

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Roundabout Training Ltd
Date of visit: 15 August 2008

Context

Roundabout Training Ltd (RTL) is a private training provider based in Derby. It provides literacy and numeracy courses at Level 1 and 2 and a range of NVQs in early years care, playwork, customer service and team leading. RTL receives employer responsive funding for Train to Gain from Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Black Country, Staffordshire, and Birmingham and Solihull local Learning and Skills Councils (LSC's). RTL also provides some learning funded by local authorities and childcare partnerships and private employers.

Since April 2007, 121 learners have enrolled on programmes. Currently 31 learners are in learning. They are employed with 12 employers in the childcare and cleaning industry. RTL has three permanent and nine associate members of staff.

In February 2007 the Adult Learning Inspectorate inspected RTL's employer training pilot provision in literacy and numeracy and early years care. At this inspection, the overall effectiveness of the provision was satisfactory, the provider had sufficient capacity to improve and the inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. Early years care was good and literacy and numeracy provision was satisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity were satisfactory but quality improvement was unsatisfactory.

The provision and its delivery have substantially changed since the previous inspection. Train to Gain provision has expanded to include NVQs in playwork, customer services and team leading. RTL has secured a further contract to deliver employer responsive funding learndirect programmes from August 2008.

Achievement and standards

What progress has the provider made to the good success rates identified at the previous inspection and achievement and standards in the newly established sector subject areas?	Significant progress
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Retention and achievement rates in literacy and numeracy are high. Success rates are very high in literacy at Level 1 and 2 and numeracy Level 1. Over half of the NVQ

learners in early years care achieve their main qualifications as well as a qualification in either literacy and numeracy or both. Learners on early years care programmes stay the full length of the programme and make progress expected of them.

Retention rates in the newly established NVO customer services programme are low. Up to 40% of learners have left, partly due to job losses in a franchise company. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

What improvements has the provider made to improve the initial assessment process?	Significant progress
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At the time of the previous inspection, the use of initial assessment to plan learning was inadequate. RTL now use a variety of assessment tools including learner self-assessment and learning style questionnaires to identify needs. Assessment materials are closely related to the vocabulary used in workplace manuals and instructions. This helps learners realise the importance of improving their literacy and numeracy and improves motivation substantially. Learners receive targeted help to improve in specific areas such as spelling, technical vocabulary and fractions and percentages.

What progress has the provider made in developing and implementing a skills for life strategy?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, the development of a skills for life strategy was slow. Since then the provider has employed a well qualified and experienced external consultant to provide consultancy and support on skills for life issues. She provides timely help to the two staff who deliver literacy and numeracy in the workplace. RTL has purchased a good number of learning resources directly relevant to the subject sector areas it offers, including contextualised learning materials. Learners receive good support for literacy and numeracy development alongside their main NVO. The pace of achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications is good. Most learners achieve one or more qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy in addition to their vocational qualification.

What progress has the provider made to improve the focus on learning?	Reasonable progress
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RTL has made reasonable progress to improve the focus on learning, a key challenge at the previous inspection. Action planning to remedy this is thorough. RTL now involves learners and their employers fully at most stages of the learning process. Most learners are highly motivated. Information, advice and guidance are now systematic. Findings from thorough initial assessment are used effectively in planning extremely flexible programmes delivered in the workplaces. Feedback on assessment during programmes is timely and appropriate. It helps learners to identify the

progress they have made and how their skills and competencies link to the overall scheme of their NVQ. Learners routinely include a broad range of evidence in their NVQ portfolios. Tutors provide good quality study support promptly and flexibly. Learners can obtain support 12 hours per day for 7 days a week.

Induction is greatly improved. At induction, tutors clearly outline what learners can expect from RTL. However, they do not sufficiently specify their expectations of learners. Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory but over general. They do not sufficiently encourage learners to reflect on the uses of their newly developed skills or knowledge.

Equality of opportunity and diversity

What progress has the provider made in monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection the providers' approach to equality of opportunity was judged to be satisfactory but the reinforcement of equality of opportunity was a weakness. Since then RTL has raised the levels of awareness among its staff and learners on disability and ethnic diversity. Learners now have a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities and routinely challenge unreasonable behaviour, bullying and harassment, including poor treatment at work. RTL has conducted a thorough review to identify further opportunities within its training and assessment activities to incorporate equality of opportunity and diversity. For example, lesson plans now include equality and diversity issues. RTL continues to monitor the participation levels of learners from groups traditionally under-represented in learning. It has taken effective action to increase the number of male learners enrolled on its play work programmes. However, RTL does not conduct routine analysis of the performance of those from traditionally under-represented groups. The ethnicity of a large number of its learners is unknown. RTL did not fully explain to learners the rationale behind the collection of such data and many did not complete this part of the form.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the provider made to improve the effectiveness of the quality improvement arrangements, including development planning?	Insufficient progress
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The inspection team judged quality improvement as inadequate at the previous inspection. Although the provider has made significant improvements to some aspects of the provision since then improvement processes are not sufficiently systematic. RTL has policies and procedures for a range of quality assurance activities but those for assuring the quality of key aspects of the learners' experience are incomplete. RTL's arrangements to observe teaching and learning sessions are

ineffective. RTL does not conduct sufficient analysis of data to set targets to improve learners' attendance or achievement of qualifications. RTL has recognised this area for improvement and has appointed a staff member with specific responsibility for quality improvement. Much work is in progress but it is too early to judge the impact.

What progress is made to improve the reliability of the self-assessment process?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, inspectors judged the self-assessment report to be insufficiently evaluative. The process did not fully include the views of employers. RTL has taken effective steps to include the views of employers and learners, for example carrying out a telephone survey of those employers who have not returned questionnaires. Learner views are now collected at various stages, including assessment and training events. The current self-assessment report is detailed and descriptive but insufficiently evaluative in parts. The development plan is clear and closely linked to quality improvement measures. It is regularly monitored and includes appropriate actions and timescales. However, RTL has not completed all the actions within the timescale it has specified.