

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Positive Outcomes  
Date of visit: 6 June 2008

### Context

Positive Outcomes Limited (PO) based in Mansfield is a privately owned training organisation providing work-based learning apprenticeship programmes in the East Midlands for around 450 learners with 190 companies. At the previous inspection in 2006 overall effectiveness, leadership and management, equality of opportunity and business administration and law were all graded satisfactory. Since the beginning of 2007, PO has embarked on a business growth strategy and now has contracts with national companies to provide training in other regions including London, the Northwest and West Midlands. These new contracts include Train to Gain and also include retail training programmes.

### Achievement and standards

To what extent have framework success rates increased since the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the previous inspection success rates were low but improving. Since then steady improvement in overall framework success rates has been maintained, broadly in line with the national trend. By the end of 2006/07 overall success rates for advanced apprentices in business administration and law were 55% and apprentices 57%, which are both just below the national average. In-year performance data, which is not validated, indicates the improvement trend continues with some evidence that the rate of improvement is increasing. Strategies are in place to continue improvement although the introduction of key performance indicators is only just underway.

What actions have been taken to redress the slow progress of some learners and with what effect?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the previous inspection a key weakness was the slow progress made by some learners with records supplied by PO indicating that 30% of learners were not completing within planned completion times. The position has improved since then and currently the figure has been reduced to 13%, although for apprentices the timely rate of completion remains below the national average. PO has addressed the

issue of learner progress and introduced improved approaches to training, employer engagement, assessment and progress monitoring. There is evidence in the 2007/08 in-year performance records that these strategies are having an impact and more learners are completing within their planned completion date.

## Quality of training

How have strategies to involve employers in training progressed since the previous inspection?	Reasonable progress
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The lack of employer involvement in training was a weakness at the previous inspection. Reviews did not involve employers sufficiently and planned co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training was weak. Since then improvements have been made and a strategy for continuing to improve employer engagement with better and more frequent communication is well under way. The provider now engages strategically with national companies to provide training. Service agreements are used to support employer engagement. The new Business Development Unit is helping to build closer relationships with employers using improved communications systems. Learners' plans are discussed more with employers than was previously the case although recording is underdeveloped. The impact of the changes made to improve reviews is not yet fully evaluated, although informal comments are collected.

## Leadership and management

What has been done to improve the reinforcement of equality of opportunity at review?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection reported a lack of consistency in the testing and reinforcing of learners' understanding of rights and responsibilities in the workplace. PO has introduced a new approach to the promotion and reinforcement. Learners are given training on a range of equality of opportunity issues and their progress is tested and monitored carefully throughout the stages of their training programme with additional training provided when required. The provider has made good progress in developing both new systems and training resources however, they are not yet fully implemented. Handouts and materials are learner friendly but there is insufficient emphasis on cultural diversity or issues related to some of the more recent equality legislation.

## Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effective is self-assessment?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the previous inspection self-assessment was judged satisfactory but with some critical comments in the text of the report which indicated the report lacked detailed analysis and insufficient use of data to support judgements.

Improvements have been made. Data is now used to support judgements and there is more detailed analysis and evaluation although the way data is presented is still not clear in some cases. The current report does not comment sufficiently well on equality of opportunity or grade this contributory area.

How effective is quality improvement?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection judged that PO was in a good position to make improvements. Since then improvements have been made and these have impacted positively on performance with a steady improving trend broadly in line with national trends. Quality assurance arrangements have been reviewed and improved. Feedback analysis is improving and overtime will provide PO with a more systematic approach capable of measurement. Although the current quality improvement plan is fit for purpose, analysis of performance with due regard to benchmarks is lacking.