

# Bassetlaw Training Agency

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 54810

**Name of lead inspector:** Karen Adriaanse HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 28 September 2011

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider  
The Bassetlaw Training Agency Ltd  
Priorswells Centre

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## **FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Context and focus of visit**

The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited (BTA) is based in Worksop. It became a company limited by guarantee in April 1988. It receives government funding from Nottinghamshire Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) to provide a foundation learning programme. It currently has 27 learners on this programme. Up to August 2011, BTA received funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for its apprenticeship programmes in health, public services and care and business administration and law. BTA is now a member of the recently formed Training Consortium Limited and it is subcontracted by the consortium to provide apprenticeships in early years' education and playwork.

At the last inspection, BTA was judged to be satisfactory in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. Its provision in child development and well-being and preparation for work were also satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

### **Themes**

#### **Self-assessment and improvement planning**

<b>What progress has been made in developing the capacity of managers and staff to enable them to identify and address key weaknesses to improve outcomes for all learners?</b>	<b>Reasonable progress</b>
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At the last inspection, although self-assessment was a well established process, the report did not focus sufficiently on improving outcomes and the quality improvement plans were not fully effective. The teams responsible for foundation learning and childcare apprenticeships have developed good skills in self-assessment to drive forward improvements. They are now more self-critical in identifying weaknesses and each team has a comprehensive quality improvement plan, which it reviews and updates.

Although the quality improvement plans do not record sufficiently detailed targets for improving success rates and progression rates, outcomes for learners have improved for both programmes. In particular, staff have used the new initial assessment tool well to identify realistic end dates for apprentices and individualised programmes in foundation learning. In childcare, staff monitor and record each apprentice's progress at monthly team meetings and retention of apprentices has improved significantly. The majority of current apprentices are on target to complete by, or before, their agreed end date. The 2010/11 data for childcare show an improvement in overall published success rates although these are still 10 percentage points below the national average. The provider's final figures for 2010/11 show further improvement. Outcomes for foundation learners have also improved.

## Outcomes for learners

**What progress has been made in increasing progression by learners on the foundation learning and their achievement of qualifications in literacy and numeracy?** **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, progression into employment, further education and training on Entry to Employment (E2E) showed a declining trend over the previous three years. The new initial assessment tool introduced in October 2010 provides more detailed and accurate information on learners' individual starting points and BTA uses this well to plan more individualised programmes. The data for achievement of all qualifications show a marked improvement for leavers in the first two months of 2011/12 compared to the previous three years. Of the nine leavers, 78% have gained a qualification in functional English and 89% have achieved in functional mathematics. The initiative to phase in qualifications works well and learners are better able to focus on one subject at a time. Current learners are progressing well.

Learners have a well-planned work placement programme to develop their employability skills. Progression into employment, further education and training has improved since the last inspection from 43% in 2009/10 for E2E to 71% in 2010/11. Progression rates from the foundation learning programme, which BTA introduced in January 2011, were low at 38%. However, of the nine learners who have left from the programme since August 2011, seven have progressed to further education or employment.

## Quality of provision

**What progress has the provider made in ensuring that teaching and learning have greater variety, pace and challenge to engage learners better and extend their understanding?** **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, BTA has improved its system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The revised model focuses more on evaluating how well the learning activities motivate all learners and help them develop their skills and confidence. The trainers now receive clear and accurate feedback and are making good progress towards the agreed actions for improvement.

Training sessions now include a wide range of practical learning activities, with effective opportunities for learners to put theory into practice, especially in personal and social development, and childcare. Learners enjoy the challenge of tackling problems that develop their understanding and they complete the activities well. They make good progress towards increasing their independence in carrying out practical everyday and work-related activities. BTA is currently increasing the links between functional English and mathematics and learners' work experience to help

them develop the skills they need for work and build confidence in carrying out calculations and literacy tasks in practical settings.

**What progress has the provider made in maintaining and improving its focus on employment in foundation learning?**

**Significant progress**

BTA has made rapid progress in building on its previous work to provide foundation learners with relevant and useful work experience. Staff have developed excellent links with a good range of employers and are skilled at finding placements that are matched appropriately to learners' development needs and career goals. Currently, 19 of the 22 learners who have completed the induction programme have a placement. BTA staff are particularly skilled at planning a structured programme of placements to ensure that learners receive the appropriate supervision on one placement before they progress to other placements or job roles that require them to take on more responsibilities and work more independently.

Target-setting for learners at work has also improved significantly since the last inspection. Staff and learners use the new initial assessments very effectively to assess learners' employability skills and attitudes to work, as well as their barriers to employment and development needs. All learners now have very clear and relevant work-related targets, and workplace supervisors contribute effectively to the monthly progress reviews that take place at learners' work placement. Learners are clear about their progress in developing skills and confidence, and how this is helping them overcome their barriers to employment.

**Leadership and management**

**What progress has the provider made in promoting equality and diversity through its learning programmes?**

**Reasonable progress**

BTA continues to provide very good individual support for learners with diverse needs. However, at the last inspection, inspectors identified the need to increase learners' awareness of the impact of inequality and difference within all aspects of life and work. In childcare, equality and diversity are integrated effectively into each unit of the programme and learners develop a good awareness of their role in promoting equality and diversity through their work with children. In foundation learning, staff have revised schemes of work and individual session plans for functional skills and personal and social development to include a greater focus on promoting equality and diversity. Progress reviews now include satisfactory assessments of learners' understanding of relevant issues. However, some learners found it difficult to understand and use relevant vocabulary used in learning activities and materials relating to equality and diversity. Staff have not received specialist training since the previous inspection, but this has been arranged to take place in October 2011.

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**What progress has the provider made in developing its use of the views of learners and other partners, including employers, to evaluate and improve the provision?** **Reasonable progress**

BTA effectively uses its established procedures for collecting learners' feedback through progress reviews in all its programmes. However, since the last inspection, BTA has explored ways to increase its activities to gather and use the views of learners. The use of a suggestions/feedback box for learners on childcare programmes now ensures confidentiality and provides the team with useful feedback. The apprenticeship training manager also meets with learners regularly to talk about their programme and work placements. Recent improvements initiated through feedback include additional support sessions at the training centre and practical 'fun' sessions at the end of each module to reinforce learning.

BTA also uses the progress reviews that take place at work to gather feedback on their provision from employers. Improvements in response to this feedback include involving employers in setting work-related targets for learners and ensuring that assessors visit learners at work more frequently throughout their programme. Staff have also recently tried to increase the feedback BTA receives from employers but questionnaires, telephone calls and invitations to meetings have not improved the response rate. BTA is continuing to explore ways to improve the involvement of learners and employers in the training programmes and to formalise the feedback process.

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