

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Leeds Training Trust (LTT)
Date of visit: 8 August 2007

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in June 2006, at which Leeds Training Trust (LTT) was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management and equality of opportunity, and unsatisfactory for its arrangements for quality improvement. Provision was judged to be satisfactory in engineering and manufacturing technology.

Off-the-job training for electrical engineering apprentices is now provided by Bradford College and Wakefield College. Leeds College of Technology continues to provide training for mechanical engineering. At the previous inspection, LTT held a contract with the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide Train to Gain provision in the form of level 2 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Engineering and manufacturing. Currently, it does not hold a Train to Gain contract but will do so again from September 2007.

Achievement and standards

What steps have LTT taken to implement strategies to improve retention and success rates?	Insufficient progress
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The development of a strategy to improve retention and success rates was a key challenge for LTT at the previous inspection. This has not yet been achieved. LTT still does not carry out any analysis of the reasons why learners leave their programmes early, or the timescales within which they do so. It has not identified any trends with regard to early leavers, and has no plan for improvement. In response to complaints from learners and employers, the company has, since September 2006, arranged for a different college to provide off-the-job training for electrical engineering learners. It has also strengthened its recruitment practice. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures.

There has been some improvement in retention rates. Of the original 27 learners who would have completed their apprenticeships in 2006-07, 27 left the programme early without qualification. Of the 42 learners recruited this year, 37 are still on programme. However, overall success rates have fallen from 49% in 2005-06 to 38% at period 9 in 2006-07 with only two more learners due to complete within the year. Timely rates have also fallen from 41% to 37% in the same period. There are

no learners who have passed their planned completion dates; learners who complete their programme do so in a timely manner.

How effective are improvements to reviews of learners' progress?	Reasonable Progress
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The arrangements for learners' progress reviews were unsatisfactory at the previous inspection. LTT have undertaken a full review of the review process and the paperwork which supports it, and have implemented a revised, improved approach. Reviews now occur at least every ten weeks. There is a greater focus on reviewing the progress made by the learner, including their achievement of completed NVO units. However, there is no measure of their rate of progress within individual units. Employers' comments on their learners' progress are collected and recorded during reviews. Learners' targets are now more focused and specific, and they are recorded more clearly, and in more detail. Reviewers place greater emphasis on checking learners' understanding of health and safety and equality of opportunity. There is now closer monitoring of the learners' attendance and progress at college.

What improvements have been made to the arrangements for monitoring of learners' progress?	Insufficient Progress
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LTT has implemented a revised process for monitoring and recording learners' progress. Assessors can now monitor learners' progress against each different part of the apprenticeship. However, progress against the NVO is measured at full unit level only. Assessment for the NVOs is holistic with each observation allowing learners to achieve certain parts of a number of units. The system is not able to provide the percentage rate of progress against individual NVO units that is needed to support this holistic approach to assessment. Some information is entered onto the management information system before it has been validated through LTT's quality assurance systems. Learners do not have information on their progress in their portfolios and employers do not receive detailed progress reports on their apprentices.

Leadership and management

Quality improvement was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, what changes have taken place to improve this?	Insufficient Progress
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The previous inspection report identified that there was an over-reliance on LTT's externally accredited quality assurance system and insufficient focus on learners' experience. This judgement remains unchanged. LTT's systems for checking and improving the quality of all aspects of their learners' experience are not thorough or efficient enough. Some aspects of the monitoring of the colleges providing off-the-job training have improved. There is frequent contact with these colleges and clear

service level agreements. However, LTT receive no information from the colleges on the outcomes of the college's observations of teaching and learning, nor do they undertake any independent observations.

Feedback from learners and employers is collected and analysed, but the questions used to gather information are simplistic and do not cover all aspects of the learner's experience. There is little discussion of the outcomes of this feedback at team meetings and no action plan is produced. The provider recognises that the present questionnaire does not provide the information needed for quality improvement and is in the early stages of developing and implementing a revised approach.

The existing action plan for improvement has been largely successful in achieving intended actions, but the plan does not identify the need for a qualitative review of all aspects of the learner's experience, focusing instead on individual, unrelated aspects. There is no measure of the impact of actions that have been taken. The self-assessment report is an accurate reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. LTT is currently developing an updated self-assessment report incorporating the views of all members of staff.

How have management and communication systems improved since the previous inspection?	Making reasonable progress
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The strengths from inspection of good communications and team work have been maintained. Communication has been further developed by the introduction of weekly staff meetings in addition to frequent, informal meetings. The progress of learners is productively discussed at these meetings. Key issues affecting the organisation, for example staffing matters or problems with a particular employer, are reported to the board. However, the recording of meetings is very brief, with few clear, time-bound actions noted and little follow up of issues discussed at previous meetings.

The management information system is now more accurate and holds more detailed information on learners. Staff and managers use the information to monitor learners' progress against the components of the apprenticeship. Information on learners is now up to date and reports are used during reviews of learners' progress. However, the data is not fully used to set specific targets for learners and staff nor to identify trends in retention or success rates to promote improvement of the provision.

