

Avant Partnership Ltd

Inspection date

18 September 2008

Inspection number

330145

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	6
Overall judgement.....	7
Effectiveness of provision	7
Capacity to improve	7
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement.....	8
Main findings	9
Achievement and standards	9
Quality of provision.....	9
Leadership and management	10
Equality of opportunity	10
What learners like	12
What learners think could improve.....	12
Sector subject areas.....	13
Learners' achievements	22

Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health, public services and care
- Information and communication technology
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. Avant Partnership Ltd (Avant) is the consortium lead for Train to Gain and young apprenticeship 14-16 training in the Humberside region. It was created in October 2007 as a wholly owned trading subsidiary of the Consortium for Learning (CfL). CfL is a charitable organisation working with and supporting a network of work-based learning providers in the Humber region. The provider network includes colleges, charities, group training associations, local authorities and private local and national training companies. All the providers in the network hold individual contracts with the LSC for the delivery of work-based learning.
2. The Train to Gain and young apprenticeship 14-16-year-old contracts, which were originally contracted by the LSC to CfL were both formally novated to Avant in January 2008. Avant, acting as the consortium lead, does not carry out any of the training for the programmes itself. While the role of Avant as the consortium lead is still developing it has an established and experienced team consisting of nine members of staff including a chief executive, managers for finance and planning and performance, co-ordinators for contracts and quality, and information and communications and two administrators.
3. Three of the partnership members were not visited on this inspection due to their low number of learners. LSC funding accounts for most of Avant's business. Avant, through its LSC contracts for Train to Gain and 14-16 young apprenticeships, provide training to national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 in health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technology, information and communication technology (ICT), retail and commercial enterprise, hospitality and catering, preparation for life and work and business administration and law. It currently has 246 Train to Gain learners and 70 young apprentices who are aged 14-16 years old. Young apprenticeship training was extended in 2007 and now provides training opportunities in two sector subject areas; business administration and hairdressing.
4. Skills for life training is to support learners taking vocational qualifications. No stand alone skills for life training is currently provided by Avant.

The following table shows the providers associated with the Avant Partnership Ltd consortium.

Consortium members	Number of Train to Gain learners	Number of young apprenticeship	Visited on inspection

		learners	
Alcrest Academy	1	10	*
Chamber Training	54		*
Hull Business Training Centre	13	9	*
Hull City Council Training	32	8	*
HYA Training	81	8	*
McArthur Dean Training	26	6	*
Prospect Training Organisation	9	8	*
SouthBank Training	15	9	*
NLT Training Services	13		
HETA	1		
East Riding Training Services	0		
North East Lincolnshire Council	2		
Positive approach (<i>young apprenticeships only</i>)		12	*

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Train To Gain 14-16	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Train To Gain 14-16	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Train To Gain 14-16	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Train To Gain 14-16	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Train To Gain 14-16	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2 Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2
14-16	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievements and standards and the quality of provision are good. Leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. In a very short period of time Avant has demonstrated that it has a good overall capacity to improve. Success rates across the Train to Gain programme are high and improving. Effective changes have been made to improve the young apprenticeship programme and retention rates have improved from satisfactory to a very high level. Improvements in the marketing and promotion of both programmes have seen increased participation levels across a wider range of sector subject areas. Learners are increasingly well matched to their programme and few leave the programme early. Avant has increased the number of young apprentices starting and achieving additional occupationally relevant qualifications. Timely success rates are generally low on Train to Gain programmes. Avant and the partnership members are fully aware of this are currently working on strategies to improve these rates. Avant has good skills for life support arrangements. Participation levels in skills for life qualifications are increasing and success rates are satisfactory.
7. Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Avant completed its first self-assessment in January 2008 and prepared an updated version of the report before its inspection in September 2008. The self-assessment process is generally inclusive but does not include sufficient employer and learner input to better evidence its judgements. The report provides a broadly accurate assessment of the provision. Success data is used well in the report to support judgements. Avant has linked the self-assessment report to actions in the quality improvement plan. However, the improvement plan is brief and only focuses on areas for improvement. The inspection team agreed with many of the judgements and the grades in Avant's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- Good Train to Gain overall success rates
- Very good retention rates
- Good achievement of additional skills for young apprentices

- Good standards of learners work
- Significant development in learners confidence and self-esteem
- Flexible and individual learning programmes
- Good staff development to support improvement
- Productive and responsive partnership working
- Good arrangements to develop and improve equality and diversity practices

Key areas for improvement

- Slow progress on skills for life qualifications
- Some slow progress towards Train to Gain achievement
- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements
- Insufficient use of learner and employer views in self-assessment
- Insufficient analysis of the performance of different groups of learners

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are good overall, as identified in Avant's self-assessment report. Avant has one full year of success data for the 2007/08 year. Train to Gain overall success rates were high at 82% compared with the national rate of 60%. Variations exist in success rates across sector subject areas, ranging from a very high 90% in engineering and manufacturing technologies to a satisfactory 65% in retail and commercial enterprise.
9. Timely success rates over the same period were low at 36% overall. The range of timely success rates spans from a good rate of 72% in care to a very low 34% in business administration and law.
10. All skills for life qualifications are carried out alongside a vocational qualification. Success rates in 2007/08 were satisfactory at 58% compared with the national rate of 51%. Participation rates are increasing and little difference exists in the success rates between literacy and numeracy awards.
11. The young apprenticeship 14-16-year-old provision has improved since the first cohort. Avant stopped recruiting new candidates in cohort 3 and increased the range of subjects available and the number of starts in cohort 4 to include hairdressing alongside business administration. Success is measured by the achievement of an NVQ level 2 and/or progression from school into further education or onto an apprenticeship. In cohort 2 level 2 success rates were 53% and progression rates were 50%. It is too early in cohort 4 to evaluate either measure. However, retention rates in the second year of the two year programme are high at 89% overall and learners are progressing well towards completing their level 2 NVQs.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

12. The quality of provision is good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Arrangements for teaching and learning are good. Learning programmes across the Train to Gain provision are developed on an individual basis and often only after account is taken of individual learning styles. Avant has developed a flexible and successful approach to supporting learning. The partnership members work hard to make learning and assessment interesting and inclusive. In ICT they are particularly effective at blending learners' existing experiences with new skills to improve understanding and confidence levels. In business administration an innovative range of projects have been developed to make the young apprenticeship programmes interesting and stimulating. Retention rates are very high at 93%. Employers recognise the improved skill and productivity levels gained from participating in the Train to Gain programmes.
13. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners well, as identified in the self-assessment report. Avant ensures that in most cases a detailed employer training needs analysis takes place that clearly establishes the most appropriate range of qualifications required to match employer and staff development needs. Train to Gain adult learners are

increasingly keen to take additional skills for life qualifications to help them meet their qualification and progression aims. The programmes have high retention and success rates and good learner and employer satisfaction levels.

14. Support arrangements are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Reviews are regular and frequent. They focus well on target-setting that supports qualification progression as well as providing learners with other pastoral and motivational support opportunities. Individual skills for life support needs are systematically identified through a process of initial assessment. An increasing number of learners are taking up the offer of skills for life support.
15. Information, advice and guidance are generally satisfactory across all programmes. Young apprentices are given advice and information about progression opportunities at the outset of learning. Adult learners have a less clear progression pathway outside their current learning programme.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. Leadership and management across the partnership are good. This was identified in Avant's self-assessment report. Avant is a new organisation that was established by a group of training providers in the Humber region and was formally established in January 2008. Partners have agreed seven key objectives for the organisation from September 2008 to 2009. Avant has not established a detailed cross partnership development plan showing how these objectives will be achieved. All Avant's partnership members have other LSC contracts and have been inspected before. At their previous inspection, the eleven individual partners' leadership and management arrangements were good in nine and satisfactory in two providers. The management of the sector subject areas across the partnership is good. Overall success rates across the partnership are good and improving.
17. Avant has developed a good range of policies and procedures to support its partners. It has established clear protocols and guidelines for partners through detailed contract arrangements and service level agreements. Data collection and management is good. Management information is accurate and thorough. Avant regularly audits its partners to ensure contract compliance and supports them to meet funding targets. Quality managers at Avant are clear about the areas where there is underperformance in success rates and have started to work with the partners concerned. Avant has correctly identified timely success rates as an area to improve. However, the information and data held by Avant is not used sufficiently to drive forward standards and to contribute to quality improvement. The learner involvement strategy and use of employers' views is underdeveloped and was identified by Avant as a key area for improvement in its self-assessment report.
18. Partnership working is well established and very effective. The providers working with Avant know each other very well and use their expertise to share good practice for the benefit of learners. The partners openly share data and discuss their progress in achieving targets at their bi-monthly group meetings. Issues are regularly raised amongst the group and through discussions effective solutions are found. For example, enrolment numbers

on skills for life programmes has increased significantly following training sessions with Avant staff.

19. Avant has a good range of productive network links in the local community and regional area. It works well in accessing funding for the benefit of the partners and their learners. Staff from Avant uses these networks effectively to initiate new ideas and share good practice across the partners. Avant works hard to maintain and improve good communications through the establishment of common procedures across all partner members for Train to Gain and young apprenticeships, through regular partnership meetings and by ensuring that they are easily accessibility for partners should they need support or guidance. Partners are very well supported by Avant staff. Avant has developed good links with some local schools which has supported the partnership in its development of a very effective 14-16-year-old young apprenticeship programme.
20. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The inspection findings broadly match the grades and key judgements in the self-assessment report. Avant staff have worked hard since January 2008 to develop a self-assessment process based on thorough data and evidence. The quality managers at Avant liaise well with partners to identify each of their key strengths and areas for improvement which contribute to the partnership's overall self-assessment report. However, the quality improvement plan from the self-assessment process is insufficiently detailed in its actions to resolve the areas for improvement. The individual providers have yet to develop an action plan outlining how they will tackle each area for improvement in Train to Gain and young apprenticeship programmes. Avant's role as an additional cross partnership agent for improvement and change is new and still developing and it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of Avant's arrangements.
21. Performance management is satisfactory. Staff at Avant have regular individual reviews with their manager and the small team clearly understand what needs to be achieved to improve quality and meet LSC targets. However, the process is new and is not yet fully documented or linked back to the partnership's key objectives and areas for improvement. Staff development is good. In the short time Avant has been established they have started to review quality processes in each of its partner organisations. For example, Avant have started to review a sample of partner's internal lesson observation records but these have not yet been used to establish a clear view about any quality improvement needs that may be required across the partnership. Resources are well used by partners to improve the quality of their provision and improvements in the programmes have been established as a result of Avant's interventions. For example, the Avant partnership providers have made significant changes to the selection and induction procedures for the young apprenticeship programme. This strategy has been very effective in getting the right young people on the young apprenticeship programmes and in improving retention rates.
22. Avant's equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory. Avant ensures that the partnership member procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Avant has a range of policies and procedures to support its role as lead partner across the Train to Gain and young apprenticeship programmes. Avant ensure its partnership members have an appropriate range of equality, diversity and health and safety policies in place. Avant, for its 14-16-year-old young apprenticeship provision, ensures that all partnership staff involved in this programme have carried out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and that partner organisations have appropriate child protection arrangements in place.

23. Avant has good partnership working arrangements that develop and improve equality and diversity practices. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Avant works closely with two well established partnership forums to improve health and safety and equality and diversity practices. The forums allow members to benefit from good shared practices, staff development and organisational policy development and to help meet changes in legislation. The partnership has good arrangements to promote a range of work-based learning opportunities to schools and employers. Recruitment levels and the range of qualifications available in Train to Gain and young apprenticeships has increased over the last two years as have the participation levels of adult learners taking skills for life qualifications.
24. Avant analyse the performance of its programmes by race gender and ability levels to meet the LSC contract requirements. However, analysis of this data to determine variations in performance across different learner types is insufficient. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. The partnership is keen to promote equality and diversity at learner reviews. However, too many variations in the effectiveness of equality and diversity promotion during reviews were observed during the inspection.

What learners like:

- 'It isn't like school'
- 'They are always there to help'
- 'The programme has given me more confidence in my own ability'
- 'Grateful in having the opportunity to achieve personal goals'
- Interesting and enjoyable programme
- 'Being able to work at our own pace'
- Having helpful and experienced tutors and assessors
- The training is really good

What learners think could improve:

- 'Simplification of the NVQ units to make them easier to understand'

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Good: Grade 2

Context

25. Avant currently work with three partners to provide Train to Gain programmes in health and social care for 101 learners. Chamber Training has 54 learners, HYA Training has 32 learners and South Bank Training (who joined the network in the summer of 2007) has 15 learners. Most are working towards NVQ level 2 in health and social care with around 20 learners working towards an NVQ level 3. Around 25 of the learners are working towards an adult literacy and/or numeracy qualifications mainly at level 1. All learners are employed within the local care sector including residential care, hospitals and domiciliary settings. Training and assessment is mostly provided in the work place.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Good standards of learners work
- Very effective individualised learning programmes
- Good staff development to improve provision

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress on skills for life qualifications

Achievement and standards

26. Overall Train to Gain and skills for life success rates are good at 87% and 71% respectively in 2007/08. These rates are significantly above the national rates for 2006/07. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. HYA, one of the partnership members providing care training, had low skills for life success rates in 2007/08 at 43%. Avant is aware of this and has supported HYA well in their efforts to improve these rates. Current learners at HYA working towards literacy and numeracy qualifications are making good progress.
27. The standard of learners work is good. They demonstrate a range of job knowledge and understanding well above the level expected at NVQ 2. Through their daily work patterns, and through the support and coaching from Avant partnership staff, learners develop a very detailed understanding of their work role, the needs of the client groups and how the theory they learn relates to their practice. Learners demonstrate good levels of self-confidence in their work and their abilities. The skill for life training has improved the standard of the written reports they produce. Portfolios are very well organised and contain a good range of evidence such as well written reflective accounts of their work. Self-assessment did not identify this strength.
28. While success rates are high, too many learners make slow progress with skills for life qualifications. In 2007/08 skills for life timely success rates were 39% for literacy and 35% for numeracy. This was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

29. Very effective individualised learning programmes meet the needs of learners and employers. Assessors and trainers prepare very detailed personalised learning plans. The plans are written in plain English and set realistic targets that are agreed with each learner. All vocational training is negotiated and agreed with the learner and employer, and assessors make effective use of any employer training and prior experience for assessment purposes. Assessors negotiate the choice of optional units with learners and their employers, effectively meeting learners' interests and supporting good workplace skills development. Results from the good initial assessment arrangements are used well to accurately identify the level of NVQ, and the skills for life and training needed. A comprehensive skills scan and assessment of individual learning styles contributes to planning the training and assessment methods used for each learner. For example, assessment action plans were created using bullet points to meet the needs of a learner with a visual learning style. Induction prepares learners well for the programme. Qualification progression is supported well by very effective and regular assessment visits that are flexible and planned to meet the needs of learners and provide minimum disruption to employers and learners. Assessors are skilful at recording workplace observations and in actively encouraging learners to extend their answers during assessment. Literacy and numeracy training is highly motivational for learners and effective in supporting the achievement of vocational qualifications. This strength was partially identified in the self-assessment report.
30. Learners and tutors have access to a satisfactory range of paper-based and ICT resources to support vocational and skills for life teaching and learning. Information, advice and

guidance are satisfactory. In most cases the learners are given sufficient advice regarding the Train to Gain programme and are working towards the appropriate level of NVQ and skills for life qualification. A small number of learners working towards level 2 are in job roles with a closer match to NVQ level 3. Learners have good support in the workplace from their employers and some employers use extra staff to cover for learners so they can fully benefit from off-the-job training or assessment.

Leadership and management

31. Leadership and management are good. Partners participate well in a good range of staff development which supports improvements. Recent staff development includes training on how to better observe teaching and learning sessions and how to improve marketing and recruitment and the use of data. Improvements to the provision include the establishment of a teaching and learning observation system, the better use of data to monitor performance and a review of the marketing and assessment of skills for life to increase learner take up. Processes for monitoring and monitoring learner progress have recently been reviewed and new areas for improvement have been identified by the data focus group. Staff development was not identified as strong in the self-assessment report.
32. Communications between Avant and its care partners are good. Avant regularly reviews the performance of care learners with each partner and they encourage the opportunities for formal and informal networking between partner members. However, opportunities to share good practice specifically within the care sector are not well structured.
33. Consortium care providers have satisfactory quality improvement arrangements, including observations of the key learning processes and a regular review of ongoing quality improvement plans. Avant collect information regarding quality assurance and improvement and monitor provider's contractual obligations well. However, they do not analyse this information effectively or set individual and measurable targets for improvement. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. Partnership staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.
34. Arrangements for equality and diversity are satisfactory. Learners demonstrate a good awareness of key issues like bullying and harassment and their understanding is regularly reinforced by assessors. The self-assessment is broadly accurate in identifying the strengths of the provision. However, the report is insufficiently critical and does not recognise the slow progress towards skills for life identified at inspection or focus sufficiently on the quality of the overall learning process.

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

35. Avant currently works with two partners to provide Train to Gain programmes at level 2 in ICT for 14 learners: Hull Business Training Centre (HBTC) and Hull City Council Training. All 14 learners are funded at a higher rate and two are also working towards a skills for life qualification. Two learners are following an information technology (IT) practitioners programme with the remainder working towards an IT user qualification. All learners are employed within the local ICT sector. Training and assessment is mostly provided in the workplace with some off-the-job group training provided at the delivery partner training centres.

Strengths

- Very significant improvement in workplace skills and competences
- Very effective strategies to support learning
- Significant development in learners confidence and self-esteem
- Good support arrangements tailored for adult learners
- Well managed programmes

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress towards Train to Gain achievement
- Insufficiently thorough promotion of equality and diversity at reviews

Achievement and standards

36. Overall ICT Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory at 72% for 2007/08. Timely success rates for the same period are low at 30%. This was identified in the self-assessment report.
37. Most learners produce a very high standard of work and this is well recorded in their evidence portfolios. The Train to Gain programme has encouraged a significant improvement in competence and confidence in their skills and for many this has helped learners to increase their levels of responsibility at work. Employers are very supportive of the programme and particularly impressed with the improved quality of the learners' work and their growing confidence. Learners strongly express a desire to continue with their studies and further improve their skills. Employers increasingly rely on the increased skill levels of the Train to Gain employees to run their businesses.

Quality of provision

38. Strategies to support learning and to re-engage adult learners into education and training are very effective. This was not fully identified in the self-assessment report. All learners

are regularly and frequently visited in the workplace where tutors work along side the learners. Tutors have developed very effective coaching techniques that use the learners' experiences and current level of knowledge, to raise their abilities to meet the assessment standards required for the qualification. Tutors are sensitive to the support and development needs of adult learners. They skilfully adapt their own extensive knowledge and experience to support learning and progression by using the working practices and equipment used by learners in their own working environment. Learners regularly attend weekly group training sessions to develop their knowledge and understanding and learn new skills.

39. Employer involvement in the training process is good. This was not identified in Avant's self-assessment report. For most learners their employers are fully engaged in the assessment, progress reviewing and planning of training processes. Tutor/assessors maintain a continual dialogue between themselves, the learner and the employer representatives through a series of regular and frequent visits. Employers are fully conversant with the qualification requirements and are increasingly aware of how the Train to Grain programmes are helping to meet their needs. Many employers talk positively about the improved quality and productivity of their organisations due to the learners' increased skill level.
40. Initial assessment arrangements are satisfactory, learners are given an initial assessment to identify their support needs and well structured and sensitive support is arranged where required. Assessment and verification practices are satisfactory. Assessment planning is good and learners are clear about what they have completed, what still needs to be done and the timescale for completion. An appropriate range of assessment techniques are used and real work evidence is always used. Targets are appropriate and for many learners provide adequate challenge.
41. A key strength in this programme is the significant development in learners' confidence and self-esteem. Many learners start the programmes with considerable trepidation, often under-valuing their own abilities and experience. The programme quickly helps them to develop their skills and become highly valued members of their employers' staff. For many this improved self-esteem also extends into their life outside work, enabling parents to have greater confidence to help and support their children with education and for others to give informed support to their partners about training opportunities.
42. Support for learners is good and particularly well tailored to meet the needs of adults. Tutors work hard to ensure learners have a good understanding of their programmes and its requirements. Their regular and frequent visits to learners are supportive, encouraging and are well planned to fit around the learners' schedules. Avant provides all learners with full contact details of their tutors and assessors and any learner or employer request for assistance is always promptly dealt with. For many learners the tutors become part of their new friendship circle and often the support, help and encouragement continues well beyond successful completion of the programme. Learners commend the levels of support and encouragement provided by their tutors.
43. Information, advice and guidance are good and learners are well prepared for their programmes. However, exit advice is less comprehensive and for some learners the options available for further study are less clear.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management of the ICT programmes are good. This was not fully identified in Avant's self-assessment report. Both HBTC and Hull City Council Training have clear strategic plans and managers are clear about their role in the Avant partnership and the benefits that the partnership brings to their organisations. Sharing of data and information is effective and the partnership understands the strengths of the individual partners. Clear structures are in place that provide effective lines of communication between the partners delivering the programmes, together with appropriate management and focus group meetings. Staff performance is appropriately monitored and performance targets set. Staff are sufficiently qualified and appropriate opportunities exist to engage in professional development activities. Internal verification practices are satisfactory; regular standardisation meetings take place to monitor the assessment decisions. The resources and facilities at both HBTC and Hull City Council training centres are good.
45. The reviews of learner progress are generally very effective. Employers are fully involved and their comments are well recorded. However, the opportunity to promote and develop learner understanding of equality and diversity issues is insufficiently well used at reviews. Learners are asked to answer factual questions from a pre-set list. Few opportunities exist for discussion where the learners' views and perceptions are sought, developed or challenged.

Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

46. Avant currently work with eight partners to provide Train to Gain programmes in business administration and law for 77 learners, including; Chamber Training, Hull Business Training Centre, Hull City Council, HYA Training, McArthur Dean Training, NLT Training Services, North East Lincolnshire Council and SouthBankTraining. Of the 77 learners around half are undertaking qualifications in business and administration with the remaining learners broadly split between qualifications in accounting and customer service. Currently four learners are taking team leading qualifications, sixteen learners, mainly business and administration, are additionally taking a skills for life qualification. All learners are employed within the local business sector. Coaching and assessment is carried out in the workplace, except for accounting learners, who have off-the-job learning sessions.
47. Avant currently works with five partners to provide a 14-16 year old Young Apprenticeship business administration programme for 40 learners, including; Hull Business Training Centre, Hull City Council, HYA Training, McArthur Dean Training and SouthBank Training. Half of the learners are male and 13% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This programme takes two years and requires a combination of two days out of the school, off-the-job learning and work experience, each week during term times. Learners work towards an NVQ Level 2 in business and administration and the expected progression is into further education or directly onto an apprenticeship programme.

Strengths

- Good Train to Gain success rates
- Good achievement of additional skills by young apprentices
- Good retention on young apprenticeship programme
- Flexible and innovative programmes tailored well to meet individual needs
- Good management of programmes

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress towards achievement for Train to Gain learners

Achievement and standards

48. Overall Train to Gain success rates for 2007/08 are good. This was identified in the self-assessment report. In 2007/08, 74% were successful which is significantly higher than the national rate of 59% for 2006/07. Skills for life qualifications in literacy and numeracy at levels 1 and 2 were taken by 12 learners, all of whom were successful, with a small proportion succeeding at their second attempt. Progress is slow towards the achievement of Train to Gain and skills for life qualifications. Timely success rates in 2007/08 were low at 32% and 29% respectively, as identified in the self-assessment report.

49. Train to Gain portfolios are satisfactory. They are well organised and in some cases, the use of IT to support the evidence is very good.
50. Young apprenticeship retention rates are very good at 93% for the second intake of learners, as identified in the self-assessment report. The early experience gained by Avant and the partners from delivering the first intake has led to a range of improved procedures. These include new arrangements for recruitment, selection and supporting the particular needs of this age group. Learners on this programme demonstrate good levels of maturity and confidence gained from participating in this programme. They have developed good communication skills and are keen to carry out both the NVQ and their planned GCSE subjects. They are also aware, through good advice and support, of the opportunities for further education and employment that this programme has given them.
51. Achievement of additional skills by young apprentices is good, either through the achievement of qualifications or through participation in courses provided by the partnership. All young apprentices achieve an accredited level 1 award in health and safety in the workplace and additionally, some can achieve key skills qualifications, and gain knowledge of first aid, IT and equality and diversity.

Quality of provision

52. The programmes are flexible, innovative and tailored well to meet the individual needs of learners. This was recognised in Avant's self-assessment report. To capture and maintain the interest of the young apprentices, some creative and engaging projects have been built into their programme. These include entry onto a regional enterprise competition for learners based with SouthBank Training. The young participants develop good team building skills, communication and presentation skills and increased confidence. Another partner, Hull City Council, has included a project on planning and budgeting for Christmas purchases, from which learners have gained IT and numeracy skills. In particular, the teaching and learning provided by Hull City Council to introduce young apprentices to the use of computer-based spreadsheets was very good.
53. Avant and its partners are fully aware of the different support for learning required for adult Train to Gain learners. They have been successful in developing their coaching and assessment skills. This development has helped to build learners' confidence and supports them to cope well with the new demands placed on them to learn without impacting negatively on their personal and working lives. The new skills and confidence gained by some employees has led them to more senior and demanding jobs with their employers. For those learners lacking in confidence, learning sessions are carefully planned to be informal and not intimidating. These strategies are highly motivating and participation levels are high.
54. Train to Gain coaching and learning sessions have clearly set aims and objectives. They take place in well resourced training rooms, with knowledgeable tutors who use informative handouts to support learning. One learner, also the managing director of his own company, has registered five of his staff on the Train to Gain programme as a result of the benefits of his own experience.
55. Assessment and internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. Learners are visited at least every four weeks with a formal review of progress every eight weeks. Individual

learning plans and reviews records are up to date and work diaries are used well to provide evidence for the qualification. The use of the review process to further promote and develop learner's awareness of health and safety and equal opportunities issues varies between different partners. The best example is where one provider uses a bank of questions to encourage meaningful discussion. Other providers miss this opportunity. Support arrangements are good overall. Partnership staff are always available to support any issues. Employers are fully supportive of the programme and readily allow learners the necessary time with their tutors and assessor as well as personal time for study while at work. Skills for life initial assessments are routine. The success rates for those who take the additional qualifications is very good and the take up by learners is increasing.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are good. This was not fully identified in Avant's self-assessment report. All partners benefit from the strong partnership working and through their participation in a range of focus groups and meetings they have developed effective arrangements to exchange good practice. An example of this is where helpful discussions led to the use of standardised paperwork, for such things as learner reviews, across the partnership. Minutes from these meetings are widely circulated to ensure that non-attending colleagues can benefit from the discussions and action points. Avant, through their performance monitoring arrangements, provide good assistance to help the partners to meet their contractual obligations. They also provide the partners with useful and often crucial information updates from sector skill councils and awarding bodies. However, Avant's overall evaluation of the quality of partners' provision and the variations that exist across the provision in the standards of promotion of equality and diversity during reviews is still in its development stage. The current arrangements lack the detailed analysis and evaluation required to fully account for each organisations strengths, satisfactory features and areas for improvement outside an overview of the providers own self-assessment.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ** programmes managed by Avant Partnership Ltd **2006 to 2009**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	1	0%
		timely	3	33%
	2007/08	overall	239	82%
		timely	308	52%
	2008/09 (1 month)	overall	50	66%
		timely	216	15%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life** programmes managed by Avant Partnership Ltd **2006 to 2009**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider skills for life rate**
Train to Gain (skills for life)	2006/07	overall	1	0%
		timely	2	35%
	2007/08	overall	25	58%
		timely	37	31%
	2008/09 (1 month)	overall	13	80%
		timely	58	17%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection