

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Harrogate Training Services
Date of visit: 2nd August 2007

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in June 2006, at which Harrogate Training Services (HTS) was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management, and for its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity. Provision was judged to be satisfactory in health, public services and care. At the previous inspection, HTS held a contract with the North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning in health, public services and care. HTS also offers work-based learning in retail, business administration and information and communications technology (ICT) as well as delivering education for 14-16 year olds and training for learners aged 25 or over on a project funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Since January 2007 HTS has delivered training to Entry to Employment (E2E) learners.

HTS was part of Harrogate Borough Council until 1992, when it became a private training provider. Nine members of staff work at HTS, seven full time and two part time. HTS has moved to new premises since the previous inspection. The new training centre is located very close to Harrogate town centre. HTS currently trains approximately 83 learners of whom 64 are following frameworks, eleven on E2E programmes and eight ESF learners. All of the learners on apprenticeship programmes have employed status.

Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to success rates, particularly progress with improving retention and timely achievement?	Significant progress
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Achievement and standards have improved since the previous inspection. HTS has made significant progress in improving achievement for learners. Of the ten business administration and information technology (IT) learners who have left their programmes in 2006-07, nine have achieved their frameworks. All three of the retail learners who have left their programmes in 2006-07 have been successful. In childcare, nine of the ten apprentices and four of the seven advanced apprentices who left their programme in 2006-07 have achieved their frameworks.

Current learners are progressing well. Data is used effectively to monitor learners' progress against targets in their individual learning plans. HTS now monitor learners' achievement of units and framework components more effectively. There is now an increase in the number of learners completing their frameworks. HTS has suitably focused on improving timely achievement and the proportion of learners who are still in training after their target completion date is reducing steadily. Learners' portfolios of evidence are well structured. Learners' progress is well monitored and learners are very clear about what work they need to do to achieve their units.

In January 2007 HTS started an E2E programme focused on pre-apprenticeship training. Of the 14 learners who have started this programme since January 2007 only three have left the programme. Of these, two have left to enter employment and one has progressed to an apprenticeship.

Quality of Education and Training

How has the monitoring of trainee progress against targets and support been improved?	Reasonable progress
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New monitoring processes have been introduced. All staff now complete a progress monitoring booklet for each learner on alternate weeks. These booklets are carefully monitored by the training manager in individual meetings with staff. Learners are now set clear targets and action plans that are updated at reviews. Employers are provided with more details on learner progress through weekly visits, telephone contact, emails, reviews and monitoring sheets. Weekly logs completed by staff carefully detail all contacts with learners and areas for concern and follow-up. Staff and learners have a good understanding of the progress being made and of future training and development needs.

What progress has been made in developing strategies to promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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HTS place a strong emphasis on developing learners' understanding of equality and diversity. The manager has attended focused training on improving learner understanding and raising awareness of equality and diversity. In addition she has liaised with outside organisations to improve the delivery of equality and diversity. Learners are now engaged in a wider range of activities that better promote and reinforce their understanding. New, innovative project work is beginning to have an impact on improving learner understanding of equality and diversity. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of this work. E2E learners have a good understanding of how equality and diversity affects them and their rights and responsibilities. In addition most learners have an understanding of relevant legislation. Staff have had good opportunities to attend external training to enable them to support the diverse needs of learners. Publicity literature and promotional

events are used well to attract under-represented learners, for example to attract males into childcare. The literature clearly explains routes to employment in early years. All male E2E learners are encouraged to participate in a taster placement in early years to raise understanding of the role.

At the previous inspection, inexperienced staff in health, public services and care was identified as a weakness. What focused staff development has been put in place for inexperienced staff?	Reasonable progress
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A new post of training manager has been created and an appointment made. A key aspect of this role is to plan, manage and deliver training to staff and in particular to new staff. Newly appointed staff have an induction that identifies their specific learning and development needs. Key aspects of the induction process include explanations of apprenticeships and the requirements of frameworks. All new staff have opportunities to shadow more experienced staff in all aspects of their job role. However, induction does not include clear guidance on what they are expected to complete with regard to corporate policies and procedures. Regular individual meetings provide opportunities for discussion on areas for development and concerns are recorded in a log book by the training manager and manager. All new staff have a review at the end of three months, followed by appraisals every six months for the first two years. Staff speak positively about the induction process.

All staff have annual appraisals that are used effectively to identify training needs of staff and plan future training. HTS have been undertaking peer observations of assessment throughout the time we have existed as this is a requirement of Internal Verification with Awarding Bodies. Recently the frequency of peer observations of assessment and marking has been increased along with linking to staff performance reviews. Internal verification meetings are used well to provide individual and whole staff development. While individual staff training needs are identified and progress monitored, there is no staff training plan for whole provider training in particular for areas such as equality and diversity and behaviour management. However, plans are in place for this to be established and implemented from September 2007.

Leadership and management

HTS were judged to be slow to implement strategies to improve provision at the previous inspection. What progress has been made in implementing measures to ensure the quality assurance of training?	Reasonable progress
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Quality assurance arrangements have improved but remain satisfactory. HTS uses peer observation. The effectiveness of induction and off-the-job training is monitored through learner views. Progress review documentation is audited but this provides more quantitative than qualitative information. Peer observations of training and

assessment are effective in sharing good practice. Staff awareness of quality assurance and their contribution towards continuous improvement is satisfactory. HTS collects feedback from learners' questionnaires twice each year and feedback from employers annually. The return rate for employer questionnaires is low. There is insufficient analysis of feedback to identify trends for improvement. Quality assurance is closely linked with the self-assessment process and development-planning.

Internal verification arrangements which are carried out by the training manager are well planned and thorough. Assessments are effectively monitored through internal verification. Learner progress is well recorded. Assessors receive detailed and comprehensive feedback following formal standardisation events and actions are well recorded.

The adequacy of the self-assessment process and development plan	Reasonable progress
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The process of self-assessment has been in place since 1998. The self assessment report is updated annually with the most recent update in June 2007, immediately before the quality assurance visit. Appropriate staff have assisted in the development of the self-assessment report through focused staff development days and meetings. Staff have a good understanding of their own section of the report. A new quality improvement plan has been developed and is currently in draft form. Development plans are well monitored and frequently updated. They have been effective in improving many key weaknesses. However, HTS has been slow in improving the quality systems. There is no formal planning of observations of training and feedback is often informal and not sufficiently precise to lead to improvement.