

BCTG Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50729

Name of lead inspector: Deavon Baker-Oxley HMI

Last day of inspection: 04 May 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. The Black Country Training Group Limited (BCTG) is a not-for-profit organisation which was established in 2001 as a limited company. It has one training site based in Oldbury, in the West Midlands. BCTG holds contracts from the West Midlands Skills Funding Agency and the European Social Fund. BCTG is one of the largest training consortia operating in the West Midlands, acting as the consortium lead for 43 work-based learning providers. The consortium comprises a mix of small and medium-sized private providers, delivering either multi-sector or specialist single-sector skills training.
2. The consortium offers apprenticeship training and workforce development. It provides national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in health, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; construction planning and the built environment; information and communication technology; retail and commercial enterprise; education and training; preparation for life and work and business administration and law. The subject areas not inspected were information and communication technology; education and training and preparation for life and work. At the time of inspection there was a total of 4,067 learners on programmes of which 3,206 were apprentices and 861 were work-based learners.
3. BCTG is managed by a non-executive director and a managing director, responsible for the day to day running of the business. The BCTG team comprises 25 staff. BCTG consortium members are located across the country in places such as Liverpool, West Midlands, East Midlands and Wiltshire.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of BCTG:
 - Age UK Trading Limited (health, public services and care)
 - Business Development Training Ltd (business, administration and law)
 - CPL Training Limited (health, public services and care; business, administration and law)
 - CSCM Learning Limited (health, public services and care)
 - Eurosource Solutions Limited (health, public services and care; business, administration and law)
 - Freshwinds (preparation for life and work; business, administration and law)
 - Gateway Training Solutions (engineering and manufacturing technology; retail and commercial enterprise; business, administration and law)
 - GB Training (UK) Ltd (health, public services and care; construction, planning and the built environment; information and communication technology; retail and commercial enterprise and business, administration and law)

- Impact Training Solutions Limited (retail and commercial enterprise and business, administration and law)
- Lean Education and Development (engineering and manufacturing technologies)
- Mercia Management Limited (engineering and manufacturing technologies; education and training; preparation for life and work; and business, administration and law)
- Mettech Midlands Limited (engineering and manufacturing technologies)
- Mount Training Solutions (construction, planning and the built environment)
- Staff Select (Nova Training Ltd) (business, administration and law)
- Pathway First Limited (health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprise; and business, administration and law)
- Peter Pyne Training Limited (retail and commercial enterprise)
- Plato Training Limited (health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprise; and business, administration and law)
- Transworld Publications (Protocol Consultancy Services), (retail and commercial enterprise)
- Quality Transport Training Limited (construction, planning and the built environment; retail and commercial enterprise; and business, administration and law)
- Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust (health, public services and care; and construction planning and the built environment)
- Sandwell Training Association Ltd (health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprise and business, administration and law)
- Sense (the National Deaf, Blind Rubella Association) (health, public services and care)
- Skills Source Care Limited, (health, public services and care)
- Skills UK Limited (engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment; and business, administration and law)
- Sutton Coldfield Training Ltd (health, public services and care; information and communication technology; and business, administration and law)
- Walsall Housing Group (engineering and manufacturing technologies; and construction, planning and the built environment)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	6,378 learners 158 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 2
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		2
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		2
Equality and diversity		2
Subject Areas		Grade
Health, public services and care		2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies		2
Construction, planning and the built environment		3
Retail and commercial enterprise		2
Business, administration and law		2

Overall effectiveness

5. The vast majority of learners achieve their qualifications very successfully and the number completing within the planned period is above the national average. Current learners are making good progress. Learners across the consortium develop self-confidence and good workplace skills, and learn to apply theory to the practice within their workplace very well. Learners are motivated, enjoy their programmes and feel safe.
6. Teaching, learning and assessment are mainly good. Workplace coaching for health and social care learners is effective. Learners on engineering and manufacturing technology programmes benefit from the industrial experience and expertise of their trainers. In retail and commercial enterprise, lessons are generally well planned ensuring good pace and timing. Learners in business, administration and law are engaged and challenged by an effective mix of practical and theoretical activities. However, in construction, planning and the

built environment, trainers do not always plan effectively or link theory and practical work. Assessment practice across the consortium is thorough. However, during learners' reviews, the setting of long-term targets is sometimes ineffective, targets are poorly expressed, and are insufficiently challenging. The flexibility of assessors and the structure of the provision meets learners' and employers' needs well. Many employers are involved in learners' progress reviews.

7. Overall management of the consortium is good. BCTG has taken very effective action to improve outcomes for all learners. There is very effective use of key performance indicators to measure and improve the performance of subcontractors across the consortium. Safeguarding arrangements are good and they are given a high priority. Equality and diversity are effectively promoted to all consortium members and other partners. The self-assessment process is inclusive of consortium members, however it fails to clearly highlight each subject area's strengths, and areas for improvement, for example, the inconsistent quality of teaching.

Main findings

- Success rates are high for learners in Train to Gain provision and they have improved over the last three years across all subject areas, with the exception of construction, planning and the built environment, where success rates are satisfactory. Across the provision, the number of learners achieving within their planned period of training is steadily improving each year. Apprenticeship success rates are high and the proportion of learners achieving by their planned end dates is in line with the national averages.
- Learners enjoy learning and they develop good workplace skills. Many learners gain greater self-confidence, improve their work practice, and can apply theory to practice well in their workplace. Learners feel safe, due to very good promotion of safe working practices within each of the subject areas and within each of the subcontractors. Opportunities for progression are good.
- Training and assessment are mostly good. Subcontractors use initial assessment well to place learners onto appropriate programmes. Assessment of learners' work is fair and rigorous. Assessors are accessible to learners and make workplace visits that suit learners' work schedules. Assessors effectively integrate literacy and numeracy skills within the main programme of study.
- Subcontractors use reviews satisfactorily to monitor progress. They ensure that employers are involved in the process. Learners receive clear short-term targets to help them achieve the individual units of their qualification. However, the quality of long-term targets is often weak and some learners are unclear about what they have to do to achieve within the planned timescales.
- BCTG's programmes meet the needs of users well. They offer a wide range of provision closely tied in with regional priorities. Subcontractors report that BCTG's staff are responsive and flexible and that communications are good. User feedback on the company's performance is good. BCTG successfully

carried out a range of promotional and marketing activities to promote apprenticeship and workplace learning programmes.

- Partnership working is good. BCTG works well with subcontractors and employer partners to promote programmes, often in disadvantaged communities. The company's learners reflect the diversity of the regions it serves. Progression opportunities for learners are good. Learners receive good support to help them achieve. The company's information, advice and guidance officers work well with learners who need additional support to help them succeed.
- An outstanding aspect of the good overall leadership and management is the leadership provided by the director and managers at BCTG. They have communicated the purposes of the provision to staff and subcontractors very effectively. The consortium is very well managed with key performance indicators used well to deliver continuous quality improvements to meet local and national needs.
- BCTG's safeguarding arrangements exceed the current regulatory requirements and are good. Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and their associated rights and responsibilities. BCTG gives safeguarding a high priority, with a named manager responsible for making consortium members aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding learners.
- BCTG's promotion of equality and diversity is good, and successfully promotes learning to those who are not in employment, education or training, particularly those from areas of significant socio-economic deprivation. However, data is used insufficiently to challenge subcontractors when setting targets for achievement for different groups of learners.
- BCTG makes good use of self-assessment to improve its provision, particularly with subcontractors who are well established within the consortium. However, analysis of data is insufficiently detailed to evaluate effectively the impact of the strategies to improve the quality of the provision. Managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively using a system of direct observation. However, the quality of teaching and learning remains inconsistent in some subject areas.

What does BCTG need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that clear and measurable long-term targets are set during progress reviews so that learners know what they need to do to make good progress and successfully complete their programme.
- Ensure that data is used effectively to analyse the performance of different groups of learners for each subcontractor, by setting challenging targets when reviewing contract performance, and effectively tracking the progress and achievement of all groups of learners.
- Improve the observation of teaching and learning to promote consistent practice across all subcontractors, by ensuring observers are appropriately qualified and experienced.

- Improve the consortium's self-assessment arrangements to ensure that feedback from learners, employers, subcontractors and staff is collected and analysed to identify strengths accurately and areas for improvement in each of the subject areas.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- very supportive staff, flexible in accommodating shift and rota patterns, and work needs
- training at work rather than having to go to college
- good support to help learners progress
- training that prepares learners well for next steps in education and employment
- training that has a positive impact on skills at work
- the challenge of work and learning.

What learners would like to see improved:

- key skills and theory classes
- more class-based learning
- more technology to be used in training
- in some cases the support did not help progress
- a firm study plan.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- very professional, skilled, flexible and highly qualified staff
- good communication channels and flow of information quickly addressing any issues
- meets employer needs well
- clear feedback and explanations from subcontractor regarding training.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more information about the qualifications
- copies of learners' development plans.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. BCTG has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. BCTG's self-assessment and development plans provide an effective framework for improvement and include challenging and realistic targets that managers use well to monitor the provision. BCTG has made good progress towards achieving these targets. BCTG makes good use of learners' views to evaluate and improve the provision. Initiatives to improve the quality of training, learning and assessment since the previous inspection have been partially successful, for example, the promotion of equality and diversity during learner reviews. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now good. The provision in literacy and numeracy, which was previously identified as an area for improvement, is now managed well. Overall success rates for apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications have improved since the last inspection and are now high. Learners' achievement of their qualifications within the agreed timescales has also improved to around the national averages.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Success rates are high across all subject areas with the exception of construction, planning and the built environment, where success rates are satisfactory. Across the provision, the number of learners achieving within their planned training period has been steadily improving in line with trends in each subject area. There are no substantial differences in achievement between the different groups of learners. Current learners are making good progress and are expected to achieve by their planned end date. However, data for previous years shows that there has been slow progress for some learners across most of the subject areas.
10. Learners improve their economic and social well-being. Opportunities for progression are good. Learners develop good workplace skills across all subject areas, with the exception of construction, where it is satisfactory. Many learners develop greater self-confidence and the ability to apply theory to their practice within their workplace. Learners feel safe, reflecting the very good promotion of safe working practices within each of the subject areas.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. Training and assessment are mainly good. BCTG ensures that subcontractors make good use of initial assessment to place learners onto a programme that matches their ability and aptitudes. Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods to meet the needs of all learners. Questioning is used effectively to check and reinforce learners' understanding. Assessors carry out workplace assessments during the day and evening and provide good, constructive

feedback on written and practical work. They effectively integrate literacy and numeracy skills with the learners' main programme, so that learners can gain a better understanding of the application of these skills to their work.

12. Progress reviews are satisfactory in monitoring learners' progress. Employers' involvement in progress reviews is good. Assessors set clear and manageable short-term targets for learners to help them progress. However, some subcontractors do not set long-term targets that are realistic, measurable or time-constrained. Some learners are unclear about what they have to do to achieve. These learners often fail to progress as quickly as they could.
13. The extent to which programmes meet the needs of users is good. The company offers a wide range of apprenticeship and work-based learning programmes to meet local and regional priorities. Subcontractors speak very highly of the company's flexibility and responsiveness. Communications with subcontractors are good. Feedback from learners and stakeholders about the quality of provision is very positive. Learners comment very favourably on how well BCTG meets their needs. The company carries out regular and successful marketing events to promote its apprenticeship programmes.
14. BCTG works with a wide range of local partners to provide programmes that meet the needs of a diverse and often disadvantaged population. A range of initiatives has successfully engaged young learners who are not in education, training or employment, ex-offenders and people with mental health difficulties. Productive partnerships with schools, the youth offending service and voluntary sector groups have helped to widen participation in learning across the region. Progression opportunities are good and well signposted. The company works collaboratively with other training providers to target provision well and to avoid duplication.
15. Care, guidance and support are highly effective in enabling learners to achieve their full potential. Assessors know their learners well and have a good understanding of how to work effectively with each learner. Learners have good access to their assessor, which enables them to share concerns early on and to resolve issues promptly. Learners who require additional support receive appropriate personalised support to help them achieve. Learners have a good awareness of the range of opportunities available to them after they complete their apprenticeship.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. An outstanding aspect of the good leadership and management at BCTG is the way that managers communicate the purposes of the provision to staff and subcontractors very effectively, and provide very good direction by identifying clear priorities for improvement. All staff have a very good understanding of their role in bringing about these improvements and driving up outcomes for

learners. Training and learning, one of the main priorities for development, has improved significantly and is now good.

17. Senior managers work well with local, regional and national priority groups to identify and plan the direction of the provision. BCTG continues to have strong links with local schools which are used very well to promote apprenticeships. BCTG has identified the need to provide more effective and efficient arrangements for standardisation of their provision across a very wide geographical area and an increasing range of programmes. The effectiveness of improvement plans is monitored and follow-up action is taken to tackle areas for improvement. However, success measures for individual improvement strategies are insufficiently specific and measurable.
18. BCTG's safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff, including those in subcontractor organisations have completed a Criminal Records Bureau check. BCTG has successfully developed a very strong culture of caring for learners and uses its safeguarding procedures well to ensure learners are safe at work. BCTG provide useful training and guidance on safeguarding topics for subcontractors. Training staff and assessors within subcontracted provision have a good understanding of their role in implementing the relevant policies and make good use of workplace visits to ensure learners' safety. Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and their associated rights and responsibilities.
19. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. BCTG successfully promotes learning to those who are not in employment, education or training, particularly those from areas of significant socio-economic deprivation. All staff and subcontractors receive good initial training and regular updates on the provider's equality of opportunity policies and procedures. They also receive regular updates on changes to legislation. The range of policies and procedures is satisfactory and they are regularly monitored. Learners develop a high level of understanding of equality and diversity issues which relate to them at work and to their roles in the workplace.
20. BCTG's monitoring of performance is adequate to cover all the different learner groups with which it works. The proportion of learners of a minority ethnic background is in line with the local population profiles for the wide geographical area of the provision. Data are used satisfactorily to identify and tackle imbalances in participation and performance by ethnicity and gender. However, managers analyse available data insufficiently to challenge each subcontractor about the performance of all groups of learners during contract review meetings.
21. BCTG makes good use of self-assessment to improve its provision, particularly with subcontractors who are well established within the consortium. BCTG has satisfactory arrangements for collecting the views of learners, employers and training staff. A learner engagement strategy has recently been introduced to improve the response rates to surveys. Managers monitor the quality of

teaching and learning effectively through a system of direct observation. However, the quality and comprehensiveness of subcontractor reports are inconsistent and managers place too much reliance on the quality reporting systems of individual subcontractors. Staff have used the resulting quality improvement plan effectively to increase overall success rates for learners and improve a number of aspects of the provision. However, aspects of teaching and assessment practice vary across the provision.

22. BCTG manages its resources well and provides good value for money. Capacity building and staff development activities provided for subcontractors promote value for money well through effective sharing of information on training and good practice. BCTG carefully monitors and risk-rates the effectiveness of its provision and reacts very effectively to variations in performance across the subcontractors. Overall success rates are good and improving.

Subject areas

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Context

23. BCTG subcontracts its health and social care provision to 13 providers. Some 374 nursing homes, residential homes, nurseries and care organisations employ the 1,549 learners currently on programme. Of these, 644 are intermediate level apprentices and 659 advanced apprentices. Some 46 learners are following workplace learning programmes at intermediate level and 182 at advanced level.

Key findings

- The number of learners completing within the planned training period has seen a marked improvement at intermediate and advanced levels, improving by 15%, and are now in line with the national average. Overall success rates were high in 2010/11. Provisional in-year data demonstrates good or better progress for the vast majority of learners measured against target end dates.
- Learners' progress towards completion of their qualification is good. Many learners progress from intermediate level to advanced level, demonstrating good progress in learning and skills development and in meeting learning and employment goals. Attendance is good. Learners enjoy developing their care and childcare skills, and they are supported effectively by assessors to raise their aspirations to progress to higher levels.
- Learners demonstrate high levels of confidence, as well as effective communication and interpersonal skills. Good links between theory and practice are evidenced in learners' portfolios, building on knowledge, understanding and work-related skills development. Learners feel extremely safe. They are able to apply health, safety and safeguarding knowledge effectively in the workplace. Risk assessments are completed well by all assessors.
- Learners make well-informed choices about health and well-being for the benefit of the users of the services that they provide. Learners are actively involved in additional recreational activities and community events to enhance the enjoyment of individual service users. Learners apply their knowledge well to provide good levels of individual care support in a variety of settings.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Very effective workplace coaching includes extensive use of individually planned learning activities and promotes additional individual research by learners. Assessors effectively use learners' employment activity, responsibility and previous learning to provide evidence of their learning. Almost all learners receive very clear verbal feedback from assessors following observations and during progress reviews.
- The recording, monitoring and evaluation of learners' progress during learning sessions is good and appropriately matched to the units of the apprenticeship qualification. Very clear targets are set, which challenge learners to extend their

knowledge and understanding, and further develop their skills. Assessment planning, review and feedback records are mostly completed comprehensively, in partnership with the learner.

- Key skills are well integrated into the programme. Functional skills are currently being introduced for a few learners. Additional learning support is provided for individuals' key skills development to meet their individual needs. However, one subcontractor does not use initial assessment well to accurately plan learning and assessment and ensure that all learners are on the appropriate programme.
- Staff are approachable and flexible when planning visits to care homes in order to accommodate rota commitments, learners' and employers' needs. For example, learners are visited during evening and very early morning shifts to carry out assessments and progress reviews. Learners appreciate the good quality care and guidance they receive. Training schedules are effectively planned involving the learner and care home line manager.
- Staff are well qualified and experienced in the care setting. BCTG provides good training and support opportunities for subcontractors. Mentors and experienced subject learning coaches are appointed to support newly qualified assessors and subcontractors who have recently joined the consortium. However, some of the quality of training and assessor practice remains inconsistent across this subject area.
- The promotion of safeguarding is very good and it is integrated well into the training programme. Learners demonstrate very good levels of understanding and application of safe working practices, risk assessment procedures and legal requirements. Equality and diversity are integrated well into workplace practice and are used to support and help individuals in the care settings.
- Observation of assessors coaching and supporting learners in the workplace is carried out consistently with paired observations taking place. Observation reports and action plans are completed to enable individuals to improve performance and to inform self-assessment processes. New assessors shadow their more experienced colleagues, and all staff share good practice and resources during bi-monthly sub-contractor meetings.
- BCTG's management of subcontractors' performance and workplace training, support and assessment is good for the majority of vocational provision; however, some improvement is required for a small minority. Assessors in most organisations actively contribute to the self-assessment process. BCTG's contract managers liaise regularly with subcontractors to discuss performance and improvement.

What does BCTG need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that learners are on the right course and studying at the right level, by strengthening the initial selection and assessment processes to meet the needs of all learners.

- Accurately identify best practice in both teaching and assessment through direct observation, and promote the sharing of best practice by making better use of the more experienced assessors and subject learning coaches.
- Improve the accuracy of the self-assessment of health and social care programmes by collecting and analysing the views of all learners, employers, assessors and other staff effectively.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Context

24. BCTG offers courses in electrical engineering, business improvement techniques, performing manufacturing operations, performing engineering operations and road passenger vehicle driving qualifications. Most of BCTG's learners follow intermediate level qualifications and a minority is working at advanced level. Some 355 learners are on apprenticeship programmes and 319 are on work-based learning programmes.

Key findings

- Success rates for most engineering work-based learners are high and improving. Success rates for Train to Gain learners have risen over the past three years and are now above the national average. On apprenticeship programmes, the first full year success rates are broadly in line with national averages. Key skills success rates are high.
- Train to Gain learners make good progress. The percentage who successfully complete their programme on time has risen over the last three years and is now well above the national rates. However, for apprentices, the percentage of learners who complete their programme by their planned completion date is well below national rates. Learners on transportation programmes make better progress, achieving their qualifications in line with the national averages.
- The standard of learners' work is good, as is the development of learners' workplace skills. Engineering learners develop good knowledge, skills and understanding. Portfolios are of a high standard and contain much good evidence of learners' work. Learners are occupationally competent by the time they complete their apprenticeship and some progress to supervisory positions.
- Learners develop their economic and social well-being well. Taxi drivers enhance their employment prospects by successfully completing the programme, which is a mandatory requirement for many local authorities. For many other engineering employers, raising the skills of their workforce is beneficial, securing employment within their company, and increasing their employees' employability. Learners all understand their rights and responsibilities at work.
- The promotion of health and safety is good. Learners feel safe and demonstrate good health and safety knowledge and practice. Health and safety standards are reinforced well in the workplace and during off-the-job training sessions. Staff ensure that a good emphasis is given to health and safety during reviews. Learners demonstrate a good recall of the health and safety issues covered during their induction.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are well planned and have clear learning aims. Learners benefit from the considerable industrial experience and expertise of their trainers, which they use well to enhance learners' knowledge

and understanding. Apprentices and employers speak highly of the quality of teaching and of the good practical and theoretical knowledge acquired. However, current procedures for subcontractors to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently developed.

- NVQ assessments, and assessment planning, are good. A range of methods is employed in each assessment but, predominantly, evidence from the workplace and direct observation is used. Assessors frequently check the NVQ evidence and provide very good feedback to the learner following an assessment. Assessment resources are of a high standard.
- Progress reviews are good. The review of NVQ assessment evidence is good with clear progress targets. Reviews monitor overall progress and include feedback from the tutor. Employers do not always contribute to the reviews. However, they are always made aware of the learner's progress.
- The provision effectively meets the needs and interests of employers and learners. Employers develop a well skilled and knowledgeable work force and most apprentices become competent employees. Apprentices are very content and are very pleased to be on the programme.
- BCTG's management of subcontractors is very effective. The service level agreement is very detailed and there is frequent contact between BCTG's contract managers and subcontractors. Meetings are very productive. Effective measures are in place to identify and implement improvement actions.
- Taxi drivers and other learners exhibit a good awareness of safeguarding matters. They are knowledgeable about current legislation, and are aware of the actions to take in situations that can arise in the course of their work. They have received specific training in safeguarding and display a professional attitude towards safeguarding.
- BCTG's approach to self-assessment for engineering is an area for improvement. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and self-critical, but is too generic and descriptive. The self-assessment report does not clearly identify judgements that specifically relate to provision in engineering. Judgements are insufficiently clear and contributions from subcontractors are not always evident. A position statement produced for the inspection was good and contained accurate information, and engineering actions in the quality improvement plan were clearly identifiable.

What does BCTG need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of learners who complete the programme within the allocated time by setting achievable targets and by ensuring consistency across subcontracted providers. Ensure that short- and long-term targets and tracking are robust, and that any indication of slow progress is readily addressed.
- Enhance the observation of teaching and learning within subcontracted provision to ensure that there is a clear focus on improvements in teaching and learning. Ensure that staff undertaking observations are appropriately qualified and experienced for the task.

- Enhance the quality of the self-assessment report by ensuring that the strengths and areas for improvement in the various subject areas are clearly stated, and by demonstrating clearer links between the judgements made and the proposed grades. Self-assess each vocational area as a separate judgement, with clear links between the strengths, areas for improvement and the self-assessed grade.

Construction, planning and the built environment

Grade 3

Context

25. BCTG currently offers intermediate apprenticeships in maintenance operations and glass fenestration manufacture and installation. Of the 98 learners currently on programme, 32 are aged 16 to 18. A small number of learners are on work-based learning programmes. BCTG works with five subcontractors.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Overall Train to Gain success rates have been high for several years, although the proportion of learners achieving by their planned end date is seven percentage points below the national rate. Overall the proportion of apprenticeship learners achieving within their planned period has declined from a high level to around the national rate. The progress of learners currently in training is mostly good.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners produce good practical work. Many learners are able to produce work of a high standard quickly and effectively in the workplace. This contributes positively to company productivity. Renovation projects carried out by learners help families to secure affordable and decent homes in their community.
- BCTG provides good apprenticeship opportunities for learners in construction. The majority of these are new, permanent jobs, with structured training to ensure full coverage of the apprenticeship framework. The promotion and management of health and safety, both off-the-job and in the workplace, are good. The support for literacy and numeracy, and the achievement of key skills, are satisfactory. However, there are no clear plans in place to prepare learners for the introduction of functional skills.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the better lessons, learners make rapid progress, working independently and demonstrating good skills. The planning of learning ensures good pace, challenge and a mix of activities. In some sessions, trainers do not plan effectively nor do they link theory and practical work effectively. In some instances, trainers do not sufficiently challenge the more able learners. Assessment is thorough and reliable, and conducted in a timely way.
- The apprenticeship programmes offered are valued and relevant to learners and local employers. Although relatively narrow in range, they do provide a good opportunity for learners to study for an apprenticeship. The work experience provided in the form of permanent employment is good. It allows learners to develop industry-standard skills and to meet the requirements of the qualification.
- Partnership arrangements are satisfactory. Subcontractors use their relationships with employers well to create and provide apprenticeship

opportunities for learners, although they currently work only with a small number of employers. All current learners are in employment.

- The care and support for learners is satisfactory. Subcontractors use initial assessment appropriately to identify learners who require additional support, although not all subcontractors are able to provide support in a timely manner, and rely on BCTG to advise and refer learners appropriately. Individual learning plans are updated throughout the course to reflect progress and highlight areas for improvement, although the quality of target-setting for individuals is sometimes poor.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. BCTG has a rigorous approach to managing subcontractors, and ensures that programmes meet contractual requirements. Actions to monitor the progress of learners are good. However, it is too soon to judge whether this will lead to good outcomes. Safeguarding arrangements are appropriate. Subcontractors seek learners' views regularly and act upon them.
- Self-assessment, and the ability of BCTG to evaluate critically the provision at subject level, is underdeveloped. The company has not identified key areas for improvement in its quality improvement planning. BCTG makes good use of data but not all subcontractors use data effectively to help them understand performance in a wider context. Quality improvement planning to raise further the standards of teaching and learning lacks a clear focus.
- Accommodation and resources are good. Workshops are tidy, well maintained and contain a good range of training areas, with good access to tools, equipment and consumable materials. Most learners are able to access information learning technology in classroom areas to support learning. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in their vocational specialism. New staff receive support to participate in professional development and gain relevant qualifications.

What does BCTG need to do to improve further?

- Improve the standards of teaching and learning by developing a thorough understanding of the good practice that exists, and the areas that are less well developed. Ensure that the teaching of theory is planned well across all subcontractors and that learners are stretched and challenged.
- Ensure that, through continued close monitoring of current learners, overall success rates for apprentices will rise as the number of learners who complete the programme within the planned period increases. An action plan is needed to ensure the effective delivery of functional skills across subcontractors.
- Improve the consistency of progress reviews to ensure that they thoroughly assess performance, capture the learning that has taken place, and set learners challenging, clear and easily measured targets.
- Improve BCTG's capacity to critically evaluate the provision across all subcontractors delivering construction, to inform accurate self-assessment and rigorous quality improvement action planning, and further accelerate the pace of improvement.

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 2

Context

26. BCTG has contracts with seven subcontractors for the provision of workplace learning and intermediate and advanced level apprenticeships in cleaning and support services, driving goods vehicles, warehousing and storage, hairdressing and hospitality. Some 610 learners are currently in training. BCTG has enrolled about 530 on apprenticeships and 79 on workplace learning programmes. A range of small, medium and large private sector organisations employ learners.

Key findings

- Overall success rates for workplace learning and apprenticeship programmes are consistently above the national average. The proportion who complete within the planned period of study is also high. Most learners make good progress towards their learning goals. Some subcontractors' programmes are flexible enough to accelerate learners' progress to enable learners to complete early. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities perform as well as other learners.
- Learners are motivated and enjoy learning. Many increase their confidence and develop good occupational and time management skills. They improve their employability and take on extra responsibilities at work. Most learners are keen to continue their training and many progress on to the next level.
- Learners feel safe and adopt safe working practices. Warehouse operatives use appropriate personal protective equipment at work. Learners are able to accurately risk assess potential hazards at work. They have a good understanding and awareness of potential safety considerations such as the correct use and storage of razors and thinning scissors in hairdressing salons.
- Trainers generally plan lessons well, ensuring that learners benefit from the good pace and timing. Learners develop independent learning skills and take responsibility for their own learning. Good quality learning materials help learners to prepare for assessments. Assessment practice is good. Assessors use a wide range of evidence to collect portfolio evidence. Worksheets help learners prepare for assessments. Portfolios are of a good standard and demonstrate good development of occupational skills.
- Trainers and learners do not make sufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT) in training and assessment to promote and support learning.
- Long-term targets for programme completion are often generic and insufficiently clear. Learners sometimes struggle to plan thoroughly for the next stage of their training. Reviewers do not always set appropriate unit targets for learners to be able to measure and assess their own progress.
- Partnerships between subcontractors and employers are well developed. Effective partnership working leads to co-ordinated provision that meets the needs of employers and learners. Where appropriate, specific programmes are

tailored to business needs that lead to increased efficiency. For example, one subcontractor has delivered an 'eco-safe' driving course and business project qualification that has significantly reduced fuel and stock costs.

- Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Assessors provide effective individual targeted support for learners. Good use is made of additional learning resources such as workbooks to help learners develop the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to complete their qualifications. In particular, one subcontractor provides effective off-the-job training support for key skills.
- BCTG has an effective quality assurance system based on risk banding to review contractors' performance. However, subcontractors' procedures for tracking and monitoring learners' progress are underdeveloped. Self-assessment is inclusive and is informed by the views within subcontractors' reports.
- Leaders and managers have maintained above average overall success rates and an above average number of learners who complete the programme within the planned time. They promote high expectations well. Most learners have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity. Appropriate use is made of equality and diversity workbooks to reinforce understanding at the start of their training. Value for money is good.

What does BCTG need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that effective medium- and long-term milestone targets are set during reviews, so that learners are able to assess and measure their own progress.
- Further develop the tracking and monitoring of learners' progress by subcontractors to ensure a clear and coherent overview is available for assessors to detect and address slow progress.
- Increase the use of ILT in training and assessment to better support learning and training, enhancing opportunities for learners to improve outcomes.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

27. BCTG has contracts with 17 subcontractors for the provision of apprenticeship and workplace learning qualifications. Currently, 1,086 learners are working towards apprenticeships in business administration, customer service, team leading, contact centres and management. Some 435 learners are following an intermediate level programme, 397 an advanced apprenticeship programme and 80 a higher apprenticeship. 174 learners follow a workplace learning programme at intermediate, advanced or higher levels. All learners are in employment.

Key findings

- Success rates on workplace learning programmes are high and have been rising for the last three years. Overall success rates in 2010/11 were outstanding. Apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory overall but the proportion completing within the planned period of study is low.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners on management programmes complete comprehensive assignments to support learning. Most learners are making satisfactory or better progress. Learners are determined and motivated to achieve their qualification and increase their understanding of workplace practices.
- Learners show good development of knowledge and are actively encouraged to carry out independent research. They develop confidence and good practical management skills such as the ability to manage teams, write reports and use different approaches to deal with conflict in the workplace. Employers appreciate highly the improvement in learners' skills and the positive impact that this has on their businesses.
- Safeguarding practices are good. Learners have a good understanding of safe working practice, which is covered at induction. They know what actions to take if they have any concerns regarding health, safety and welfare issues. Learners are well informed about safeguarding in their own workplace.
- Training is good. Experienced and knowledgeable trainers ensure that learning sessions are interactive. Lessons include a good mix of practical and theoretical activities to engage and stretch learners. Learners are enthusiastic and motivated. They participate well in a range of useful and interesting activities applicable to the workplace. Workshops are well planned and provide good knowledge and understanding to support learners in their jobs and qualifications.
- Assessment is satisfactory and meets the awarding body standards. Learners readily assume responsibility for their qualification and learning. However, the setting and review of short-term targets is insufficiently rigorous. Targets are

often insufficiently specific and time-bound to challenge learners. Long-term goals are not systematically reviewed.

- Partnerships with subcontractors are good. BCTG has established good links with subcontractors who benefit from a wide range of services and expertise to support their programmes. BCTG is responsive and flexible in meeting partners' needs to enable them to deliver apprenticeships and workplace learning and share good practice to benefit learners.
- Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers well. Employers are very positive about the impact that the programme has made on working practices in their organisation. Assessors work well with managers to keep them informed of learners' progress.
- Learners' induction is satisfactory. Learners receive a range of information on health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding. The induction helps learners to work more effectively in their jobs. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are satisfactory.
- Learners receive good support. Management apprentices receive individual support sessions, which help them to reinforce their understanding of management concepts. Assessors motivate and support learners to enable them to understand course requirements. Employers take an active role in supporting learners at work.
- Monitoring of subcontractors is good. Managers monitor performance closely at monthly meetings. Communication is good and best practice is shared well. Clear performance targets are set and monitored. BCTG staff respond quickly and effectively to requests from subcontractors. BCTG supports partners well by providing a good range of training programmes for staff and learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners have a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. These include dealing with a diverse range of clients with different needs. Good reinforcement takes place during reviews and workplace visits. Work with learners has had a positive impact on their understanding of the impact of equality and diversity in the workplace.

What does BCTG need to do to improve further?

- Improve the review process to ensure that learners overcome barriers to achievement by setting effective short-term targets that are specific and time-bound. Ensure that learners' long term goals are reviewed systematically during reviews.

Information about the inspection

28. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, 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 bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. 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)

BCTG 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	0	0
Part-time learners	4,067	4,067
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
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>	3	
<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?	2	
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?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
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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