

Training & Recruitment Partnership Ltd

Inspection date

11 April 2008

Inspection number

318257

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like	11
What learners think could improve.....	11
Sector subject areas.....	12
Construction, planning and the built environment	12
Business, administration and law	15
Learners' achievements	18

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' quality monitoring or annual assessment 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:

- Construction, planning and the built environment
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. Training & Recruitment Partnership Ltd (TRP Ltd) was formed in March 1998 to take over the business of Merton Training Consortium, which had been in existence since 1983. TRP Ltd employs 10 staff, 6 of whom work part time. A senior management team comprising, a centre manager, a director, a business development manager and a manager for management information systems leads the company. Two training advisers support learners in construction, and engineering technology and manufacturing. Four training advisors also provide assessment and internal verification to learners in business administration, customer service, teaching assistants and learning, development and support services for young people and children. The remaining staff is employed to provide key skills support, recruitment, and business and administrative support to the company. The company uses eleven local further education colleges who act as subcontractors for assessment of the national vocational qualifications (NVQs), for training of key skills and the theoretical aspects of the programmes in construction, engineering and accountancy.
2. TRP Ltd is funded by the London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships programmes for young people and NVQs for Train to Gain adults in south London and the south east of England. There are 29 learners in construction, 37 in engineering, 34 in business administration and 24 in care subject sector areas with very small numbers of learners in floristry. All learners are in full-time employment.
3. In the year April 2006 to March 2007, unemployment rates in the London Borough of Merton were 6.1% compared with a national average of 5.3%. National Census 2001 data reports the proportion of the borough's population from minority ethnic or mixed race backgrounds at 25% compared with 9.1% for England overall.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Construction, planning and the built environment	Inadequate: Grade 4
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Provision in business, administration and law is good. However, provision in construction is inadequate.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. TRP Ltd has taken effective steps to improve most provision since the previous inspection. Overall success rates in advanced apprenticeships have improved significantly from 44 % to 84 % between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Although success rates for apprentices have declined from 80 % to 64 % they are satisfactory and are above the national average. A number of issues raised at previous inspections remain as areas for improvement. In construction, despite some actions taken by TRP Ltd to resolve issues, provision is inadequate. Quality improvement arrangements remain incomplete and subcontracted issues relating to some construction learners are still unresolved. A significant number of service level agreements including those with colleges for construction, remain unsigned. While development plans have been accurate in identifying an appropriate range of issues, TRP Ltd has not determined precise actions for their resolution. Good staff development has continued as has the good development of learners' craft skills in construction. Formal and informal communication within the small management team is effective and enables staff to take successful action once outstanding issues have been precisely identified.
6. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The report was prepared by senior managers and circulated to other staff for comment. Regular contact with learners and employers enable staff to be aware of their views. TRP Ltd has not formally included the views from learners, employers and subcontractors in the self-assessment process. TRP Ltd have prepared comprehensive development plans to support the self-assessment report yet these plans lack specific detail or timescales. The self-assessment report correctly emphasises many of the strengths of the provision, but under-emphasises a few identified areas for improvement.

Key strengths

- Very good success rates in business administration and engineering
- Good development of workplace skills
- Particularly effective links with employers
- Good staff development

Key areas for improvement

- Development of provision in construction
- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements
- Use and critical analysis of appropriate data to improve provision
- Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Overall success rates are good. TRP Ltd has very good success rates in business administration and good success rates in engineering. Learners are making very good progress on the recently introduced Train to Gain programmes. Overall learner's timely success rates are broadly satisfactory. As identified in the self-assessment standards of learners work are good. In construction, which represents approximately a quarter of all learners, success rates are very poor. All learners enjoy gaining new skills at work.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning in the college for engineering and construction learners is effective and learners satisfactorily gain their technical certificates and key skills. Teaching in engineering is supplemented with individual sessions from the training adviser who visits the college and helps individual learners with some specialist aspects of their studies. Training on-the-job is good. Most assessors plan assessment effectively. Although learners receive training in construction at college, it is not linked well to on-the-job assessments. Assessment practice in construction is inadequate and reviews are weak. Most other reviews inform learners about their progress.
9. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. As identified in the self-assessment report, TRP Ltd has strong links with employers and ensures learners gain relevant and appropriate experience. Employers provide a good range of appropriate work linked to learners' NVQ portfolios. Work is well planned for most learners to practise skills and incrementally build on experience and knowledge. Learners are trusted to complete complex and demanding tasks and progress well. TRP Ltd provides employers with a good range of information on the programmes it offers. A few employers are not fully involved in learners' reviews and TRP Ltd has only recently resolved the insufficient assessment in the workplace for construction learners.
10. Initial assessment of learners is satisfactory. Training advisors provide good advice and guidance and support at times that are flexible and suit learner's needs well. Most learners receive frequent and helpful review visits. Learners are effectively mentored in the skills they need to develop. In construction learners have not had adequate or frequent enough reviews.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Leadership and management are satisfactory. TRP Ltd has a small staff team who work effectively together. Two senior managers together with a director plan the general strategy and direction of the company well. Day-to-day operational management is mostly effective. Most learners make good progress. Managers organise good staff development both for existing and new staff. Senior managers have spent considerable time in training an existing director and a new member of staff in company procedures and personal development activity. Staff development is supported by clear and comprehensive job descriptions. An annual training plan appropriately includes an assessment of the impact on company performance. The targets and action points in the plan are insufficiently specific or measurable to allow useful monitoring of progress. Skills for life support is satisfactorily available to all learners in need but is not yet combined within a comprehensive strategy.
12. Although the team is small and monitoring of provision is carried out through informal channels, quality improvement arrangements, a weakness in previous inspections, remains incomplete. TRP Ltd has basic quality policies and procedures and a broad outline for quality assurance. The company also has a three year development plan which is regularly updated; some of which is incorporated into the self-assessment development plan. The format of these development plans does not contain target dates or milestones that would allow effective monitoring of progress against timed and measurable outcomes. Quality assurance processes do not allow the company to adequately judge the effectiveness of any measures that may have been introduced to improve provision. The management of quality monitoring of subcontractors' performance has been weak. Relationships with teachers and staff who train learners are mostly effective yet TRP Ltd has not successfully gained agreement to service level agreements with most colleges it uses as subcontractors for all or part of the assessment and off-the-job training. This was identified as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report.
13. The procedures for safeguarding learners do not fully meet current government requirements. TRP Ltd has started the process to check all staff against records held by the criminal records bureau and is waiting for results. The business development manager has extensive experience in this field but TRP Ltd does not have a formal safeguarding policy. TRP is waiting for results from recent CRB checks. However, List 99 checks have been carried out on all staff and confirmation of clearance has been received.
14. The company has not yet embraced the concepts behind the changes to data management outlined in New Measures of Success. Data is held in bespoke databases and spreadsheets that provide accurate and reliable data for submission to the local LSC. Reports produced at TRP Ltd relating to performance data, however, are not compatible with the provider performance and qualification success reports used by the LSC and inspectorates. Performance data in management reports do not correlate with published performance data under the New Measures of Success. Despite the clearly good performance in some

areas of provision, staff do not have an adequate understanding of published data to ensure informed discussion and to compare performance at overall levels with national averages.

15. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. TRP Ltd continues to place strong emphasis on ensuring most learners have good opportunities to achieve their full potential. Individual personal support from training advisors for business and engineering learners is particularly effective. The engineering training adviser, who has also recently taken responsibility for construction learners, has empathy with learners and a thorough and careful approach with employers. He has intervened very effectively with employers and colleges on behalf of individual learners. Although learners are very clear about who to go to with any issues concerning their rights and wellbeing, promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity issues with learners post induction is limited and insufficiently detailed. Written records of checks carried out during reviews about issues relating to equal opportunities do not show that learners' understanding is extended or developed well. Senior managers have recently discussed legislation to prepare a disability and equalities scheme for the company. Information is collected about recruitment from different ethnic groups and types of learners but no analysis is carried out. TRP Ltd does not specify any actions to improve participation in apprenticeships from non-stereotypical groups.

What learners like:

- Support and guidance from training advisors – ‘friendly and helps me with anything’
- The responsive and approachable staff
- The way the train to gain programmes extend and develop skills and knowledge – ‘feedback from assessors is great’
- The way employers treat learners - ‘employers show they have confidence in me’
- Learning while at work and gaining new skills - ‘opportunities to do different things’
- The structure of the programme for business administration - ‘bringing the evidence together at the end ’

What learners think could improve:

- The way key skills are taught - ‘make key skills more interesting’

Sector subject areas

Construction, planning and the built environment

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

16. TRP Ltd has 31 apprentices and seven advanced apprentices in construction following programmes in either decorative, wood or building services occupations. A further seven learners are following Train to Gain programmes. TRP Ltd provides some assessment for key skills but most assessment is carried out through subcontract arrangements with colleges in Guildford, Lambeth, Lewisham and North East Surrey. Most learners are at North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT). A new subcontractor, Skills Centre, has recently begun to assess NVQs in decorative and wood occupations.

Strengths

- Good standard of workplace skills
- Good on-the-job training

Areas for improvement

- Very poor success rates
- Poor assessment practice
- Weak progress reviews
- Slow implementation of actions to improve provision

Achievement and standards

17. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Overall success rates over the three year period from 2004/05 to 2006/07 have dropped to 20%. Construction crafts framework and NVQ success rates are inadequate with none of the 22 learners on programme over the same three year period achieving either of these. Building services apprenticeship framework success rates are also poor and have dropped from a satisfactory level in 2004/05 to 32% below the national average in 2006/07. Current learners are making slow progress in completing NVQs. Key skills and technical certificate success rates are satisfactory.

18. Learners demonstrate good workplace skills. They are confident in their ability to work to the level of skill required by their employers. Employers have sufficient confidence in this ability to let the learners work on complex projects. For example, learners are de-commissioning and installing domestic boilers with minimal supervision.

Quality of provision

19. Overall training and learning are satisfactory. On-the-job training by employers is good. Careful pairing of learners with experienced workers ensures that learners are effectively mentored in the skills they need to develop. Work is well planned and arranged so that learners can practise these skills and incrementally build on experience and knowledge. The assessment of learners' progress on NVQ programmes is inadequate. Learners have had few visits, some none, from the main subcontractor NESCOL, to assess competence in the workplace. In September 2007, NESCOL withdrew assessment of learners on construction programmes. TRP Ltd successfully negotiated with NESCOL to resume NVQ assessment in February 2008 and assessments have taken place in April. However, most learners have not collected any evidence of work carried out in the workplace from the start of their programme. Assessment arrangements with the new Train to Gain subcontractor, Skills Centre are good but it is too early to assess the success of these.
20. Learner's progress reviews are weak. Targets set at reviews are not sufficiently detailed to provide guidance on completion of NVQ units. Targets, where set, are not checked at the next review and issues are not followed through. Building services learners are not encouraged to collect evidence of NVQ competence until they are almost one year into the programme. Reviews inaccurately record progress in terms of percentage completion of NVQs where nothing has been achieved. Learners who lost the services of the NESCOL assessor have not been encouraged by TRP Ltd training advisors to continue to collect evidence of competence. Many opportunities to collect good evidence of competence have been missed. A small number of learners have collected some photographic evidence of competence but this has not been validated and will have to be repeated. The absence, through ill health, of one training adviser has meant that some learners have had insufficient reviews. Building services learners who are out of funding but have not yet completed their framework had no on-site reviews between June 2007 and January 2008.
21. TRP Ltd construction programmes satisfactorily meet the needs of learners and employers. Despite the low success rates, learners are acquiring the skills they need for employment and are progressing either within their current employers' structure or into other employment within the construction industry. Employers get a skilled workforce and their involvement in the development of these skills means they are developed to meet the particular needs of their organisation.
22. Advice guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment satisfactorily identifies learners' individual learning needs. Where these have been identified they have been met either by specialist support at college or personal support from the TRP Ltd training adviser. In one case the highly effective and caring personal support from the training adviser prevented a learner from being excluded from college and losing his employment.

Leadership and management

23. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Success rates have been low for three years. TRP Ltd has identified ongoing assessment issues but has been slow to address these. Discussion with NESOT has only recently identified the shortfall in progress of individual learners. A suitable assessment plan has been agreed to ensure building services learners can complete their frameworks by June. A new provider has recently been found to assess NVQs of the construction crafts learners who have yet to achieve their frameworks.
24. The quality assurance of the learner review process is inadequate. Staff checks paperwork to ensure files are complete but do not check the quality of the content. No observations are carried out to check either the quality of reviews or the work carried out by the subcontractors on behalf of the company. TRP Ltd has also been slow to address a long term staffing problem which has resulted in learners having insufficient reviews with someone who understands their programme.
25. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Most learners have a satisfactory, although limited, understanding of equality and diversity issues which they gain through induction. Training advisors fail to build on this and insufficiently develop a wider understanding at reviews. An increasing number of female learners have been recruited to the new Train to Gain programme.
26. The self-assessment report is satisfactory but overemphasises the success on building services programmes as being satisfactory. A weakness from the previous inspection about inadequate arrangements for work-based assessment has not yet been satisfactorily addressed.

Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

27. TRP Ltd offer apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in business administration, customer service, accountancy and management and Train to Gain training programmes at level 2 and 3. Currently there are eight apprentices, 16 advanced apprentices, nine learners on Train to Gain programmes at level 2, and two at level 3. All learners are employed. Training is mostly carried out on employers' premises except for accountancy learners where TRP Ltd subcontracts this work to Merton and Croydon Colleges.

Strengths

- Very good success rates
- Good progression for learners
- Particularly effective links with employers

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently thorough initial assessment
- Insufficient monitoring of key processes

Achievement and standards

28. Achievement and standards are very good. Success rates have significantly improved since the previous inspection. Overall success rates for business administration advanced apprentices have increased from 25% in 2004/05 to 94% in 2006/07. Learners timely success rate has also significantly improved but and is satisfactory. Learners currently on programme are making good progress. Success rates for the technical certificates and key skills are good. Learners' progress in the workplace is good. Learners are well motivated, with many learners progressing to more responsible positions during their apprenticeship training. Many learners stay with their employers and TRP Ltd to gain the next level of qualification either within the same occupation or with a related apprenticeship to match their increased or different responsibility. TRP Ltd makes good use of the health and safety unit of the qualification to enhance learners' knowledge and understanding and help them adopt safe working practices.

Quality of provision

29. Training and learning are good. Employers work effectively with TRP Ltd to supplement employees learning and development through the Train to Gain programme. Learners are trained well by their employers on-the-job. Training advisors also provide very good coaching and additional advice and guidance to individual learners about their work. Learners are given the opportunity to gain additional qualifications and attend specific training events within their chosen occupation. Employers provide plenty of time and sufficient resources to enable learners to gather appropriate evidence for their portfolios.

The company has very good relationships with senior management in a wide range of employers. TRP Ltd works well with employers to identify learners recruited as potential apprentices for vacancies in their companies.

30. Assessment practice is satisfactory. An appropriate and sufficient variety of evidence is used to demonstrate learners' competence. Staff do not sufficiently highlight where learners could be collecting evidence for assessment and do not discuss enough some aspects of work.
31. TRP Ltd meets the needs of learners well. Opportunities for learners to progress in the workplace is encouraged and supported by employers. TRP Ltd works well with learners, who are recruited but not yet employed or on an apprenticeship, providing good advice and support on interview techniques and curriculum vitae writing.
32. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactory, and completed appropriately. Although employers are asked to comment on progress they are not always present or participate fully. Initial assessment adequately covers learners' literacy and numeracy needs but is insufficiently thorough to fully recognise learners' prior achievements or learning and assessment preferences. Many learners are employed and have been working for their employer for many years. TRP Ltd does not use the opportunity to accredit or recorded in sufficient detail skills already achieved to enable learners to progress more quickly. TRP Ltd staff are well informed of the requirements of the framework achievements and proxy qualifications and these are recorded accordingly in the individual learning plan. Learners are not fully aware of the relevance of this document.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. TRP Ltd have improved arrangements for training and increased the range of qualifications available including additional qualifications since the previous inspection.
34. Training advisors ensure learners are treated well and can achieve their full potential, intervening where appropriate on their behalf. Staff provides learners with a good variety of information in the induction material and guides for their unit about rights and responsibilities to help them gain an understanding about equality of opportunity. Some learners do not fully understand these resources and it is not always referred to during reviews. Most reviews report that there are no equality of opportunity issues since the last review but do not show how learners understanding is extended or broadened.
35. Communications within the small staff team who work with business administration learners are good. However, monitoring of key processes is insufficient. TRP Ltd does not have any formal quality improvement arrangements to monitor the quality of key aspects of programmes such as induction, training, or reviews. Internal verification is carried out once an NVQ unit has been achieved. There is insufficient planning in advance to ensure all assessment decisions cover the range of units and assessors. Feedback to assessors is brief and does not show how assessors can improve record keeping or judgements sufficiently. Service level agreements with the two colleges who work with the accountancy apprentices have not been signed and TRP Ltd has not carried out any formal monitoring. The SAR reflected the main strengths identified on inspection, but did not recognise the two areas of improvements

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider **2005 to 2007**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	16	69	48	31	34
		timely	14	50	31	29	22
	05-06	overall	16	50	52	44	44
		timely	27	19	34	15	27
	06-07	overall	25	84	64	84	58
		timely	26	42	43	42	37
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	64	31	51	30	39
		timely	65	5	29	5	22
	05-06	overall	56	80	58	80	52
		timely	33	15	38	15	34
	06-07	overall	39	64	65	64	61
		timely	48	31	47	31	44

* 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

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'