision.

The previous inspection was in February 2009. Grades were satisfactory in all areas. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, making judgements about the progress made since this inspection.

### **Themes**

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

**What progress has been made in ensuring that self-assessment is identifying and rectifying areas for improvement?**

**Reasonable progress**

The self-assessment process has improved since the inspection and is now a regular part of the company's annual quality calendar. The senior management team is unequivocal in its determination to improve the quality of the provision and it recognises that self-assessment is an important aspect of quality improvement. As part of the drive for continuous development, the company has recently moved into newly refurbished accommodation with improved teaching facilities, and a modern, spacious coffee area for learners.

The current self-assessment report continues to be fully inclusive, as identified at the inspection, and includes the views of learners, employers and staff. Senior managers have fully taken account of the judgements made on self-assessment by inspectors and have been more cautious in grading. The report is appropriately evaluative and demonstrates that the organisation has a realistic understanding of its key strengths and areas to improve. Good use of data and other evidence underpins judgements contained in the report, although there is insufficient in-depth analysis of individual subject areas. Links between self-assessment and quality improvement planning are clear. However, few actions have been identified to maintain or improve strengths and areas identified as satisfactory.

## Outcomes for learners

**What progress has been made in improving the overall and success rates within the planned time?**

**Significant progress**

STL has made significant progress in increasing success rates within the planned time from 58% in 2007/08 to 76% in 2009/10. Information and communication technology has increased from 50% to 80% and business management has increased from 33% to 74% in the same period. Increases in other areas are reasonable. The increase in overall success rates is significant in business management, increasing from 67% to 87% in the period 2007/08 to 2009/10. The increase in overall success rates in other areas is reasonable.

Since the inspection, STL has implemented planned training to develop its staff and improve the effectiveness both of trainers and assessors. All staff now use the learner management system to record and monitor learners' progress effectively. Where additional support needs are identified, STL provides extra support to enable learners to complete within their end date.

## Quality of provision

**What progress has taken place in information and communication technology to ensure that initial assessment is effectively used to plan individual learning programmes?**

**Reasonable progress**

The use of initial assessment has improved since the inspection. STL now plans initial assessment so that it informs the individual learning plans. Some assessments take place before the first workshop so that trainers and assessors can identify any support requirements. Where learners have insufficient computer skills to start a level 2 programme, STL provides additional sessions to cover basic computer skills. If initial assessment identifies any additional literacy and numeracy support needs, STL has a clear process for referral. Trainers and assessors also take account of any additional support they can give. The results of the literacy and numeracy initial assessments are recorded on the individual learning plan, but not all learners are sure about what the results mean. The trainers and assessors now use the results of the learning styles initial assessment in their delivery, but these are not recorded on the individual learning plan. End dates are still standardised by group, but STL now provides additional support, where a need is identified, either at initial assessment or as the course progresses.

**What progress has taken place to ensure that learners are on the most appropriate qualification and that all learners receive course information or advice prior to the first workshop?**

**Reasonable progress**

STL now fully uses the pre-course information and the initial assessment results to ensure that all learners are on the most appropriate qualification. The account manager for the employer reviews all the completed paperwork and initial assessments before the learners start on the programme and talks with the trainer

and assessor to ensure that the qualification and level are appropriate. Discussions take place with the employer where there are concerns.

All learners now receive pre-course information, which is distributed via their company's learning champion. This includes a learning information and advice sheet that introduces STL and the funded programme. It covers health and safety, equal opportunities, initial assessment, the length of the course, the support available and the course content. There is also more detailed information on the learner's specific qualification. However, there is insufficient information for employers where assessment requirements have changed since the previous course, and some learners are confused that they are being assessed differently from colleagues who had previously been on the course.

### **Leadership and management**

**What progress has taken place to ensure that effective quality monitoring of teaching and learning, progress reviews and target setting is taking place?**

**Significant progress**

Senior managers have taken prompt and effective action to improve the quality monitoring of all key aspects of the provision following the inspection. The introduction of a quality improvement framework is instrumental in this and clearly identifies the processes for checking the quality of teaching and learning, progress reviews and target setting with learners. An annual calendar of quality monitoring is produced so that all staff are clear on the processes involved and when they take place. Realistic targets are set for staff. All key learning processes are now thoroughly reviewed and staff are well supported if they fail to meet the required standard. Observations are recorded in detail and make clear links between teaching and learning, although in some cases the text indicates that a higher grade should be awarded. Following the inspection, action points from observations are produced consistently now and monthly discussions between line managers and individual staff ensure that actions are followed up and achieved.

**What progress has been made in business, administration and law to improve the coordination of the aspects of the programme identified at the previous inspection?**

**Significant progress**

Communication among staff, both within business, administration and law and across the different subject areas, has significantly improved since the inspection and there is good sharing of best practice. Bi-monthly staff meetings with staff from across the subject areas have been highly productive in radically improving the coordination across programmes. Clearer identification of training needs for staff has emerged through more thorough annual staff appraisal, six-monthly staff reviews, self-assessment and the much-improved quality monitoring of key learning processes. Documentation for assessments and other aspects of training are greatly improved and all staff have been trained in their usage. Following the inspection, clear records are now kept across the provision. Each course has a dedicated folder for easy identification of course documents and information on learners. Target setting and action planning with learners has greatly improved across all programmes, as has the

recording of individual learning plans. Senior managers now routinely check and monitor these.

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 1231231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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