

Trade Training Associates

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58834

Name of lead inspector: June Cramman HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 November 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit 40
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Information about the provider

1. Trade Training Associates (TTA) is a private training company with a training centre based in Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne. It began trading in April 2008, with a Train to Gain contract that is now almost complete. In March 2010, the company gained its 16 to 18 apprenticeship contract from the Skills Funding Agency and now provides apprenticeships in construction and the built environment and hair and beauty. As hair and beauty provision is a recent addition, only construction was graded. Government-funded training accounts for 95% of the provider's current training activities. This is TTA's first inspection.
2. The company operates the training division as well as commercial companies that offer building and hairdressing services to the public. TTA employs learners in its own commercial companies from their first day in training. A minority of learners are subcontracted to a range of other employers in the local area.
3. A managing director and an operations director have overall management responsibilities for TTA. They are responsible to a non-executive board comprised of members of the business community. The provision is managed by three sector-subject heads and supported by 25 trainers and assessors. An additional 14 staff work in various support functions including human resources, sales and marketing, and finance and administration.
4. Learners are recruited from the north-east region with most from Newcastle upon Tyne. All learners in hairdressing are women. Apart from one learner, learners in the construction provision are men. People from minority ethnic communities account for 2% of all learners.
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
 - PTD (performing engineering operations)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision	
Train to gain	4
Apprentices	254

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Construction and the built environment	3

Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of TTA’s provision is satisfactory. Outcomes for learners are good with high overall success rates for apprentices. However, the completion rate within planned end dates for Train to Gain learners is low. The standard of learners’ work is good. Learners feel very safe and have a good awareness of health and safety practice. Learners participate well in community projects.
7. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Practical sessions are very effective and learners participate fully and develop good skills. Trainers’ activities dominate theory sessions, not allowing learners enough discussion time. Target setting in workplace reviews is insufficiently challenging. The training programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well. The learners are employed at the start of their programme within the newly developed commercial companies. Close partnerships with community groups and employers give learners access to speedier assessments. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are satisfactory.
8. TTA’s leadership and management are satisfactory as are its arrangements for managing safeguarding and equality and diversity. Managers and board members lead the company very effectively to provide good value for money. However, quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently established.

Main findings

- The overall apprenticeship success rates are high, and for advanced apprentices they are very high. Apprentices' completion of programmes within planned timescales is good, being significantly better than national averages. For Train to Gain learners, however, the completion rate within their planned timescales is low. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners quickly develop practical skills and apply these successfully in the workplace. Employers are very pleased with learners' preparation for work.
- A significant number of learners are young people who were not in education, employment or training and success rates for these learners are high. Learners from minority ethnic groups achieve well but women learners in construction significantly underachieve compared to men.
- Learners feel safe and apply safe working practices. They have a good understanding of health and safety and demonstrate safe working practices both in the training centre and in the workplace. TTA pays close attention to ensuring that learners have good safety awareness before starting training in the workplace.
- Learners make a good contribution to community projects and are keen to participate. Work on the various projects is substantial and involves many trades. Some of the projects last up to 18 weeks and involve up to 10 apprentices. Apprentices are proud of the skills they develop and of their contribution to the community.
- Practical skills sessions are good and learners make rapid progress. Assessments are carefully planned and delivered. Trainers effectively link theory to practical tasks but dominate the theory sessions by talking too much. Staff do not sufficiently use workplace reviews to set demanding targets, to involve employers in the planning of learning, or to promote equality and diversity.
- TTA has developed an innovative programme that enables learners to gain good skills. Employment within the newly established commercial companies enables learners to benefit from a range of assessment opportunities. Learners gain full qualifications quickly. The most proficient learners are offered continued employment on a longer-term basis, within one of the commercial companies, allowing them to progress to the next level. Learners receive a wage while training and gain good wider employability skills.
- The company has good partnerships with community projects and charitable trusts enabling it to provide gas installations, repairs and replacements at a significantly reduced cost through the recently established commercial arm. Partnerships with employers are good; TTA responds efficiently to their needs in developing provision that matches industry requirements.
- TTA takes positive action to keep punctuality and attendance at high levels. Induction provides learners with good information about all aspects of the programme. Trainers provide good support to learners and give effective individual help in the training centre. However, TTA provides insufficient support in the workplace. The company does not sufficiently identify and give systematic support to learners with specific learning needs such as dyslexia.

- Managers and directors have a very clear focus on the needs of employers. Their implementation of the new, innovative apprenticeship programme very effectively involves the two new commercial companies. Annual business planning is good but long-term planning is insufficient. Managers' high aspirations, to improve learner outcomes and provide good-quality training, have led to notable improvements. Board members have very good industrial knowledge and provide highly effective challenge to TTA.
- Equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory. Learners receive thorough equality and diversity coverage at induction and within the customer services training but they are insufficiently promoted within subsequent teaching and learning. Staff do not sufficiently reinforce equality and diversity at learners' progress reviews. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. However, TTA does not have a single equality and safeguarding policy and action plan.
- The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Quality-assurance arrangements are new and not fully established. Systems to collect and use learner and employer feedback are not formalised. Observation records used to evaluate the quality of teaching, training and assessment are too descriptive and managers do not always use them effectively to improve the provision.
- Value for money is good. Success rates for apprentices have continued to improve and are high. Financial management and control are good. TTA has invested heavily in resources to support the training of learners. Classrooms provide a satisfactory environment for learning. All are equipped with facilities to support information and learning technology (ILT) but these are not used effectively by all trainers. Access to computers for construction learners is not equitable with learners on other programmes.

What does TTA need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise the high success rates on apprenticeship programmes and narrow the achievement gap for women in construction by improving provision, particularly in teaching and learning.
- Involve learners more in theory lessons by providing a wider range of activities, including access to information technology; ensure that learners' understanding is checked regularly through more effective questioning.
- Develop the review system to incorporate employers' input, improve the monitoring of learners' progress through clear target setting and provide effective interventions to improve performance.
- Review and improve the procedures for identifying and providing support for learners in the training centre and the working environment so that learners receive good-quality support and guidance at all points of their programme.
- Develop a single equality policy together with an annual action plan for equality and diversity and safeguarding. Ensure close monitoring, evaluation and annual updates of the plan. The action plan should promote equality and diversity much more effectively in teaching, learning and reviews.

- Implement a strategy for user involvement so that the views of learners and employers are collected systematically, analysed and acted upon in order to bring about improvements in learners' outcomes and the quality of provision.
- Ensure that the observation process is reliable and used more effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Develop the quality manual to provide a clear focus on improving the quality of provision and ensure that the self-assessment report is more evaluative and that judgements are clear.
- Provide enough computers to support construction learners and ensure trainers are proficient in the use of ILT.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the practical sessions and experience on site
- the good course content and being able to gain vocational qualifications
- getting on with tasks at a good speed and working on their own initiative
- being paid a wage
- good training that is getting better, coupled with the additional training in customer service and gas installation
- being treated as an adult
- having sufficient space and materials but also working in pairs on tasks
- the good individual support from trainers.

What learners would like to see improved:

- a more realistic work environment when in the centre
- materials and bays already constructed, ready to start the course
- better organisation of the course, including timings, induction and access to materials
- more help from trainers
- less written work
- better access to general resources, such as a better canteen and individual lockers.

What employers like:

- the high degree of flexibility that TTA demonstrates
- the knowledge and skills that apprentices arrive with
- apprentices' good health and safety awareness
- good support for learners from TTA.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more involvement in the training
- greater awareness of what apprentices are doing when at the centre
- more involvement in learners' reviews.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. TTA's capacity to make and sustain improvements is satisfactory. Since the introduction of apprenticeship programmes, success rates have been maintained at high levels. Most apprentices achieve within their planned programme. However, Train to Gain learners make slow progress. The standard of learner's practical work is good.
10. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but learners' progress reviews are weak. Target setting is used effectively to improve success rates but is not used satisfactorily to improve the quality of provision. Staff and directors are highly committed and lead the company skilfully. Value for money is good. TTA has introduced a range of quality-assurance processes but these are not yet fully effective.
11. The self-assessment report for 2009/10 is TTA's first. Staff and directors' involvement in the process is satisfactory. However, insufficient attention is given to the views of learners and employers in the report. The report is highly descriptive and is not always sufficiently critical. The satisfactory quality improvement plan has a clear focus on maintaining the high level of success rates but it does not always deal with the areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report. Around half of all grades in the self-assessment report are the same as those awarded by inspectors.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. In the current year, the first full year of the construction apprenticeship programmes, overall apprenticeship success rates for apprentices are high and for advanced apprentices they are very high. Most learners who complete their programme progress to an advanced apprenticeship. Retention is good and for advanced apprentices it is outstanding. Apprentices' progress on construction and hair and beauty is good. For Train to Gain learners, the rate for completion within their planned timescale is low.
13. All learners gain an additional qualification and training. All apprentices complete a National Vocational Qualification at level 2 in customer service, and attend training on equality and diversity and data protection. Heating apprentices gain additional electrical units that qualify them to install central heating boilers. A local bank gives training on the financial aspects of being self-employed. Employers also provide good additional training. Apprentices value these opportunities highly. Of all learners who have left the programme, only one is unemployed.
14. Learners feel safe and apply safe working practices. They understand safeguarding issues to at least a satisfactory level. They have a good understanding of health and safety, and take responsibility for their own and others' safety. TTA places a high priority on the health and safety of its

learners. Learners have good safety awareness before they enter the workplace.

15. Learners are involved in a range of good community projects. They have refurbished a children's hospice and a war veterans' home; continuous special promotions for older people mainly involve installing heating in their homes at very competitive rates. Learners develop their trade skills and their customer service standards. Community work also provides good opportunities for assessment activities.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

16. Practical sessions are good. They are well structured with challenging targets that enable learners to develop good skills and make good progress. Trainers plan assessments carefully and give clear instruction and detailed feedback. Theory sessions are effectively linked to practical and work-related tasks. However, the narrow range of teaching activities are often disrupted by external noise. Trainers dominate theory sessions and do not allow learners enough time for discussion. Initial assessment is good in identifying levels of literacy and numeracy. TTA provides workshop support sessions to learners but gives no further structured development of their literacy and numeracy.
17. TTA plans the programme effectively so that all learners gain additional qualifications that enhance their employability. Resources are appropriate for practical activities and are used effectively in most lessons. However, access to computers for construction learners is poor. Interactive whiteboards are available but staff are not confident in their use.
18. Staff regularly visit learners in the workplace to monitor progress. However, target setting in workplace reviews is poor. Employers are insufficiently involved in the review process and on- and off-the-job training are not sufficiently linked. While equality and diversity are built into the induction process, trainers do not always sufficiently promote them during the review process or teaching and training.
19. TTA has created an innovative programme to develop learners' skills and assessment opportunities by establishing its own commercial companies. These enable learners to progress to full qualifications at a good pace. On programme completion, TTA employs the more proficient learners on a longer-term basis to develop a cost-effective commercial service. However, not all learners are aware of this opportunity for internal employment.
20. The well-planned training is designed to meet the needs of both learners and employers. TTA has been active in developing a schools' diploma that has been very effective in promoting awareness of, and access to, apprenticeship programmes. Employers speak positively about the level of service offered which has resulted in much repeat business for TTA. The majority of learners are provided with good and relevant work experience to enhance future employment opportunities. However, for a minority of learners, work

experience opportunities are too narrow. Learners understand how they are progressing but this is not always communicated sufficiently to employers.

21. TTA has developed good partnerships to develop the provision. The company has good links with community projects and charitable trusts providing gas installations, repairs and replacements at a significantly reduced cost. Apprentices gain good work experience and benefit from frequent assessment. They also have the opportunity to work more closely with disadvantaged groups which widens their awareness of different people in the community.
22. TTA takes positive action to keep both punctuality and attendance at high levels. Induction informs learners fully about all aspects of the industry and the programme, though its delivery was delayed for a minority of learners. Many staff have qualifications in information, advice and guidance and give appropriate and timely information to learners. Trainers are supportive of learners' needs and respond effectively to individual concerns. However, TTA gives insufficient support in the workplace. The identification of, and systematic support for, learners with specific learning needs such as dyslexia are insufficient.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

23. Managers and directors have a very clear focus on the needs of employers. Implementation of the new, highly innovative apprenticeship programme is built around their two new commercial companies. However, while sound strategic objectives are identified in a good annual business plan, longer-term planning is less well developed. Managers' high aspirations, to improve learners' outcomes and provide good-quality training, have led to notable improvements in success rates. Trainers have good industrial experience and occupational qualifications.
24. All non-executive directors run allied successful companies and have very clear expectations of the provision. Their very good local and industry knowledge has helped develop highly effective partnerships. The board provides very effective challenge for TTA to improve, achieve high success rates and financial stability. However, it has been less effective in improving the quality of provision.
25. Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Learners feel very safe and appreciate the arrangements that ensure their welfare. TTA liaises appropriately with the local children's safeguarding board to collect information to support learners. A record of Criminal Records Bureau checks is held centrally and updated satisfactorily. New learners complete records in which they are asked to declare any health or care conditions at the start of their programme. Many fail to give this information; when trainers subsequently uncover concerns they give suitable individual support. This information is not yet systematically collected by the designated safeguarding officer.

26. A satisfactory equality and diversity policy is in place and is reviewed annually. TTA has not yet developed a single equality scheme but separate schemes are in place for gender, race and disability. Currently, there is no equality and diversity action plan and no targets are set. Equality and diversity are thoroughly covered at induction and within the customer services training but are not sufficiently promoted within subsequent teaching and learning. Equality and diversity are insufficiently reinforced at learners' progress reviews. A significant number of learners are young people who were not in education, employment or training and success rates for these learners are high. Learners from minority ethnic groups achieve well but women learners significantly under-achieve, compared to men, in construction. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not systematically identified.
27. Staff take time to listen to the views of learners but these arrangements are not sufficiently formalised. In hairdressing and beauty, learners take part in effective learner voice groups. However, construction learners do not yet have these. TTA is an employer-led organisation and the views of non-executive directors have a positive influence on the training. However TTA does not formally collect the views of other employers.
28. All quality assurance arrangements are relatively new and not yet fully established. Trainers share good practice successfully and managers use internal service-level agreements very effectively to performance manage the programmes. They also make good use of data to bring about improvements. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. An observation process is in place to evaluate the quality of teaching, training and assessment. However, the records produced are too descriptive and managers do not always use them effectively to improve the provision. The quality manual is effective in bringing together policies and procedures but it has insufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
29. Value for money is good. Success rates for apprentices have continued to improve and are high. Financial management and control are good. TTA has invested heavily in resources to support the training of learners. Classrooms provide a satisfactory environment for learning. They are all equipped with facilities to support ILT but these are not used effectively by all trainers. While hair and beauty learners have good access to computers, construction learners do not.

Information about the inspection

30. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operations director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of TTA's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the company started training.
31. 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 across the programmes in the subject areas TTA offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Trade Training Associates**

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	254	254
Part-time learners	4	4
Overall effectiveness	3	3
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	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
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?	3	
Leadership and management	3	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
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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