

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: TNG
Date of visit: 18 November 2008

Context

The monitoring visit follows the inspection of TNG in August 2007, at which the effectiveness of provision, capacity to improve, leadership and management and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. Provision in health, public services and care was also satisfactory.

Since the inspection, the number and range of contracts has increased. TNG now has Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contracts for Train to Gain, apprenticeships, entry to employment, skills for jobs, adult learning accounts, pre-learning apprenticeships and employer support programmes. As of 6 of November, TNG had 2580 LSC-funded learners compared with 1255 at the time of the previous inspection. The number of Train to Gain learners had increased from 813 to 1584 while the number of apprenticeships had declined from 356 to 191. Nine subcontractors deliver training to 661 learners on Train to Gain and skills for jobs programmes. Over 90% of TNG's Train to Gain provision remains in the care sector.

TNG operates as two regions, north and south, with 55 local centres. It employs approximately 600 staff. The LSC provision is located across the UK with clusters in London and the South East, Midlands and the North. Each area has its own characteristics and provision is arranged to reflect local circumstances.

Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to the overall success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices?	Reasonable progress
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Overall success rates were judged to be poor at the previous inspection. TNG has made reasonable progress in rectifying this area for improvement. Overall framework success rates on apprenticeships improved from 29% in 2006/07 to 43% in 2007/08. However, they remain significantly below national averages. TNG recognised that success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships for children's care, learning and development in London were particularly poor. They have withdrawn the programmes in this region while they review staffing and delivery processes. Apprenticeships continue to be offered in other LSC areas including Berkshire and Leicestershire where overall success rates have improved to 66% and 57% in 2007/08 respectively. TNG is increasing the range of programmes it offers to ensure

there are suitable progression opportunities for learners. Relevant level 1 courses are now available to E2E learners and pre-learning apprenticeships are offered in the Midlands.

How much progress has been made in improving the timely success rates for learners?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, the timely progress of learners was an area for improvement. TNG's self-assessment report recognises that it has made insufficient progress in rectifying this and that timely success rates remain a key area for improvement. Timely success rates for apprenticeships are still low, with a small improvement from 16% in 2006/07 to 23% in 2007/08. On Train to Gain programmes, TNG successfully sustained the good overall success rates of 79% in 2006/07 and 82% in 2007/08. During this time the number of learners increased significantly. However, timely success rates on Train to Gain declined from 53% in 2006/07 to 32% in 2007/08. TNG has analysed the various success rates and identified several qualifications and subcontractors where timely success rates are particularly low. TNG is either working with its subcontractors to improve timely completion or has agreed to run down the contracts.

The quality of provision

What progress has been made to address target-setting for learners during reviews?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, the targets set for learners, during reviews, were insufficiently clear or useful. TNG has made insufficient progress in rectifying this area for improvement. It has recognised the need to reconsider the delivery processes and documentation used for work-based learning programmes. A full evaluation of all the documents, with effective involvement from staff, has resulted in new individual learning plans and progress review forms. Staff training in the use of these forms is taking place. Currently, the targets set during reviews remain insufficiently clear or useful for learners. Individual learning plans do not always specify the theory training a learner will receive or when it will take place. Expected end dates are sometimes the same for all aspects of a learner's programme. Three progress reviews are planned for each Train to Gain learner. The second review does not always state whether previous actions have been completed or confirm when the next or final review will take place. New targets and actions often focus only on the next assessment visit. There is no formal process to enable the skills for life tutor to provide progress information on those learners who are receiving additional support.

Leadership and Management

How much progress has been made to increase the amount and use of management information?	Reasonable progress
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The use of management information was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. TNG has made reasonable progress in rectifying this. Following the previous inspection TNG appointed a management information manager and invested in systems to allow all databases to be combined and co-ordinated. TNG now prepares useful reports to monitor and review monthly and cumulative key performance indicators, analysed by different contracts and regions. These reports provide managers with a much clearer understanding of performance and areas for improvement. In addition to this more readily available management information, performance managers now meet with assessors every month to discuss the progress of each learner. Staff have a much greater focus on, and awareness of, the need to achieve performance targets and timely success. TNG plans to develop comparative measures to monitor trends and provide more detailed analysis for different groups of learners.

How effectively has TNG improved the level of employer engagement?	Reasonable progress
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Employer engagement was satisfactory at the previous inspection. TNG has made reasonable progress in improving this aspect of its provision. Improved communications with employers ensure that employers know what to expect from TNG. Initial advice and guidance of learners has also improved, with referral to other providers where TNG does not have appropriate provision. This helps to meet employers' needs more effectively. Employers now have service level agreements and complete an organisational needs analysis to help improve TNG's understanding of their needs. TNG's employer engagement team meetings focus on delivery and support for employers. The results of an employer survey have been analysed well and positive action has been taken. Quarterly regional employer newsletters focus on the support and training that is available as well as information on learner success stories. A new employer engagement strategy has identified regional discrepancies and opportunities to engage employers more effectively, both nationally and locally.

How effective are the findings and feedback, following observations, on improving teaching and learning?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, findings from the observation of teaching and learning were too descriptive, identified normal practice and strengths, and were not summarised for sharing with staff. TNG has made reasonable progress to improve this aspect of provision. A new national observation scheme has been introduced

that is well understood by staff and focused on improvement. Observation includes all activities that impact on learners, in addition to teaching. Annual graded observations are subject to an improved moderation process. A team of trained observers carries out observations. A thorough and fair appeals procedure for disputed grades has helped to focus on improving teaching. Thorough moderation has identified development trends, such as the need for staff training in differentiation and changes to session planning documents. Some staff have been placed on certificated teaching courses as a result. Staff whose graded sessions are inadequate receive development support and additional observations to follow up their progress. Although a full annual cycle of the observation programme has not been completed the system is well implemented, and focuses closely on improving teaching.

What progress has been made in implementing a company-wide approach to equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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Equality of opportunity was satisfactory at the previous inspection. TNG has recently taken a new approach and now allocates responsibility for equality and diversity jointly to human resources and quality improvement teams, to ensure that both learners and staff are included. All staff carry out online equality and diversity training, which is available at three levels; this is an improvement since the previous inspection when training was being introduced at only two levels. TNG has launched a new equality and diversity forum, reporting at board level, to refocus TNGs' approach to equality and diversity. The forum focuses on four aspects of provision – internal procedures, production of data on learners so that centres 'know their learners', promotion of equality to learners and evaluation of mandatory staff training to develop it further. Equality data is now being produced for centres and managers are being supported in its use.

TNG has sharpened its focus on safeguarding. It has appointed a manager for the area. A new safeguarding poster for learners is being introduced that provides clear information for learners on what constitutes safeguarding issues and how to report them, including a free-phone contact number. The staff newsletter includes a section from the safeguarding officer to help raise staff awareness and other articles highlight the work of the equality and diversity forum.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effectively has TNG developed self-assessment and development planning?	Reasonable progress
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TNG has made significant investment in establishing new quality improvement policies and procedures, and provided new staffing structures to support their implementation. After the previous inspection, TNG decided that a new approach to quality improvement was required. It appointed a new quality director in November

2007 to improve progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Although not yet fully established, quality improvement initiatives are having a positive impact in several areas of the business. Managers at centre level feel better supported in the self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes. TNG has implemented a 'whole provider approach' to gathering feedback from learners and employers. The self-assessment process is now more focused on the performance of learners, and more inclusive, following the introduction of staff questionnaires and clear guidance on making judgements. Several phases of moderation help managers to make appropriate use of evidence and data. The format of the self-assessment report reflects current inspection reports and includes safeguarding. It makes good use of information on satisfactory aspects of provision, as well as strengths and areas for improvement and is now more evaluative.