

LDR Squared Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 52942

Name of lead inspector: Tim Gardner HMI

Last day of inspection: 25 March 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. LDR Squared Ltd (LDR Squared) is a privately owned work-based learning provider that was formed in 2001. It provides training and consultancy to organisations in the north east of England. During 2008/09 LDR Squared was awarded its first direct Train to Gain contract through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) North East. LDR Squared delivers national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at intermediate level in business improvement techniques and advanced level learning and development. At the time of the inspection the provider was only delivering qualifications in business improvement techniques at intermediate level and this was the only area inspected on this occasion.
2. LDR Squared was last inspected in August 2006 when the provision, which included a European Social Fund co-financed project, was judged to be satisfactory. A focused monitoring visit took place in January 2010. At this visit significant progress was recorded for one theme, reasonable progress in four themes and insufficient progress for one theme.
3. LDR Squared delivers no training on behalf of other providers.
4. No organisations provide training on behalf of LDR Squared.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain	76 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 3
Aspect	Grade	
Outcomes for learners	2	
Quality of provision	2	
Leadership and management	3	
Safeguarding	3	
Equality and diversity	3	
Subject Areas	Grade	
Business Management	2	

Overall effectiveness

5. LDR Squared provides good programmes for learners on business improvement techniques. The number of learners who successfully achieve their qualification is consistently high. The majority of learners in 2010/11 have completed their learning programme significantly ahead of their planned end date. All learners enjoy developing and enhancing their skills and they take particular pride in being able to recognise how, where and when their new skills have a positive impact in their workplace. Their employers recognise improvements in learners' working practices as well as savings for them through greater efficiency.
6. The training and assessment of the programme are good. Workshops are well-managed and projects are particularly relevant. These contribute very effectively to the enhancement of learners' understanding and enable them to apply their new skills and knowledge to business improvement techniques in their workplace.
7. The small staff team manages the programmes effectively and works well with employers to ensure that learners' needs are met. The staff team's approach to the promotion of equality and diversity and safeguarding is satisfactory.

Main findings

- Success rates are good. Although success rates declined slightly in 2009/10, they remain high. The number of learners who achieve within their expected time increased last year but remained below the national average. This rate for current learners is significantly higher at 93% and is well above the national average.
- Learners enjoy the programme and they develop a broad range of useful skills, knowledge and understanding to improve their performance in the workplace. Employers recognise significant benefits to their company through learners' improved performance and one employer has made major savings in costs and expenditure.
- Learners feel safe in the workplace and during training. Learners and LDR Squared carry out appropriate and well-implemented risk assessments and control measures for the high-security premises.
- Teaching and training are good. A thoroughly-planned and organised series of workshops utilise high-quality resources and materials in a good range of practical training exercises. Learners engage in a number of highly relevant practical projects and make very effective use of the very high-quality resources and equipment.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessment plans developed prior to the start of training ensure that all learners have the same experience. Plans are recorded in review and feedback documentation. Individual learning plans are comprehensive and include learning objectives, resources for learning, assessment plans and evidence requirements. Progress reviews are frequent and used to set individual targets.
- The provision is very effective in meeting the needs of both employers and learners. Partnership arrangements are good. LDR Squared works closely with employers developing well-managed, co-ordinated and relevant training programmes. The programme is highly relevant and meets both the requirements of the industry and the learners involved.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. LDR Squared provides highly effective support for learners under threat of redundancy, suffering ill-health or those that leave the programme for other reasons. Learners with identified needs receive good individual support to assist them in successfully completing the programme.
- Leadership and management of the programme are satisfactory. Much communication is informal although recently meetings have been recorded more formally. LDR Squared provides good support for all staff as part of its values and ethical approach to training. The business plan identifies areas for development but lacks detail and data to support the future developments and targets to assess their effectiveness.
- Safeguarding for learners is satisfactory. Health and safety, personal safety issues, and learners' rights and responsibilities are all covered at induction and learner handbooks include effective material to support these.

- LDR Squared's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. Some concepts and issues are covered briefly during induction and the learner handbook material very effectively introduces more aspects. However, there are no systematic arrangements to follow-up and review these concepts. Learning outcomes are not made explicit and learners' knowledge and understanding are not checked sufficiently.
- Quality assurance is satisfactory. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place. Systems and processes have been further developed since the last inspection, including those for observations and auditing. However, action plans from some processes, including the observations of training, are not systematically developed to ensure that areas for improvement are successfully addressed.
- Internal verification is comprehensive and well documented. Assessments are moderated through both formal standardisation meetings and additional informal sessions. However, although an inclusive process, the self-assessment report is too descriptive and not sufficiently evaluative. It includes little evidence to support the judgements made.

What does LDR Squared need to do to improve further?

- Increase the promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity throughout the training process, particularly during induction and progress reviews, by developing clear learning outcomes. Create systems to check effectively learners' understanding and achievement of those outcomes.
- Continue to review and develop quality systems and processes to ensure that LDR Squared systematically monitors and critically reviews its performance fully in order to identify and respond to areas for improvement.
- Introduce formal action plans and systems after observations of teaching, training and learning to ensure that issues are followed up, fully completed and contribute to improvements.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- working with others to solve problems
- the enthusiastic and helpful trainer
- the pace of the course
- meeting new people and interacting with each other
- using effective practical examples
- good interaction with the group and tutor
- the use of technology to record evidence
- the good organisation and clear explanations.

What learners would like to see improved:

- smaller groups to make learning more challenging

- more information in advance of training sessions
- increase the time for project work with the tutor.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the change in behaviour and culture of employees
- continuous improvement activities in manufacturing processes
- significant cost savings because of the use of training in the workplace
- good involvement of the project manager with the company.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no areas for improvement were identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. LDR Squared's capacity to make and sustain improvement is satisfactory. Although the provision has improved since the last inspection in 2006, the inspections are not of the same type of provision. In the two years of Train to Gain provision so far, success rates have been high although they declined slightly last year on the intermediate level programme and for the smaller advanced level programme. The proportion of learners achieving within their planned timescales for intermediate programmes also improved but remains significantly below the national average. The proportion of advanced level learners achieving within their planned timescales significantly improved last year and is above the national average.
9. The self-assessment process includes all members of staff. It is scheduled as part of a quality calendar. Although inspectors agreed with most of the grades awarded, the report is not sufficiently evaluative. Much of the content is descriptive and findings are not sufficiently supported by evidence. Data are not used well to support the judgements.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Success rates are good. Although success rates declined slightly last year, they remain high in 2009/10 at 91% for intermediate learners on the business improvement techniques qualification. The number of learners who achieve within their expected time also increased last year to 59% but remained below the national average of 78% . Provider data indicate the rate for current learners in 2010/11 is significantly higher at 93% for both overall achievement and achievement within their planned time and is well above the national average. Success rates on the smaller advanced level education and training programme for last year were high at 91%.
11. Learners enjoy the business improvement techniques programme and they develop a wide range of useful skills, knowledge and understanding to improve their performance in the workplace. They gain in self-confidence, develop a better understanding of manufacturing processes and use their skills to bring about improvements in the workplace. Employers recognise significant benefits to their companies and one employer has made major savings on costs and expenditure.
12. Learners feel safe in the workplace and during training. The learner and LDR Squared carry out appropriate risk assessments and control measures for the high-security premises and these are implemented very effectively. Health and safety as well as personal safety are covered at induction and are reinforced during reviews.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. The quality of the provision is good. Management of teaching, training and learning is also good. Training takes place through a series of carefully planned formal workshops that provide learners with a good knowledge of the tools and techniques for business improvement. Teams of learners carry out relevant and practical projects in the workplace using the methods and skills they have acquired. Resources for training are excellent, with good quality classrooms on employer premises and the use of industry-standard equipment and machinery in practical training exercises.
14. Assessment plans, established prior to the start of training, are not individualised and all learners have the same assessment targets. Learners are clear about the progress they make. Assessment results are clearly recorded in review and feedback documentation. Further assessments take place through witness testimony and direct observation of working practices.
15. Individual learning plans are comprehensive and include learning objectives, resources for learning, assessment plans and evidence requirements. Progress reviews take place monthly. Reviewers/assessors give feedback to the learners on the progress they have made at each review. Individual, relevant and measurable short-term targets are set that support the next stage of learning.
16. The provision is very effective in meeting the needs of both employers and learners. Employers recognise the new skills learners acquire and use to a high standard in the workplace. The employer clearly identifies the learners' change in behaviour and culture that supports continuous improvement of manufacturing processes throughout the workplace. The training programme supports the company ethos of ensuring that the design and marketing of newly designed products are efficient and effective. The employer also encourages senior managers to raise their understanding of the training programme by working towards the same qualifications and training alongside the workforce.
17. Partnership arrangements are good. LDR Squared works closely with employers to complete a thorough training needs analysis. This results in a well-developed training programme that is relevant to the requirements of the industry and to the individual learners. LDR Squared encourages employers to take ownership of the training programme by expanding the employers' own capacity for in-company training and assessment.
18. Care, support and guidance are good. Learners are provided with a good range of information on the aims and objectives of the training programme. Those learners who are made redundant, suffer from chronic illness that slows their progress or leave the employer before finishing their training receive good encouragement and support to complete their programmes. LDR Squared and the employer are sensitive to the learners' needs and provide facilities off-site for them to complete their programmes. Learners who face barriers to learning receive a high level of individual support to help them maintain their progress and achieve their targets. All learners complete an initial screening to assess their literacy and numeracy levels. Those requiring support receive an initial

assessment and are dealt with sensitively and made to feel at ease. The good support given to these learners helps them to overcome barriers to their learning, make good progress and achieve their training goals.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

19. Leadership and management of the programme are satisfactory. Much communication is informal although recently more formal recording of meetings has been developed. A satisfactory development plan is used to manage and monitor key delivery activities. LDR Squared provides good support for all staff as part of its values and ethical approach to training. Project managers have been appointed as part of a succession-planning process. The business plan lacks sufficient detail, data and targets to support the areas for future developments.
20. Learners make good use of opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of their training. They are encouraged to comment on the positive aspects of their programmes and what could be improved. LDR Squared is very responsive to the criticisms raised and resolves many of the issues. LDR Squared works closely with the employer in supporting improvement. Since training has taken place there have been significant cost savings to the employer. Learners adopt the techniques and skills developed during training to organise their workplace and to introduce a range of cost savings.
21. Safeguarding for learners is satisfactory. Issues regarding health and safety as well as personal safety, rights and responsibilities are covered at induction and effective materials to support these are included in learner handbooks. Staff training is satisfactorily developed and delivered by a project manager.
22. LDR Squared's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. Some concepts and issues are covered briefly during induction and the learner handbook material very effectively introduces more aspects. However, there is no systematic check on, and review of, how well the concepts are understood. Learning outcomes are not explicitly stated and actual learner knowledge and understanding are not sufficiently checked. A project manager has successfully translated documents and materials into Polish to enable learners from that country to access the training provision.
23. Quality assurance is satisfactory. A comprehensive set of policies and procedures is in place. Systems and processes have been developed further since the last inspection, including for observations and auditing. However, action plans from the observations of training and trainer self-evaluations are not systematically developed to ensure that issues and areas for improvement are implemented successfully. Not all documents are always fully and accurately completed and others are not sufficiently proof read before use.
24. Internal verification is comprehensive and well documented. Formal standardisation meetings are held as well as further informal sessions. However, the self-assessment report, although fully inclusive and involving all staff, is too descriptive and lacks evaluation. Too little use is made of management

information and insufficient evidence is included in the latest version to support the judgements made.

Information about the inspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. Inspectors collected evidence from the programme in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**LDR Squared Ltd**

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	79	79
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
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	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
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?	2	
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?	2	
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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