

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Community Training Services Ltd
Date of visit: 26 June 2008

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in December 2006, at which Community Training Service Ltd (CTS) was graded as good for leadership and management and its quality improvement arrangements and satisfactory for equality of opportunity. Provision was satisfactory in employability training.

CTS is a private training company established in 1999. It has contracts with South Yorkshire and Yorkshire and Humberside Learning and Skills Councils to provide entry to employment (E2E), apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. It is a subcontractor for A4E and provides a range of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programmes.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in improving outcomes on E2E programmes?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection in December 2006, positive outcomes for learners on the E2E programme were satisfactory at 49% and just above the national rate. Since the inspection CTS have introduced a number of successful strategies to support increased numbers of learners to stay on programme and achieve positive progression outcomes. Over three years, progression rates have improved significantly faster than the national rate. Currently 61% of learners have progressed into employment or further education and all have achieved further qualifications whilst on the programme.

New Deal job outcomes are above contractual targets and qualification success rates are good. In 2007, CTS extended provision to include apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. It is too early in the programme for learners to achieve their qualifications. However, in-year retention rates for both programmes are very high at over 95%.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to ensure that training is planned to meet the individual needs of learners?	Reasonable progress
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CTS has made reasonable progress in planning training to meet individual learner needs. On the E2E programme at the previous inspection too much use was made of paper-based learning resources in induction and group training sessions, and some of the paper-based resources were dull and uninspiring. CTS has made reasonable progress in improving the delivery methods of the E2E programme by including more practical activities. Trainers use a range of activities to motivate and interest learners. For example, learners baked chocolate brownies in a numeracy session to help them understand the numerical concepts of quantity and proportion. Resources have improved. Handouts include a range of clear visual images to add interest. Lesson plans list a range of interesting activities for each session. However, they do not always identify how the differing abilities of the learners will be met.

CTS has made reasonable progress to improve the planning for and recording of New Deal participants' individual barriers to employment. All learners are interviewed and an appropriate assessment is made regarding the level and extent of their development needs to prepare them for employment. Learners are rated on a colour coded scale of red, amber and green and careful thought is given to the most appropriate programme to develop their skills and confidence. CTS is participating in a useful pilot programme using a computer based assessment tool where learners self-assess their confidence levels and abilities in a range of every day situations. Learners also use a learndirect career identification programme at induction to help provide them with direction and career aspirations.

What progress has been made in improving target-setting at learner reviews?	Reasonable progress
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The review process has improved. The targets set in learning plans are now individualised. Monthly progress reviews emphasise social as well as vocational targets and progress against targets is followed up at each review. Staff have attended external training on the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA). In house training has taken place to help trainers improve and set precise and measurable targets. The self-assessment report acknowledges that whilst there has been marked progress in this area, it still remains an area for improvement, particularly for E2E programmes.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to ensure business development is responsive to local and national priorities?	Significant progress
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CTS has made significant progress in developing programmes, particularly for socially and economically disadvantaged learners of all age groups. Strong partnership working has been maintained since the previous inspection. The company contributes well to the social inclusion agenda of their funding bodies and of Sheffield City Council. For example, through the Sheffield City Stewardship programme in partnership with Kier Sheffield LLP and Sheffield Homes they provide valuable opportunities for E2E learners to develop employment-related skills. The company is represented on a wide range of strategic partnership meetings. Staff work with a wide range of external agencies and are particularly responsive and prompt in using these contacts to meet learners' social needs. The business plan is well considered and has effectively planned for the growth. New programmes have been added to help contribute to the Government's agenda of improving work force qualifications up to level 3 through Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes. Learner numbers have increased from 169 in 2006 to 630 currently. CTS has made good investment in increased staffing, and high quality resources provide a conducive and professional learning environment.

What progress has been made to improve learners' awareness of equality of opportunity?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection actions to raise learners' awareness of equality of opportunity were ineffective. Reasonable progress has been made to raise learners' awareness. The induction programme has been reviewed and learners now benefit from a range of activities to improve their understanding of equality and diversity and to challenge their attitudes. Equal opportunities are discussed at learner reviews where prompt cards are used to instigate discussion. All lesson plans contain a prompt to remind tutors to include equality and diversity in their planned activities. However, trainers do not always state explicitly how they will promote equality and diversity through the planned activities.

What progress has been made in further improving arrangements for observations of teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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CTS has made reasonable progress in improving arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning. CTS has a well planned programme of lesson observations. Staff are observed twice a year and observations result in clear feedback and actions to improve. Training and support is offered to develop staff skills where areas for improvement are identified. Two managers have been trained to observe learning sessions which extends the observation team to four. However, CTS insufficiently

identifies best practice, particularly where performance is judged to be outstanding, to share with staff. The grades of the observations are not analysed to allow the company to set improvement targets for the following year. Action plans are not formally signed off by the quality manager to ensure that the actions have been met. Currently, no written quality procedure is in place to detail the process and possible outcomes of the observation or to explain to them what to do if they do not agree with the results.

What progress has been made in improving the self-assessment process and development planning?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the self-assessment process was consultative and sufficiently critical. CTS has further developed the process. All staff contribute to the findings in the report. Feedback from employers and learners is used well. The report is very thorough and judgements are supported by clear evidence. The associated development plan is monitored closely and updated quarterly and has been effective in improving many key areas for improvement. However, a minority of actions have not been achieved within the set timescale and it is not clear from the plan what further action will be taken. It is not clear whether the timescales set are for the review or completion of the objectives.