YH Training Services Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

YH Training Services Limited (YH), established in 1975 as a Group Training Association, converted to a Private Limited Company in 1985. The head office is in Scarborough and six training centres operate in Yorkshire and Humberside. Work-based learning for young people and adults is offered through apprenticeships and Train to Gain in business administration, accountancy, retailing, customer service, information and communication technology, distribution and warehousing, performing manufacturing operations, and team leading. Foundation learning has been offered since August 2010.

The overall management of YH consists of four directors, two of whom work within the company on a daily basis. A senior management team is responsible for the company's training provision, with an employee development manager responsible for staff recruitment and training.

The previous inspection, carried out in January 2010, awarded satisfactory grades in outcomes for learners, quality of provision, and leadership and management. Retail and commercial enterprise, preparation for life and work, and business, administration and law were also graded satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has YH made to increase the effectiveness of the self-assessment and quality improvement processes to bring about improvements?   **Reasonable Progress**

Since the previous inspection, YH has improved its quality systems. Central to the improvement is the organisation's revised quality improvement plan. Staff are very aware of their responsibilities to ensure key improvement aspects are followed through and fulfilled within agreed time-scales. The quality improvement plan, which is now a key agenda item at a wide range of communication meetings, is more regularly monitored and updated. This is improving the organisation's ability to forward plan. Self-assessment is a fully inclusive process with all staff contributing through one-to-one and team meetings. Learners' and employers' views are regularly collected with good examples of these views leading to programme improvements. However, having recognised limited participation in learner and, particularly, employer surveys, a new electronic system for feedback collecting is in the process of being launched with a focus on targeting learners' and employers' opinions.

Better monitoring of all aspects of programme performance has contributed to improved overall achievement, with electronic recording of trainers' and learners'

activities being used as a key tool to drive progress. Moving to electronic recording systems has improved the use of management information to monitor progress.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has YH made to improve the overall and   Reasonable planned outcomes for learners?   progress

At the time of the previous inspection, outcomes for learners were satisfactory. Success rates had improved but were below national rates in 2008/09. The overall success rate has improved further since the inspection. In 2009/10, the overall success rate was 76% compared with the national rate of 74%, although it declined to 73% in 2010/11. The success rate of those who achieved within the planned period increased substantially from 45% in 2008/09 to 66% in 2009/10 and exceeded the national rate of 62%. Only 63% of the 38 learners aged 16 to 18 in the administration area of business, administration and law completed their qualification in 2009/10 compared with the national rate of 81%. YH has analysed the reasons for the high number of learners who left the programme early and has taken steps to reduce early leaving in future courses. The success rates of Train to Gain learners have improved steadily over a four year period. The success rate of those learners who achieved within the planned period was 78% in 2009/10 and it increased further to 88% in 2010/11. YH satisfactorily monitors the achievements of different groups of learners. No significant differences exist.

Quality of Provision

What progress has YH made to improve the monitoring of   Significant teaching and learning to ensure learners' needs are met?   progress

Observation of teaching and learning was not used effectively to improve the quality of the provision at the time of the previous inspection. Observations are now planned for a year in advance. Each trainer is observed leading a group training session twice every year. In addition, internal verifiers observe individual training activities in the workplace alongside assessments. Observation records contain a detailed evaluation of each trainer's performance and include valuable suggestions for improvement. The areas for improvement are also accurately recorded on a system which tracks the progress made by trainers during successive observations. It also successfully identifies trainers' development needs.

Good use is made of trainers' performance management to identify actions for improvement based on the observation records and other key performance indicators, and to review progress regularly. Quarterly meetings of trainers from all of the training centres are used effectively to share good practice and to standardise practice in teaching as well as assessment. For example, all the business administration trainers completed a sample technical certificate test at one of the meetings and then discussed the best way of preparing learners for similar 'live' tests.

What progress has YH made to improve the effectiveness of   Reasonable
the learner progress review process?   progress

At the previous inspection the reviewing of learners' progress was weak. Targets were not specific, and equality and diversity understanding was not being checked and reinforced. Learners and employers had insufficient understanding of the progress made by learners.

Electronic individual learning plans and review records are now an integral part of the review process. Since the previous inspection both individual learning plans and review documents are electronically updated and copied to learners and employers with a graphical display giving easy recognition of progress to date. Clear action plans, with more focused milestones and targets, are driving forward learner achievement. However, information is not yet being processed systematically to ensure that the updated information from individual learning plans and review documents is promptly transferred to the main system.

Reinforcement of equality and diversity at learner reviews is now underpinned by a comprehensive range of questioning and checking of understanding. Highly effective booklets, developed by the organisation and distributed to trainers, ensure a consistent approach and learners now show a good understanding of equality and diversity. Staff awareness of equality and diversity has been raised through formal training and regular updating. Progress reviews are observed as part of the YH quality assurance process.

Leadership and management

What progress has YH made to improve its understanding of   Significant
safeguarding requirements?   progress

Safeguarding arrangements were judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection. Policies and practices were found to be sufficiently established to protect and support learners. However, the revision of safeguarding arrangements was an ongoing priority for the organisation. Significant improvements have been made to ensure the safety of learners and safeguarding is a major focus throughout the organisation.

High levels of awareness now exist among staff, learners and employers. All are fully aware of the policies and systems implemented since the previous inspection. Safeguarding is a key focus at induction and is fully reinforced at learners' progress reviews where it is supported by highly effective trainer handbooks. All staff have completed online training, becoming qualified to level 2 and continuing to level 3. Staff in foundation learning have received specific training to ensure their own and their learners' safety following a comprehensive risk assessment of the programme. Through regular staff meetings other staff members are made aware of safeguarding requirements and developments.

The health and safety of learners in the workplace and the training centres is a priority for YH. Inspectors found good examples where safeguarding issues had been resolved very effectively.