Resources (NE) Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	58800
Name of lead inspector:	Ian McMillan HMI
Last day of inspection:	26 April 2012
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Brewery Lane Felling Gateshead NE10 0EY
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Information about the provider

1. Resources (NE) Ltd (RNE) is an independent training provider based in Gateshead. RNE started government funded training in 2008 and its first apprenticeship training programmes started in April 2011. RNE provides training and assessment services under subcontracting arrangements for a number of other government-funded training providers. This is RNE's first inspection.

2. The organisation provides training in information and communication technology, construction crafts, business administration, and customer service training. RNE also has a small adult-skills programme and is developing provision in new areas including warehousing, security and call-centre training. RNE has a small Foundation Learning subcontract with three local providers and provides end to end employability training for a national provider under the Governments Work Programme.

3. Most of RNE's 113 current learners are working towards intermediate apprenticeships. Of these, 56 are ICT apprentices. In addition, approximately 190 learners come to RNE through its subcontracting partners for courses lasting for between two and 26 weeks. RNE subcontracts the training and assessment for its 23 construction apprentices to a local training provider. RNE employs 32 staff to deliver its programmes and delivers training in four training centres across North and South Shields and Gateshead.

4. Approximately 75% of RNE's work as a training provider is funded through the government and managed through contracts with the North East Skills Funding Agency.

5. Resources (NE) provides training on behalf of the following providers:
    ■ Avanta
    ■ Palmersville training (Barnardos)
    ■ Stockton Riverside College
    ■ Rathbone
    ■ Tyne Met College
    ■ South Tyneside Council

6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of Resources (NE):
    ■ TDB Training Ltd
    ■ Agility group

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for adult learners: Adult employability training	11 part-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	102 apprentices

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	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	Grade
Information and Communication Technology	3

Overall effectiveness

7. The overall effectiveness of RNE's provision is satisfactory. Managers provide leadership that has successfully developed the business; they set ambitious targets for staff and learners and monitor these targets well. RNE is a new independent training provider and although quality-improvement arrangements are still being developed some improvements have been made to ensure more learners stay in learning and complete their programmes. RNE uses an appropriate range of teaching, training and assessment methods to support learning and to ensure learners progress well.

8. Arrangements to monitor and support learner progress, including in the work subcontracted to other training providers are satisfactory. RNE works productively with learners, employers and other partners to provide an expanding and flexible training provision that meets their needs. However, insufficient work experience and progression opportunities exist to support progression into employment for learners. Arrangements to assess learners at work are efficient and well managed. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory and prioritised well throughout the organisation. RNE successfully creates a culture of respect and care for learners and staff. Managers are aware of the need to use management information more effectively to inform improvement planning and self-assessment.

Main findings

■ Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Train to Gain programmes were very successful and contributed well to improving learners' economic well-being and employability. Due to the newness of RNE's apprenticeship programmes, no complete data on outcomes are available. Nevertheless, all current apprentices are progressing well. Outcomes for learners across the provision subcontracted into RNE from other providers are satisfactory.

■ Retention rates across all programmes are satisfactory and good on ICT programmes. Learners feel safe. The standard of learners' work meets programme requirements and some learners demonstrate good computer web site design and IT networking skills.

■ Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Workplace learning is good and planned well to ensure appropriate skills development. Equipment and resources are satisfactory. Tutor feedback to learners regarding their marked work needs to be more informative and tutors need to develop more flexible and interactive learning opportunities through better use of the available technology and equipment.

■ The standard of learner progress reviews varies considerably. The best reviews effectively consider learners' current progress. They set targets that are detailed and understood by all parties. However, some reviews are less effective and lack clarity and detail about short and medium-term targets for progression. Individual learning plans are not up-dated regularly to reflect support needs or learner progress.

■ RNE satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of its learners and users. It offers an expanding youth and adult provision that includes foundation training, apprenticeship provision in ICT, construction, business and warehousing. New provision in security and call-centre training is well developed. Arrangements to secure sufficient work experience and progression opportunities for learners are weak.

■ Partnerships with other training providers, connexions and local schools are productive and benefit learners. Many learners access RNE's programmes through these partnerships. However, there is insufficient strategic partnership working with employers or community groups to support the further development of RNE's programmes.

■ Care, guidance and specialist support arrangements are satisfactory. Learners benefit well from effective personal support from tutors. This personal support is a key element in RNE's improved retention rates, in learners' vocational skills development and in the development of employability skills such as having a positive attitude to work and good timekeeping.

■ The senior management team has established a clearly stated and well communicated strategic business direction for the organisation. Business plans contain appropriate organisational targets and clear strategic objectives. RNE recognises the need to develop additional plans, for example, on quality improvement and employer engagement, that are linked more effectively to

business planning. Arrangements for operational management and the management of health and safety are satisfactory. RNE has made recent progress in developing its staff appraisal and performance management systems.

- Arrangements for safeguarding and equality and diversity are adequate. Policies and procedures meet legislative requirements and are effectively applied. Staff training in these areas is prioritised. RNE recognises the need to more systematically identify variations in performance across different learner types and take action to narrow any identified achievement gaps.

- RNE's engagement with learners and employers relies mostly on informal methods but is effective in bringing about improvements.

- Arrangements for quality assurance and improvement are satisfactory. Many arrangements are new but the improvements made in monitoring learner progress, induction and tracking and supporting learner progress has benefitted many learners. RNE does not use achievement data and management information sufficiently to support self-assessment and quality improvement.

What does Resources (NE) need to do to improve further?

- Ensure current learners complete their apprenticeship programmes successfully through maintaining effective levels of individual support and through continued work to improve retention rates.

- Make teaching and learning more structured, interactive and less tutor centred through improved lesson planning and increased use of technology.

- Increase the effectiveness of learner reviews particularly through the setting of clearer improvement targets for learners and by ensuring their review are used to update individual learning plans.

- Improve learner opportunities to engage in work experience and to progress into employment through more partnership working and productive links with employers.

- Strengthen current work to identify variations in performance across different learner groups and develop focused actions to narrow any identified achievement gaps.

- Develop a more self-critical approach to quality improvement and self-assessment through more effective evaluation and use of data and management information.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors
What learners like:
- the new skills learned and the opportunity to achieve
- the effective, often one to one support from tutors
- the quick resolution of any problems that arise.

What learners would like to see improved:

■ the poor IT resources at the training centre

■ the lack of planned work experience.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

■ the speedy response from RNE to meet our needs

■ the good communications from RNE.

What employers would like to see improved:

■ no employer comments.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement   Grade 3

9.   RNE has a satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvements. During the short time of delivering apprenticeships, Train to Gain and employability programmes RNE has maintained good progress for apprentices and good outcomes for Train to Gain learners. It has expanded provision to meet the training needs of industry and works productively with other local training providers. RNE has a flexible approach to training and assessment that benefits learners and employers.

10.   RNE is making satisfactory progress in developing a range of strategies and procedures to support its ambitions for growth. It has sufficient staff to deliver and manage its programmes and recognises the need to focus more on improving and developing the provision. Its strategic business mission is ambitious. However, the processes for self-assessment and improvement planning are not yet sufficiently developed to support the mission. RNE is responsive to feedback from learners and employers to ensure improvements are made. Its self-assessment is a satisfactory tool for change. Staff do not make sufficient use of information and data to inform improvement planning.

Outcomes for learners   Grade 3

11.   Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Train to Gain learners benefit from particularly good success rates that improve their prospects for economic well-being and employment. Apprenticeship outcomes are now satisfactory but in the early phase, too many learners did not complete and left their programme early. Retention rates across all programmes have improved and are now satisfactory. All learners develop good employability skills. Current learners are progressing well and employers state that they are pleased with the standard of work they produce, particularly on ICT programmes in web design and IT network development.

12.   Learners feel safe; health and safety is considered carefully and appropriately prioritised. Personal safety is promoted appropriately during induction and throughout the training programme. Some learners were involved in community based projects but this is not a routine feature of the programmes.

The quality of provision   Grade 3

13. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. The most effective learning and development of skills takes place at work where these are generally well planned and organised. On-the-job training, assessment and skills development are effective. RNE is aware of the need to improve lessons to make them more learner focused and to plan more effectively to meet individual learner needs. It recognises the need to improve theory teaching to groups and to make teaching and learning more stimulating and interesting through the better use of technology. The standard of learners' written and practical work is satisfactory but tutors' feedback on written work is often too brief. Workshop resources and equipment in the training centre are adequate. Learners enjoy their work, they work safely and their standard of work is satisfactory.

14. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Assessments take place frequently and are well planned to avoid disrupting work patterns. RNE ensures assessors and internal verification share and develop good practice.

15. Tutors prepare individual learning plans well but as learners progress and their needs change these are rarely up-dated. Initial assessment arrangements provide an accurate record of learners' additional support needs. Tutors and managers monitor learner progress very closely. Learner progress reviews enable assessors to evaluate learners' progress and take account of learners' wider development including their attitude to training and work. Learners make good progress but some of the progress targets set for learners and employers by tutors during reviews are insufficiently precise.

16. RNE satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of its users. It has demonstrated its increasing responsiveness in meeting employers' training needs through the introduction of apprenticeships and by widening its portfolio of courses. It works productively with schools and other training providers and many learners benefit from these partnerships through better access to training and apprenticeships. RNE is particularly aware of the need to develop links that are more productive with community groups, strategic partners and employer networks to increase access to work placements and job opportunities for learners.

17. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. A particularly strong feature of these arrangements is the very effective personal support tutors provide for learners. This support is a highly effective feature of RNE's improving learner retention rates. The good personal and specialist support learners receive is making a major contribution to learners' commitment to succeed. RNE offers satisfactory support to the few learners engaged in RNE's adult or apprenticeship provision who have specialist or complex support needs. RNE is aware of the need to evaluate the impact its support interventions have on learner success.

Leadership and management   Grade 3

The senior management team has identified a clear vision and strategic direction for the growth of the company and has shared this effectively with managers and staff. Strategic planning incorporates appropriate organisational targets and clear strategic objectives are set out in the business plan. However, to support its strategic and business growth objectives RNE managers recognise the need to align business planning with other key planning considerations such as employer engagement and quality improvement.

18. Operational management is satisfactory. All staff work within a clear management framework. Operational staff, responsible for teaching, assessing and organising RNE's programmes are well supported by managers to ensure they operate effectively. Managers focus well on providing effective personal support for learners. Performance management, quality-improvement arrangements and staff development are all newly established features of management activities.

19. The promotion and management of health and safety are satisfactory. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and there is a good focus on health and safety throughout the organisation.

20. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. RNE maintains detailed records showing that Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out for all staff and subcontractors. A senior member of staff is responsible for safeguarding arrangements. Key aspects of safeguarding for learners, for example internet safety and cyber bullying, are promoted satisfactorily during learner induction. Appropriate safeguarding policies are effective in raising safety and safeguarding issues across the organisation. RNE is aware of the need to refresh these policies to include considerations for vulnerable adults. Learners' understanding of health and safety and safeguarding is satisfactory. Accident and incident reporting arrangements lead to effective actions for improvement.

21. The equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory. RNE has worked effectively to create an atmosphere of respect. RNE successfully widens participation in its programmes by learners who previously had difficulty finding a training place in ICT or construction. Organisations sub-contracting to RNE are appreciative of their expertise in working with learners with low prior attainment and who encounter barriers to employment.

22. All staff have received basic awareness-raising training in equality, diversity and safeguarding and are aware of the issues and their responsibilities in this area. RNE is planning further improvements in this area including in the development of more accurate data to accurately identify achievement gaps and variations in performance across different learners groups. It is too early to yet assess the effect of these improvements.

23.   Partnerships with sub-contractors, schools and funding organisations are satisfactory. These partnerships are productive and benefit learners through improved access to training opportunities, qualifications and apprenticeship training. The information gathered from learner and employer surveys lead to improvements. For example, RNE revised the induction process to make it more informative and less bureaucratic. RNE is aware of the need to increase significantly the partnership working with employers to ensure a constant flow of good work experience and potential job-progression opportunities for learners.

24.   Arrangements to self-assess and improve the quality of the provision are satisfactory. A new senior manager is now responsible for quality improvement and most procedures are new or recently revised and up-dated. Some improvements have been made and are already providing benefits for learners. For example, the recently introduced lesson observations are providing useful information about staff performance. New procedures are being used to track and monitor learner progress towards their qualification and effective personal support from tutors has significantly improved the retention rate of learners across all programmes. RNE is aware that its self-assessment process needs to include staff more fully. The report is insufficiently self-critical and lacks the wider use of management information and data to support its judgements. RNE provides satisfactory value for money.

Information about the inspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's business development director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and data on learners and their achievement.

26. 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)

Resources (NE)

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	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners	113	102	11
Overall effectiveness	**3**	**3**	**3**
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	**3**	**3**	**3**
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
*Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?**	N/a		
*How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?**	N/a		
Quality of provision	**3**	**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?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	**3**	**3**	**3**
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
*How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?**	N/a		
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?	3		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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