

Talent Training (UK) Limited Liability Partnership

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		13–15 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A large majority of learners achieve well and those in the current year are making good progress.
- Learners are highly motivated to learn; they apply their new skills and working practices well.
- Training and coaching sessions interest and engage learners; training is highly relevant to learners' work.
- A wide range of assessment methods are used very well to support learners' progress.
- Particularly effective employer engagement and workforce development strategies inform and enrich learning.
- Good curriculum development and management support effective training.
- Strong leadership results in successful improvement strategies and capacity building.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because

- Success rates for apprentices in 2012/13 were not high enough.
- The quality of functional skills teaching is not consistently high and too few training staff are sufficiently skilled in this area.
- Aspects of leadership and management require further development.

Full report

What does Talent Training (UK) LLP (Talent) need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of apprentices who succeed in achieving the full apprenticeship framework by:
 - developing and applying good initial assessment practices
 - strengthening teaching and learning, particularly in functional skills
 - carefully monitoring and reviewing each learner's progress and tailoring appropriate support to improve
 - planning learning around clear objectives that meet each learner's individual needs
 - involving local supervisors, team leaders and managers in planning and providing practical learning opportunities at each workplace.

- Improve the way functional skills are taught by:
 - ensuring that all tutors and assessors have sufficient confidence and expertise to develop learners' functional skills
 - ensuring that learners begin work on their functional skills at the start of their programmes
 - setting appropriate and challenging objectives for learners to develop skills progressively
 - sharing existing best practice in the integration of functional skills into learners' routine work and all elements of their apprenticeship.

- Strengthen management strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring all staff have the skills and resources required to perform at their best
 - rigorously applying the improved observation and staff support process
 - implementing an integrated staff development and appraisal programme
 - enabling more learners to access learning resources which extend their learning.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- A large majority of learners achieve well and make good progress. Based on the provider's own data, overall success rates in 2012/13 for workplace and classroom-based learners were high.
- Success rates for all apprentices were only satisfactory in 2011/12, but they improved significantly in 2012/13. Success rates in the larger companies with which Talent works were very high. In the current year, the apprenticeship success rate is very high and those apprentices still in training are making good progress.
- In 2012/13, there were some differences in achievement between male and female learners but these were not significant.
- Learners demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of customer service standards and communicate skilfully with customers. They deal very effectively with customers' requests and respond with accurate information.
- Learners appreciate the value of understanding customers' needs and consistently apply appropriate standards of service. They develop skills in using modern business technologies and apply these well at work to improve business efficiency.
- Many older learners are achieving qualifications for the first time. They are also developing their confidence and improving their skills in English and mathematics.

- Training successfully enhances learners' motivation and ability to deal successfully with change. In many cases learners benefit from working with others to understand their organisations. Employers value the learners' increased motivation and engagement, and the confidence they gain from their positive learning experiences.
- A significant outcome of the programmes Talent provides is that learners become motivated to engage in new working practices, work with changed business arrangements and different organisational cultures. Many are refreshed in their attitudes towards their jobs and gain new energy, confidence and enthusiasm. In the larger companies employee turnover and absence rates have reduced.
- Most learners make good progress to higher-level training, additional qualifications, or more highly skilled job roles.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in significantly improved timely apprenticeship success rates. Learners grow in self-esteem and confidence, participate well in their training and develop good skills. Training advisers provide good personal and professional support to learners. Advisers have high expectations, know the work environment well and aim to get the best from learners. Employers value what their employees are learning. For example, one manager was pleased with the more confident way in which an experienced team member could now deal with customers' complaints.
- Teaching and learning are good in workshop sessions and individual coaching. Talent is now working very closely with most employers to ensure that case studies, scenarios and guided discussions all draw on specific vocational terminology, realistic working practices and employers' values.
- Learners enjoy the variety of work on their programme, and particularly value Talent's workshop sessions. They have good opportunities to reflect on their developing skills and knowledge and exchange experiences and knowledge with learners from other parts of the company. Learners who have been working in a customer service role for several years are encouraged to evaluate their performance critically; as a result, many adopt new approaches more closely aligned to their employers' needs.
- Learners understand their programme requirements well. In most cases, they know how much progress they have made and when they can expect to complete. Learners use an electronic portfolio effectively to record evidence from a good variety of sources. The portfolios give the learners, their training advisers and line managers an accessible and straightforward summary of progress.
- Learning resources and workbooks are tailored closely to learners' work environments. Talent's staff continuously improve these in close partnership with employers. The dialogue between Talent and employers is a particular strength of the provision.
- Learners' work is assessed promptly and in ways that helps drive progress. Feedback from assessors gives learners a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Assessors set challenging goals, which learners work hard to achieve.
- Careful planning of training causes the minimum of disruption to the learners' routine job requirements or their employers' business. Training advisers work closely with employers' team leaders and work schedulers to ensure that learners have appropriate time away from their desks for discussions and reviews, and to attend training workshops.
- The initial assessment process is new but working effectively. It clearly identifies learners' functional skills needs. The best coaching sessions ensure that learners develop their functional skills in their workplaces. However, training does not make use of all naturally occurring opportunities for developing learners' functional skills. One learner who found the numeracy requirements of the apprenticeship difficult was given work to do which helped strengthen her numeracy skills, but this is a rare example. Advisers, trainers and assessors have the confidence

or skills needed to develop learners' functional skills. Also, functional skills teaching too often takes place near the end of the programme rather than from the outset. Learners do have access to on-line resources to support the development of functional skills, but not all learners can access these systems in their workplaces.

- Training advisers offer good advice and guidance throughout the programme. Aspects of equality and diversity are integrated well into the programme and learners have a good respect for others. In the better teaching and learning sessions, diversity and health and safety matters are incorporated effectively, and learners' understanding of them is good. Learners generally have a good understanding of how to recognise and deal with any instances of bullying or discrimination at work.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are strong. Leaders and managers demonstrate a clear strategic direction and have a passion for workforce training and development that is shared by staff. The senior team has implemented a successful improvement strategy and is realistic about future challenges. Leaders are ambitious, setting stretching objectives and to achieve excellent results for all learners.
- Good strategic planning is at the heart of Talent's developing capacity to accelerate the continuous improvement process. Significant improvements in programme performance, particularly in learners' success rates, have come about through a significant investment in and good use of technology and the careful recruitment of new staff. Improvements to the ways Talent selects and deals with employers have led to better training arrangements and working conditions for learners. Talent's training workforce is highly committed to supporting learners' success and achievement.
- Talent plays a significant role in the development of strong strategic partnerships in industry. It works closely with successful, high-profile companies, developing workforce skills in the logistics, transport and supply chain industries. This work has increased the numbers of traineeships and younger apprentices available and has increased participation by females in these generally male-dominated occupations.
- Talent works particularly well with employers to develop bespoke programmes that develop the skills learners need in their work. Employers value highly the knowledge and expertise that Talent demonstrates in the logistics sector and its aim to provide a first-class service to the industry.
- Managers have implemented a range of strategies to improve the standard of learning and assessment and to build capacity. This includes appointing new senior staff with appropriate experience and expertise. Talent is building its ability to deliver higher quality training; five training advisers have either completed or are nearing completion of a level 4 learning and development qualification.
- Realistic improvement action plans support a good range of well-founded but relatively new improvements. Actions to improve the skills of training staff in providing support for learners' functional skills are now underway, though it is too early to assess their impact. Improvements to the teaching and learning observation process are also at an early stage.
- Performance monitoring is well established. It identifies and addresses poor performance well. Talent has put in place a well-planned structure of meetings and staff communication to standardise and share good practice.
- Quality assurance arrangements are effective. Talent's self-assessment process is inclusive and takes good account of learners', employers' and staff views. The current draft self-assessment report is accurate, reasonably self-critical and uses data effectively. Judgements are supported by relevant evidence. Self-assessment leads to effective quality improvement planning.
- Staff use the feedback sought regularly from learners and employers to improve the learning programmes. Data collection and use have improved but further refinements are needed to

provide a fully integrated system for monitoring all elements of the learners' experience. For example, the collection and analysis of data on learners' progression requires improvement.

- Talent training advisers are highly flexible in dealing with the wide geographical spread and varied working patterns of national employers. Communications with employers are very good. The company adapts very successfully to meet employers' changing circumstances and requirements.
- Talent has a clear and well-thought-out strategy for developing its own equality of opportunity and diversity arrangements and those of its client companies. The promotion of equality and diversity to learners is effective. Most learners have a clear understanding of equality and diversity matters resulting from good promotion in the course of workshops and other opportunities during their programme. Staff receive frequent training and take part in awareness-raising discussions at staff meetings and during company training workshops.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners meet statutory requirements and risk is managed appropriately. Health and safety matters are given an appropriately high profile and are promoted well to learners. Staff have personal security alarms. Learners are given a 24-hour telephone contact number together with contact details of Talent's and their employers' safeguarding officers. Where safeguarding issues have arisen, Talent has taken swift and effective actions. Health and safety practice within employers' sites is good.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Talent Training (UK) Ltd		
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:		
1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Customer service	2

Provider details

Talent Training (UK) Ltd	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 0
	Part-time: 2610
Principal/CEO	Mr Mark Hargreaves
Date of previous inspection	November 2009
Website address	www.talenttraininguk.com

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	324	N/A	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	7	766	3	19	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Additional socio-economic information

Talent Training (UK) Limited Liability Partnership operates from a head office in South Shields, Tyne and Wear and is one of the largest training providers in the North East of England. Learners are employed across England in a small number of large companies and most training takes place on employers' premises. Talent training's advisers work in-company to train, support and assess learners. Since the last inspection the nature of the provision has changed significantly with the company now providing apprenticeships mainly for employees aged 19 and above, mainly in customer service settings.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspectors

Derrick Spragg HMI

This inspection was completed over two visits. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Managing Director as nominee, completed the inspection which commenced in 8–12 July 2013 when a team consisting of one of Her Majesty's inspectors and four additional inspectors visited the provider. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report, development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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