

Thermal Insulation Contractors Association

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

The Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association (TICA) was established in 1990 when the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Industry relinquished its arrangements with the Construction Industry Training Board. TICA is the sole provider of work-based learning in thermal insulation in England, and contracts with the Skills Funding Agency to provide apprenticeships in Thermal Insulation at level 2. Apprentices attend the training centre for two week blocks of training four times a year. For the remainder of their time they work with their employers on sites throughout the United Kingdom.

TICA's head office and national training centre has been based in Darlington since 2001 and operates on a not-for-profit basis. TICA is led by its chief executive who is supported by; two craft instructors and assessors; three training officers who are also internal verifiers and a functional skills instructor who is also the lead internal verifier.

At the previous inspection overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, leadership and management and provision in building services were all found to be satisfactory.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving arrangements for observing the quality of teaching in order to secure quality improvement for all learners?	Insufficient progress
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At the last inspection, although self-assessment overall and its impact on quality improvement was satisfactory, arrangements to observe teaching and training were judged to lack a clear focus on the standard of learning. The outcomes of the observation process were not linked to quality improvement activities. Insufficient progress has been made to develop these arrangements.

Since the last inspection, TICA has maintained its self-assessment processes and improved its assessment practices and arrangements to monitor the quality and standards of assessments. Some staff have undergone basic training in how to observe and identify effective teaching, training and learning. Similar training is planned for staff, using a local further education college. However, this training has not led to TICA developing or improving its observation process. Observation activities have not led to improved practices, for example, more evaluation of the impact of teaching on learning. The outcomes from observations have not informed TICA's quality improvement or staff development activities.

Outcomes for learners

How effective have measures to improve timely achievement rates been since the last inspection? Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, overall success rates were good but the number of learners who completed within planned timescales, although improving, was low. Target setting at reviews was insufficiently detailed, presenting a barrier to learners' progress.

Since the last inspection TICA has maintained its high overall success rates and taken a number of positive steps to improve timely achievement. TICA has revised and improved its assessment and internal verification processes. More staff are now involved in internal verification and assessment. There is a more coherent approach towards ensuring timely learner progress through; better communication between members of the team and employers; allocating assessors a case load of learners and increasing contact time with learners. More emphasis is placed on observation and witness testimony and there are better links between on- and off-the-job training. Staff carry out reviews of work done on-site at the start of every off-the-job training block. Employers are more involved in reviewing progress. Target setting at reviews is more detailed but could be improved further. The current intake of learners started in September 2010, all are making good progress and are on target to complete in a timely manner.

Quality of provision

To what extent are employers now better informed about learners' progress and the tasks they need to complete at work? Reasonable progress

The previous inspection found that employers were not sufficiently informed about learners' progress and the tasks they needed to carry out at work in order to complete their qualification.

TICA has taken effective steps to improve the involvement of employers. Communication is better and more frequent. Relationships between employers and training officers, visiting apprentices on-site, are much improved. Training officers carry out more on-site visits, which are better focused on learner progress. Employers are aware of their responsibilities and most are fully involved in the review process. Links between on- and off-the-job training are improved. Employers receive detailed reports covering all the work carried out by their apprentices whilst at the national training centre. Employers, assisted by the TICA's training officers, provide reports to instructors, in the training centre, to ensure they are aware of the work each apprentice has carried out on-site. Employers confirm they are more aware of the progress their apprentices make. As a result of the better and more frequent exchange of information, they are well placed to ensure that the right mix

of work opportunities is made available to ensure apprentices can complete their qualification.

Leadership and management

How effective has the implementation of initiatives been to widen participation and improve progression opportunities across the range of learners?

Insufficient progress

Initiatives to widen participation and improve progression opportunities for learners were judged to be weak, at the last inspection. Since then, TICA has made some progress in promoting wider career progression opportunities to learners through case studies, included in its internal newsletter. TICA has also done some exploratory work, with an awarding body, to consider progression opportunities through the introduction of a management and supervision programme at level 3. However, this work is incomplete and progression beyond level 2 is still very limited. Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection, to widen participation. TICA is aware of the need to better champion equality and diversity through, for example, the introduction of actions that will challenge and support the development of employers' recruitment and selection arrangements. TICA is also aware of the need to more closely scrutinise its apprenticeship application data and the data for learners who start employment and training, to identify any trends or issues.

What actions have been taken to ensure that the committee of industry representatives has been provided with all the data it needs to inform actions for improvement?

Reasonable progress

At the time of the last inspection, TICA's governing council was judged to have too little information about apprenticeship success rates and to be insufficiently involved in improving the programmes. Reasonable progress has been made to ensure the governing council and TICA's five regional committees have accurate reports outlining learner progress and success rates. As a result of these improved communications with the various committees, the provider has secured an improved commitment from its employer members to support the efforts of tutors and assessors in ensuring more learners complete their training within agreed timescales. To further emphasise the importance of effective employer involvement, TICA's training officers have developed a joint agreement with employers. This agreement now requires employers to agree that a learner is, or is not, competent at the end of the formal apprenticeship training and assessment programme. This new joint agreement has supported the other TICA actions to improve success within planned timescales.

Have all staff participated in training that updates their knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection staff had not received training in safeguarding. In addition, although staff had adequate knowledge of their role in implementing TICA's equal opportunities policies and procedures, too few had undergone recent training in equalities and diversity.

TICA has taken a number of steps to address these issues and following the last inspection, appropriate training has taken place for relevant staff. Managers have attended safeguarding awareness training and all trainers, assessors and instructors have completed a nationally accredited on-line safeguarding course to level 2. They have also received up-to-date training in equality and diversity. These areas now have a much higher profile within the organisation. TICA has checked all training staff through the Criminal Records Bureau. Plans are in place to extend this to staff engaged in other work and those who share the premises with TICA and might have some involvement with learners. Staff are now better informed and more aware of their responsibilities to learners. They routinely discuss equality, diversity and safeguarding with learners at reviews and on assessment visits and record any issues raised. However, staff do not discuss these topics at all staff meetings although TICA is aware of the need to do so.

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