

Gloucestershire Training Group Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50129

Name of lead inspector: Cliff Rose HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 June 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 8 Chancel Close
Gloucester
GL4 3SN

Telephone number: 0145 2423461

Information about the provider

1. Gloucestershire Training Group Ltd (GTG) is an independent group training association with charitable status. It operates from premises in a small trading estate in Gloucester. The group is owned by a number of local companies in the engineering, manufacturing and production sector. GTG's board of directors is drawn from the member companies. Operational management of the group is conducted by a chief executive supported by a senior management team of six. GTG employs 18 personnel who include 10 qualified assessors and six qualified internal verifiers. Those involved in training hold appropriate qualifications. The provider holds a contract from the Skills Funding Agency to deliver intermediate and advanced apprenticeships for young people in engineering. At inspection there were no intermediate apprentices, 85 learners were working toward an advanced apprenticeship in mechanical engineering and 36 in electrical engineering. Two of the learners were female and four from non-white British backgrounds.
2. Government funded training accounts for 90% of GTG's business.
3. According to 2010 statistics 5.5% of the working age population in Gloucestershire were unemployed compared with the regional figure of 6% in the South West and 7.7% overall nationally in Great Britain. The county is not ethnically diverse. In 2007 an estimated 95% of the population was white (British, Irish or other) compared to a national average of approximately 89%.
4. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Avon Vale Training (first year off-the-job performing engineering operations and key skills)
 - Stroud College (first year off-the-job performing engineering operations and key skills).
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - Gloucestershire College (electrical engineering)
 - Worcester College (electrical engineering).

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10 |
|---|--|
| Employer provision: Apprenticeships | 135 apprentices |

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 |
| | | Grade |
| Outcomes for learners | | 2 |
| Quality of provision | | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | 3 |
| Safeguarding | | 3 |
| Equality and diversity | | 3 |
| Subject Areas | | Grade |
| Engineering | | 2 |

Overall effectiveness

6. As an organisation owned and managed by local engineering companies, the provision meets the needs of both employers and apprentices particularly well. The first year at GTG's training centre provides learners with a good grounding in engineering, which they then build on with their employers and with good support from the provider. All those remaining on the programme complete their qualifications and practically all within the predicted time. GTG staff are committed and enthusiastic and strive to continuously improve the learners' experience; however, incomplete recording or systematic quality improvement arrangements have prevented them from significantly improving the quality of teaching and learning or the promotion of equality and diversity.

Main findings

- Learners attain their learning goals well. Since a dip in 2008/09 there has been a steady upward trend in overall success rates which have been consistently above the national average and are now good. Practically all learners who complete their framework do so within the predicted end date. The success rate of learners in performing engineering operations is particularly high.

- Learners enjoy their learning. There is evidence that learners improve their employability skills and employers comment on the way that the course makes them better employees.
- The development of workplace skills and the standard of learners' work are excellent. They quickly become competent in their job roles and move easily into positions of responsibility. They work in prestigious environments on state-of-the-art equipment and processes, where the standards and expectations are high. They quickly acquire relevant skills together with increased confidence and self esteem.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. In the workplace, planning of evidence for assessment for some learners is detailed and meticulous although with an over-reliance on written evidence and with too little use of direct observation. In the training centre, teaching inspires learners and instils good working practices. Staff are well qualified and experienced, highly motivated, enthusiastic and very effectively stimulate their learners.
- Formal planning of individual learners' programmes is ineffective. The individual learning plan (ILP) is completed at the start of the programme, but many tutors and assessors consider that it serves no real purpose other than to record the overall structure of the learner's programme. In workshops, learning is based on a standard set of exercises and, although tutors know their learners well, little is done to individualise each learner's programme.
- Assessment in the workplace is satisfactory. For some learners there is detailed and meticulous planning for production of evidence towards NVQ assessment, and learners are clear on what is required and what they need to produce. However, for many learners, there is an over-reliance on written evidence with too little use of assessment by direct observation and other modes of assessment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment do not sufficiently promote equality and recognise diversity. Progress reviews do not reinforce equality and diversity. Equality and diversity are not effectively promoted during lessons in the training centre. However, inappropriate language and behaviour are challenged by members of staff, and there is a general atmosphere of mutual respect between learners and tutors.
- Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers particularly well. Employers are very positive about the benefits their employees gain from the course such as improved employability skills and the high level of technical skills. The range of programmes also meets the needs of learners very well. Some learners take additional units to broaden their knowledge and skills. Many will progress to higher level awards.
- GTG has particularly close links with the employers with whom it works. This very close working relationship significantly benefits learners, ensuring that the training closely matches the requirements of the learners' employment. GTG works closely with schools to raise the pupils' understanding of engineering. In one project pupils are building a light aircraft.

- Individual support for learners is good. Members of staff give their time freely to support those who need it. Daily surgeries in the training centre are particularly effective. Employers are very supportive of their learners, being very generous with time and resources. The close links that GTG has with employers ensures that information, advice and guidance that learners receive is relevant and up-to-date.
- The provider has a clear and realistic strategic direction. The comprehensive three-year business plan considers threats and opportunities in detail and lists a number of developments needed to further improve the provision, actions needed in the event of changes to funding and increased demand for training from member companies. GTG is actively seeking alternative premises and additional regional funding.
- Staff development is good. GTG has supported training staff so that all have at least the minimum teaching qualification and can progress to higher level qualifications if they wish to do so. Succession planning is effective. The organisation has a history of internal promotion and recruitment of staff to fill gaps in its capability. GTG supports staff personal development not related to its business needs.
- Self assessment is well established and effective; however, formal quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. Managers observe teaching and learning sessions and give feedback to tutors including action points, but they do not grade the sessions and the observers have no system of standardisation or moderation. Internal verification of assessment is satisfactory. Other key aspects such as progress reviews are not observed.

What does Gloucestershire Training Group Limited need to do to improve further?

- Increase the range of assessment activities to allow learners to demonstrate their full range of skills and develop their full potential.
- Improve the arrangements for internal verification to ensure that assessment practices are continually monitored and improved.
- Improve the planning workshop activities to ensure that all learners have individual plans with clear targets for completion of standard exercises, clearly recorded.
- Improve the reinforcement of equality and diversity through more in-depth questioning of learners during progress reviews, ensuring that their understanding is improved and they are more aware of current legislation.
- The board should more proactively challenge the organisation's management and set challenging targets in order to drive further improvements.
- Introduce effective quality improvement arrangements which cover all aspects of the provision in order to inform management decisions and ensure continuous improvement.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the high levels of subject knowledge and enthusiasm of the instructors
- the help and support given by staff
- the way the programme is laid out and made interesting
- the friendly and helpful atmosphere
- the relevant engineering experience of the instructors
- the adult environment
- the practical hands-on nature of so much of the training
- learning more than the minimum requirement.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the standard of instruction in electrical engineering
- the information on next steps in the programme
- the level of challenge to more able learners
- the consistency in standards between sections
- shortening the length of some sections
- reducing the amount of repetition within the framework
- reducing the length of induction.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the personalised and professional service
- the good performance compared to other local providers
- the good understanding of user needs
- the good discipline instilled in the apprentices
- the support offered
- the high standards achieved by apprentices.

What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing reported.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. The provider has maintained the same grades in all aspects except leadership and management as in the last inspection in 2007. Overall success rates had declined in 2008/09 but are improving year on year and are once again good. The improvement in the number of learners completing within their predicted end date has been most pronounced. Staff involvement in the self assessment process and in quality improvement planning is good. All staff attend an annual quality improvement day where they consider the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement, which then leads to the production of a self critical and evaluative report and associated quality improvement plan. Staff at all levels contribute further suggestions for improvement throughout the year. Having been dissatisfied with the provision of sub-contracted technical certificate training and successfully bringing it in-house for mechanical engineering, GTG has recruited the necessary staff and made arrangements to do the same for electrical engineering in 2011/12.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Since 2008/09 there has been a continuing upward trend in overall success rates for apprentices against a background of increasing learner numbers. The rates are consistently above the national average and at just over 81% are now good. Practically all learners complete their frameworks within the expected time frames, which are also becoming increasingly shorter. The success rate in the first year in the GTG training centre is particularly high.
9. The development of workplace skills and the standard of learners' work are excellent. Learners quickly become competent in their job roles, move easily into responsible positions and become valued members of work teams. They work in prestigious environments on state-of-the-art equipment and processes, where the standards and expectations are high. They quickly acquire skills, increased confidence and self esteem. Work colleagues and managers speak very highly of their contribution to the workplace, their maturity and responsible approach. Their skills gained at the training centre in the first year are developed and extended well beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship framework by a range of innovative and challenging projects.
10. There are very good opportunities to achieve qualifications above and beyond the framework requirements. Some learners complete additional units during their stay at the training centre enabling them to be dual skilled and many progress and are supported to the higher national certificate (HNC) in engineering, or degree programmes. On completion of the apprenticeship, progression into employment is very good. All learners progress into employment with the sponsoring employer usually into their placement of choice. Many stay with their company for many years and there are many ex-apprentices in positions of responsibility and influence within the companies.

11. There is a strong focus on safe working practices within the training centre and the workplace. Learners work competently and diligently. All learners state they feel safe both in the training centre and at work and express confidence in their ability to challenge unsafe working practices. The learners' training is enriched by involvement in a range of additional projects, for example the building of a jetty at a local sailing club to enable access to the boats for those with disabilities and the maintenance and repair of robots for the televised robot wars programmes.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Assessment in the workplace is satisfactory. For some learners there is detailed and meticulous planning for production of evidence towards NVQ assessment, and learners are clear on what is required and what they need to produce. However, for many there is an over-reliance on written evidence with too little use direct observation or other modes of assessment. There is significant variation in assessment practice. For some learners, workplace evidence is targeted and collected from the start of their time in company while others concentrate on completing knowledge questions during the early stages and miss some ideal opportunities to gather good quality evidence.
13. Six-weekly progress reviews are arranged well in advance and are effective at monitoring learner progress. However equality and diversity are not sufficiently reinforced during these reviews. Reviewers use a limited number of closed questions and frequently only given cursory attention to them. They are primarily concerned with learners' rights and do not sufficiently consider their responsibilities. They do not raise learners' broader understanding of equality and diversity or their knowledge of recent changes to the legislation. Tutors do little to promote equality and diversity during off-the-job lessons.
14. Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers exceptionally well. Employers are very positive about the benefits their employees gain from the training. They speak very highly about the much improved discipline, conduct and employability skills together with the high level of technical skill learners acquire. They are equally positive about the value added to their business by the skill enhancement provided by GTG. The range of courses available to learners meets the needs of those wishing to work in the engineering sector very well. Some learners take additional units to broaden their knowledge and skills.
15. GTG has developed particularly close links with its employers who consider the relationship to be much closer to a partnership than an employer/training provider relationship. GTG has worked closely with schools to raise the pupils' understanding and knowledge of engineering. In one local collaborative project pupils are building a light aircraft. There is some evidence that this work has raised the profile of engineering and work-based learning and has resulted in some additional learners becoming apprentices.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

16. The provider has a clear and realistic strategic direction. The comprehensive three-year business plan considers threats and opportunities in detail and lists a number of developments needed to further improve the provision and to reflect the changing national and regional priorities. However, some of the proposed developments lack measurable targets. GTG is considering several alternatives, which would enable it to cope with increased demand for engineering apprenticeships and to accommodate in-house delivery of technical certificates and other training requests from member companies. It is simultaneously actively seeking funding to acquire new, larger premises.
17. Staff development is good. GTG has supported all staff involved in the delivery of training so that all have at least their minimum qualification for preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) and progress to higher level teaching qualifications if they wish to do so. Succession planning is good. The organisation has a history of internal promotion coupled with the recruitment of suitable staff from elsewhere. The organisation also supports staff personal development not necessarily directly related to its business needs.
18. Board directors contribute to strategic direction and monitor all aspects of the provision satisfactorily. They use consultants to ensure that they are kept up to date with legal requirements. Board members are aware of their statutory duties. The board is seeking to enlarge its membership as well as the membership of GTG. The chief executive attends quarterly board meetings and the board is kept informed by regular reports on the provider's performance.
19. Learners are satisfactorily safeguarded. All staff have undergone Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and attended safeguarding training at GTG in 2011. The chief executive is the designated safeguarding officer and attends the local safeguarding board meetings. Staff knowledge of safeguarding is good. Safeguarding is adequately covered at learner induction and learners are reminded through posters and their handbooks; however they lack detailed knowledge of the subject.
20. Equality and diversity are well embedded in GTG's provision. Staff do not tolerate inappropriate language or behaviour. Comprehensive and up-to-date policies are reflected in employee and learner handbooks. There is no identifiable achievement gap between groups of learners by gender or ethnicity although there are few female or non-white learners. However, GTG does not analyse its performance data to compare the performance of learners grouped in other ways such as by post code, employer or assessor. GTG has used a black member of staff to build contacts with black and Asian community groups and has made strenuous efforts to recruit more female learners into a predominantly female industry through attendance with member companies at job fairs and by working with local schools. The local member of parliament is using GTG's forthcoming annual award celebration to introduce an award for the best female engineering apprentice in Gloucestershire.

21. GTG actively gathers the views of employers through regular contact at the training centre and visits to the companies and through the board of directors. Learner views are gathered as part of the evaluation exercise at the end of each phase and through the apprentice committee which has representatives from each of the employers with apprentices in training. These views are reflected in self assessment.
22. Formal quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. Managers observe teaching and learning sessions and give feedback to tutors; however, they do not grade the sessions and the observers have no system of standardisation or moderation. Other key aspects such as progress reviews are not observed. The arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory and comply with awarding body requirements. The process is systematic but too frequently concentrates on signatures and dates and fails to provide support for assessors and learners on how assessment practices could be improved. The current practice is to verify completed portfolios; however, there is a gradual shift towards ongoing verification.
23. Value for money is good. Success rates for the first year of training in the training are high. The premises and equipment are adequate. GTG pays particular attention to recycling materials and to minimising waste.

Information about the inspection

24. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's chief executive, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. 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. 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)
Gloucestershire Training Group Limited

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 | 120 | 120 |
| 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? | 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> | 2 | |
| Quality of provision | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 3 | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 1 | |
| 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> | 3 | |
| 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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Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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