

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: UK Training & Development

Date of visit: 5 August 2008

Context

UK Training and Development (UKTD) is a privately owned training company, set up in 1998 and based in Hemel Hempstead. It contracts with five local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), namely Hertfordshire, London West, Surrey, Berkshire and Milton Keynes, and Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, to provide work-based learning for young people. The company mainly provides hairdressing training but also has two advanced apprentices in business management. Approximately 9% of UKTD's training is privately funded.

UKTD currently has 273 hairdressing learners, all of them employed. Of these, 229 are apprentices and 44 are advanced apprentices. Most assessment and training is completed in the workplace, although UKTD has recently opened an academy to deliver off-the-job theory and practical training. UKTD has a scheme of work that lists the training that should take place in employer's salons, with responsibility for its delivery shared between employers and UKTD's staff. At salons where there are no work-based assessors, UKTD carries out the salon assessments. UKTD has 14 field-based training consultants, 6 field-based skills for life consultants and 15 office staff, internal verifiers and the management team based at its offices in Hemel Hempstead. It also employs 14 training consultants who work directly with hairdressing learners in the workplace and who are responsible for managing all of the learners' training. Support for key skills training and additional learning support is provided by a team of six specialist skills for life training consultants. A further team of 15 staff with varied duties form the team. A field manager monitors the work of the training staff and the progress of learners.

UKTD was reinspected in February 2007. At that time, its leadership and management, arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity were judged satisfactory. Provision in retail and commercial enterprise, specifically in hairdressing, was also satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

How effectively has the provider maintained and further improved their achievement rates?	Reasonable progress
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At UKTD's previous reinspection, success rates for advanced apprenticeships were poor. The provider has made reasonable progress in improving success rates across all programmes. In 2005/06, only 36% of the advanced apprentices succeeded in achieving their framework. Success rates for these learners declined in 2006/07 to 21%, which is very low and substantially below the national average of 51%.

UKTD has been successful in improving overall success rates for advanced apprentices in 2007/08 but they still remain low at 55%. Timely success rates are also very low at 35%. Many learners leave the programme without completing all components of their apprenticeships. In the current year, 80% of the advanced apprentices that left the programme had completed their NVQ only.

Success rates for apprentices remained stable but low at 51% in 2005/06 and 50% in 2006/07. This is below the national average of 59%. Success rates for these learners increased to 57% in the current year, although this is still low. Timely success rates also remain low in 2007/08 at 43%.

Since 2007, the provider has improved the effectiveness of their initial assessment and learner induction processes. A specialist skills for life tutor carries out these processes now and provides a more accurate diagnosis of learners' support needs. The use of the management information systems has also been further developed. UKTD are now able to review and monitor learner progress more effectively during their monthly meetings.

The teaching and learning observation system

What actions have been taken to develop the teaching and learning observation system?	Insufficient progress
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At its reinspection, UKTD had begun to develop a teaching and learning observation system. It has made insufficient progress in fully establishing this process. Too few teaching and learning observations have been carried out in the last 18 months. UKTD's observation plan is not effective. It does not include both the provider's and the employers' practical training. UKTD does not moderate observations of teaching and learning. Overall, the current observations are not sufficiently challenging or thorough. They do not always identify areas for development. If areas for improvement are identified, they are not followed up.

The use of target-setting

How effectively has the provider developed the use of target-setting?	Reasonable progress
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Target-setting for learners was poor at the previous inspection. The provider has made reasonable progress in rectifying this weakness. Since the reinspection, staff have been developed to help them set specific and measurable targets. Training consultants review these targets with learners every three weeks during their salon visits. They use effective systems for monitoring learners' progress. This progress is regularly reviewed during workplace review meetings. Internal verifiers monitor learners' progress more thoroughly. However, UKTD has only recently begun to monitor target-setting by all training consultants to identify areas of good practice or concern and has not yet assessed the quality of this aspect of its provision.

The use of feedback

Has the provider improved the use of feedback on training?	Insufficient progress
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At its reinspection, UKTD's collection and use of feedback on training was unsystematic. It has made insufficient progress in rectifying this weakness. It issued a learner questionnaire following the induction of learners in January 2008. However, the number of learners sampled was too small to identify meaningful trends. Recently, it held individual meetings with a small number of employers but the information obtained did not include feedback on the quality of training it provides. In the near future, UKTD is planning to launch the use of questionnaires for all learners at designated stages of their learning programme.

The promotion of equality of opportunity

Has the provider promoted and encouraged under-represented groups to join hairdressing programmes?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous reinspection UKTD had not taken sufficient action to promote and encourage members of under-represented groups to join its hairdressing programmes. This was also a weakness at its earlier inspection. The provider has made insufficient progress in rectifying this weakness.

It has produced and distributed new marketing literature targeting under-represented groups but these actions are very recent and it is too soon to judge their impact. Targets set by the organisation to recruit from under-represented ethnic groups have been exceeded for some ethnic groups. However, it is not clear if this is the result of any action taken by UKTD, or whether the improvement is sustainable.

The recruitment of men has declined to 6% in the current year, from 13% in 2004/05. Although UKTD is planning a joint project with Connexions to challenge stereotypical views of the hairdressing industry, UKTD does not place sufficient emphasis on the internal and external promotion of equality and diversity.

The self-assessment process

How effective are the self-assessment process and the post inspection plan?	Insufficient progress
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UKTD's self-assessment process includes staff fully and it is largely accurate. The post-inspection action plan does not sufficiently specify the target date for the completion of each objective. The quality improvement plan includes all the identified weaknesses at the reinspection. However, until recently, it has not prioritised these clearly. The plan does not focus effectively on the key aspects of provision that need improving. The quality plan has been ineffective in making timely progress across all the weaknesses identified at the reinspection.