

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Rochdale Training Association
Date of visit: 10 July 2008

Context

Rochdale Training Association (RTA) has a contract with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide apprenticeships and Train to Gain in engineering, business administration and information and communication technology. RTA also subcontract Train to Gain provision in construction and provides a range of commercially funded short courses. This monitoring visit follows the inspection in November 2007, at which RTA's overall effectiveness, leadership and management and its arrangements equality of opportunity were inadequate. Provision was inadequate in engineering and manufacturing technologies but good in information and communication technology and business administration. Health and social care and construction training continue to be subcontracted to two local providers.

Achievement and standards

How effectively have RTA maintained and improved success rates across apprenticeship provision?	Significant progress
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Overall success rates for all apprenticeships improved slightly from 61% in 2005/06 to 67% in 2006/07. Period nine success rates for 2007/08 show a significant improvement to 86% with good improvements in timely rates. Advanced and apprentice overall success rates improved slightly by 5% and 9% respectively between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Overall success rates have improved significantly to 82% for advanced apprentices and 91% for apprentices up to period nine in 2007/08.

What actions have been taken to improve success rates on engineering apprenticeship programmes?	Insufficient progress
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Engineering apprenticeship overall success rates improved between 2005/06 to 2006/07 from 40% to 61% and to 89% for period nine in 2007/08. However, advanced apprentice success rates declined to 50% as at period nine in 2007/08 from 53% in both 2005/06 and 2006/07. Apprentices are progressing well and

significant numbers are completing within their allotted time. However, advanced apprentice timely success rates, at 18%, are significantly below the national average.

Learners' progress is insufficiently monitored by managers. Staff performance targets agreed and set at appraisal are not consistently monitored or reviewed. Staff have only recently been shown the new measures of success for apprenticeships and the provider intends to provide staff with this information each month. RTA has only recently recruited a new manager and a new chief instructor for engineering with responsibility for establishing quality processes and the monitoring of learners progress.

How effectively has the provider maintained and improved Train to Gain success rates?	Insufficient progress
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Considerable variations exist between the success rate data for Train to Gain learners provided by the LSC gateway and data held by RTA. All sector subject areas on the gateway are below minimum performance levels apart from information and communication technology. However, data held by RTA identifies overall Train to Gain success rates of 84% in 2006/07.

RTA now uses an effective skills evaluation to match optional units to the learners' job role and responsibility. However, no arrangements exist to assess learners' literacy and numeracy levels. Learners who self-refer are supported by an external specialist agency. Currently only two of the 360 learners receive support.

Quality of teaching and learning

What progress has been made to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection the observation of teaching and learning was insufficiently thorough to promote continuous improvement. The post-inspection action plan identifies the need to improve the quality of the process and resolve all aspects of the learner experience, but no detailed action plans or plans to monitor the process exist. Some progress has been made in business administration and information and communication technology with observations of reviews, assessment and plans to work with another training provider. However, little progress has taken place in engineering. No overall policy, procedure or overview of the quality of teaching and learning exists across RTA. No recent training has taken place in the use of observation or co-ordinated action to improve the quality of all aspects of delivery and assessment. RTA does not have a sound procedure to check the quality of teaching and learning in subcontractors or on short courses.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve the management of health and safety for learners?	Significant progress
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RTA now effectively manages, promotes and monitors health and safety. A detailed health and safety policy is in place. Risk assessments have been improved and areas not previously assessed are now included. Improved practice includes the completion of weekly maintenance sheets, accident reports checked against risk assessments, the inclusion of RTA health and safety documentation within the curriculum content and frequent health and safety audits and annual checks of learner placements. Better monitoring of accident reports has resulted in changes in practice. Health and safety is now a standard agenda item at all meetings. The health and safety manager audits all team meetings, providing support and guidance on issues raised and amending practice to improve standards and minimise risk. All staff have had health and safety training in the duty of care. Although improved, the questioning of learners at review is still based on compliance with little emphasis on the promotion of good health and safety practices. RTA has identified this and is developing staff questioning skills. RTA also plans to extend the duty of care training to include learners.

What progress has been made to improve equality and diversity and ensure that RTA now complies with equality and diversity legislation?	Reasonable progress
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RTA has implemented a number of necessary measures designed to resolve the poor promotion of equality and diversity. Local authority experts are actively involved to ensure compliance and understanding of requirements. RTA has a detailed action plan for equality and diversity and a senior manager is working with the local LSC single equality scheme group. Effective initial staff training and a revised induction for learners includes information on all recent legislation. Some good resources have been developed for induction and review. A pilot of sessions on topics such as money management, drugs and sexual health was well received with plans for more sessions. RTA has carried out further actions to widen participation by linking with marketing and local communities and groups. Data is now analysed by gender, ethnicity and disability but no resultant action plan exists based on the findings. The equal opportunities policy remains out of date but is shortly to be revised. A detailed accessibility audit was completed in April 2008 but no resultant action plan is in place as yet.

What progress has RTA made to ensure compliance with safeguarding legislation?	Insufficient progress
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RTA has developed a child protection policy that is currently being finalised after consultation with the Rochdale Child Protection Unit. The existing policy does not

include vulnerable adults. However, the provider is aware of the omission and is planning to rectify this. Two named senior managers are designated child protection officers and are awaiting specialist training planned for September. Staff awareness training has taken place with an external specialist and links are in place with a named child protection officer from the child protection agency. Adequate arrangements are in place for staff awaiting Criminal Records Bureau checks. However, no consideration has been given to how the policy will link with existing policies or how safeguarding will be promoted to new and existing learners.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What impact has the detailed post-inspection action plan had on progress?	Reasonable progress
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RTA has a generally thorough and detailed post inspection action plan, which is being led and managed by the deputy chief executive. This is linked to a quality improvement log and progress monitored by a traffic light system. Some aspects of the action plan are very detailed and progress has been made. Business administration has led on improvements in some key areas but these have yet to be extended to benefit all learners. A number of key targets for improvement have insufficient detail at a leadership and management level to effect organisational improvement. The plan does not use key performance indicators to set or assess progress and new targets, especially where targets have not been met. The quality improvement log identifies possible impacts of actions but does not identify or evaluate the actual impact. All staff are kept up-to-date on progress against the plans with reports to all levels of team/management meetings and the board.

A range of evaluations have been carried out by learners and employers with actions taken to resolve a number of issues.

What progress has been made in improving leadership and management across the organisation?	Insufficient progress
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The management restructure is now almost complete, but progress has been too slow, particularly in engineering, where key posts have only been filled very recently. The new role of deputy chief executive is only part-time with continuing responsibility for a major curriculum area limiting the opportunities to fully embed changes across whole organisation. RTA has appropriately reallocated a number of cross organisational roles such as health and safety, equality and diversity, key skills support with improvements in those areas.

No clear overview of responsibility for quality improvement exists. The deputy chief executive is responsible for the post-inspection action plan and the chief executive for quality improvement with no clear identification of the accountabilities and differences between the two aspects of quality. Some key aspects of quality do not

have a cross-cutting analysis or action plan at senior management level. Some parts of the quality manual have been updated but others have not been revised since 2004. A number of key aspects of the learning process are not included in the quality manual, for example for observation of teaching and learning, assessment of and provision for learners' support needs in literacy and numeracy and safeguarding.

Data is still not routinely used to identify trends or the impact of changes. New measures of success are not routinely used or understood by staff. Train to Gain data held by RTA differs significantly from that held by the LSC.

