

Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd

Inspection date

19 September 2008

Inspection number

329325

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Retailing and wholesaling
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd (BMR) was set up in 2002 to offer training in retail skills for a number of different multi-national companies. The provider operates from one office in Telford, Shropshire. BMR contracts currently with four Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), of which Shropshire LSC is the lead, to offer Train to Gain and apprenticeship provision, almost all of which is in retailing and wholesaling and business administration, management, team leading and customer service. BMR gained its first contract for business, administration and law apprenticeships and a new contract for retailing and wholesaling apprenticeships during the latter part of 2007/08. Contracts for Train to Gain started at various times between 2006/07 and 2007/08. Many of the current apprentices and Train to Gain learners had enrolled only recently on programmes at the time of the inspection. BMR focuses its provision in four regional areas across England, which are the North West, the South East, Greater London and the West Midlands. More than 80% of the learners are on programmes in the latter two regions.
2. At the time of the inspection, there were 89 apprentices, of whom 21 were retailing apprentices and 68 were business administration apprentices. The numbers of learners on Train to Gain in these two areas were 21 and 42, respectively. Three-quarters of the current learners are women and 16% come from a minority ethnic background. The inspection graded the retail and wholesaling and business, administration and law Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes and incorporated judgements on the small amount of Train to Gain provision in cleaning.
3. The senior management team comprises a managing director, operations manager, business development manager and a projects manager. They are responsible for a team of specialist managers, regional internal verifiers, a mobile training unit and seven assessors.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Retailing and warehousing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. The retail and wholesaling and business, administration and law programmes are both satisfactory. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory, as are leadership and management and equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. BMR demonstrates that it has satisfactory capacity to improve. It is not possible to make a judgement about trends over time in success rates, but Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory and retention to date on apprenticeship programmes is good. Some business administration learners are making slow progress towards completing their qualification. It was also not possible to compare the inspection grade profile with previous published reports or to judge the extent to which BMR has rectified the areas for improvement in the previous inspection report, as the provider has not been inspected before. Financial performance and stability are good. Most staff are receptive to new ideas and feedback from inspectors on the quality of the provision, but a few are insufficiently critical and do not have enough awareness of what improvements are required. The arrangements for quality improvement are insufficiently thorough. BMR had resolved some of the areas for improvement identified in the 2006/07 self-assessment report by the time it wrote an updated report in June 2008, but others remain, as identified by inspectors at the time of the inspection.
6. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is reasonably inclusive, but BMR only involves staff at the outset of the process to ascertain their initial views. The provider incorporates learners' and employers' views well as part of the process and uses accurate data appropriately to support judgements on achievements. The evaluation of some important parts of the provision is insufficient, such as the development of learners' skills and the quality of training and there is too much repetition in the most recent report of the same points. Inspectors' grades matched all of those in the report, as did many of the judgements, but inspectors identified a small number of additional strengths and areas for improvement. The process does not sufficiently identify differences in the quality of the two sector subject areas or in the performance of different regions. Managers monitor and update the quality improvement plan, but some of the actions and completion dates are not sufficiently precise.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' skills and knowledge
- Good employer responsiveness
- Successful strategies to diversify the training provision

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient monitoring of learners' progress
- Ineffective planning of some individual learning
- Insufficiently thorough quality improvement arrangements

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Achievement and standards are satisfactory, as identified through self-assessment. Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory overall, but good in retail and wholesaling where both the overall and timely success rates were 75% in 2007/08. Retail apprenticeship success rates were low in 2006/07, but this was mainly due to the unforeseen withdrawal of most of the learners from training when an employer sold part of their business. It is too early to judge the performance of the retail and business administration apprenticeship programmes which started in March 2008, but retention to date is high. BMR analyses recruitment and withdrawal patterns for learners from different backgrounds, but does not yet have sufficient performance data over time to identify any meaningful trends.
8. Learners on all programmes develop good work related skills and knowledge. They improve their performance at work and enhance their supervisory skills and opportunities for promotion. Standards of learners' work in portfolios are satisfactory. Some learners on business administration programmes make slow progress towards completing their qualifications.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as is the standard of training overall. Many learners benefit from assessors' good coaching and support in the workplace and assessment practices are generally satisfactory. Planning of learning is ineffective for some learners on business administration programmes and formal target-setting is insufficiently detailed for retail apprentices.
10. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. As identified by BMR through self-assessment, employer responsiveness is particularly good in retail and staff plan their visits flexibly to suit the needs of businesses and learners.
11. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Assessors spend a lot of time supporting learners in the workplace, as most of them never visit BMR's offices. Learners have an appropriate understanding of the support available to them, which staff reinforce and check during their frequent visits to employers. Learners receive appropriate advice on further training and promotion opportunities at work.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

12. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as identified through self-assessment. Strategies to diversify the business into new areas of work have been successful following the sudden termination of the previous retail apprenticeship contract with Texaco after the company which took them over decided to carry out their own training of employees. This contract accounted for 65% of BMR's training portfolio. Managers have strived successfully to build new relationships and to maintain a viable business over the last two years. BMR has worked closely with four different LSCs and a number of colleges to develop Train to Gain provision across four different regions and to introduce a business administration apprenticeship programme. The profile of companies that BMR works with has changed dramatically over the last 18 months and now includes a very wide range of small, medium-sized and large organisations in different business sectors. The provider has been involved in a very successful initiative with Texaco to develop a mobile training unit which delivers bespoke training programmes for staff working in petrol stations, some of which is mandatory for the industry. BMR ensures that employers are instrumental in planning the training they want. The delivery of training and assessment is very flexible to suit employers' needs, particularly where employees work at nights or at the weekend.
13. Support for staff is good. Many of the staff work a long way from BMR's head office and do not have a regional base. In many cases, they have to work at weekends or at night. Managers support them well with a range of resources to carry out their role effectively. They ensure they are available at times when staff might want to contact them with any issues regarding training and/or assessment. The management style is supportive and consultative. Staff have the flexibility to support other colleagues who work in different regions where necessary. BMR has made a number of good staff appointments with suitable expertise to enable it to take on new areas of work. Staff take part in a wide range of useful internal and external training events and BMR funds its employees to gain work related and teaching qualifications, as well as to carry out professional updating. Appraisals for staff have a strong focus on continuing professional development, but do not always identify how staff will bring about improvements to the training programmes.
14. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Staff have a good understanding of what equality of opportunity means for BMR's learners. The provider's equal opportunities policy is detailed and updated annually to reflect changes in legislation. BMR checks and develops learners' understanding of equality of opportunity at induction and shares this information with employers. The reinforcement of equality of opportunity at reviews is appropriate and arranged so that learners can talk freely about any issues they may have at work. Assessors do not always record discussions of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity in sufficient detail during reviews. Employers value the support and training they receive from BMR to develop their own equal opportunities policies and knowledge. All staff take part in annual equality and diversity training and are tested to assess their understanding. Contracts are too recent for the provider to have sufficient data to analyse

the performance of different groups of learners. The provider has used this analysis well to identify strategies to increase the numbers of women and black and minority ethnic learners in Train to Gain. At the time of the inspection, 16% of the learners were from a minority ethnic background.

15. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. BMR has appropriate policies and procedures to report any concerns about the welfare of learners. Managers maintain a central record of checks carried out for all relevant staff.
16. BMR does not have a sufficiently well developed strategy to support learners with literacy, language and/or numeracy needs. BMR has identified this area for improvement through self-assessment. Initial assessment is thorough and has identified a small number of learners who require additional learning support. The process to encourage learners to take up support is ineffective and almost all of the learners decline the offer of any help with their skills for life. Some learners and employers make their own arrangements for literacy and numeracy support and/or receive appropriate informal support from assessors. Staff are not clear about the level of support learners need to achieve their key skills. BMR does not have any staff with sufficient expertise to support learners with identified needs, but is currently developing a strategy to provide external support.
17. The arrangements for quality improvement are insufficiently thorough. Where staff identify actions during meetings, they follow them up thoroughly at subsequent meetings. BMR has an annual quality improvement cycle, but the procedures for each of its constituent parts are not always sufficiently effective. Monitoring of data at staff meetings and audits of learners' paperwork do not identify the slow progress for some learners or the insufficiently detailed target-setting. Procedures to observe background theory training are not clear. Managers do not have an accurate view of the quality of training and written records of observations are too general. They do not identify the specific strengths or areas for improvement in training. The use of learners' and employers' feedback to bring about improvements is satisfactory. Not enough good practice is shared.

What learners like:

- 'I have really enjoyed the programme'
- Achieving a qualification related to their job roles
- Broadening of managerial skills – 'It developed my confidence and ability to lead people'
- Projects that give learners something to focus on
- Flexibility and enthusiasm of the assessors
- Good support and individual help – 'The individual support that has suited me'
- 'Improving my English'

What learners think could improve:

- Support from some employers to work towards a qualification
- Over-reliance on testing during some parts of the training
- Amount of interaction and challenge during workshops

Sector subject areas

Retailing and wholesaling

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

18. At the time of the inspection, BMR provided National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for 21 Train to Gain learners and apprenticeships for 19 apprentices and two advanced apprentices in retailing and wholesaling. Almost all of the learners work at a range of retailers in the West Midlands region. BMR also has a Train to Gain contract to provide NVQs for a large private cleaning company in Bolton, which had recruited just over 20 learners at the time of the inspection. Five assessors and three internal verifiers carry out training and assessment, which all takes place in the workplace.

Strengths

- High success rates on Train to Gain
- Good development of learners' work related knowledge

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on apprenticeships
- Insufficiently detailed formal target-setting for apprentices

Achievement and standards

19. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are high. In 2007/08, both the overall and timely success rates were 75%. Retention on the Train to Gain programmes is currently high. Apprenticeship success rates are low. In 2006/07, the overall and timely success rates for apprentices were 31% and 21%, respectively. Most of the learners worked for one employer who sold part of their business and withdrew from apprenticeship training at short notice. Where possible, learners completed their NVQs and the success rate was 69%, but this sudden withdrawal from the contract with BMR had a significantly negative effect on learners' ability to complete their framework.

20. The development of learners' work related knowledge is good. It has improved significantly through attending BMR's training programmes. Learners develop a good understanding of work routines and the importance of following precise instructions when completing job activities. Some learners now have additional responsibilities at work or have gained promotion through developing their supervisory skills. Employers identify improvements in the quality of learners' work. In particular, learners are more knowledgeable about health and safety and equality and diversity.

21. The standard of learners' work in portfolios is satisfactory. BMR have provided learners with MP3 players which they find convenient to use and less time-consuming than writing up evidence to record witness statements. The use of samples of work to demonstrate competence is insufficient.

Quality of provision

22. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as is the standard of training. Assessors provide learners with useful individual coaching in the workplace to develop employees' specific skills and understanding. Learning resources are appropriate, comprising mainly handouts of information and activities and questions. Key skills resources and activities reflect learners' individual working environments and specific job responsibilities. Work-based assessment is frequent and comprehensive. Assessors' questioning techniques are effective in identifying learners' knowledge and understanding that are not always evident from observations only. Assessors give learners clear verbal feedback after every assessment. Some written observation records do not accurately summarise assessors' comments.
23. Formal target-setting for apprentices is insufficient. Individual learning plans identify the qualifications that learners have to achieve, but many do not incorporate sufficient information of required training. Some plans do not have target achievement dates for completion of different units. Some apprentices have been in training for significant periods of time, but have not completed any NVQ units. The introduction of key skills has been slow for some apprentices and some key skills activities do not have target dates for completion. BMR has identified this area for improvement and has started to closely monitor the achievement of key skills external tests. Learning plans for Train to Gain learners are satisfactory. Assessors provide satisfactory literacy and numeracy support for learners, but the formal arrangements to use the outcomes of initial assessment to provide learners with the most appropriate additional learning support are weak.
24. BMR's training programmes meet the needs and interests of learners. Training in the workplace suits learners who would otherwise have to travel long distances to the provider's offices. Employers appreciate the flexibility it gives them, as they find it difficult to release their employees for off-the-job training. Visits by assessors to the workplace are frequent and flexible to meet the needs of employers and learners, particularly in areas such as private contract cleaning which often takes place at night.
25. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Assessors ensure that learners do not experience any difficulties at work and give them appropriate advice and guidance on a wide range of issues. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of important topics covered at induction, including health and safety, equality and diversity and the make up of their programmes.

Leadership and management

26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications and teamwork are good. Managers meet with staff individually every month to support them and to discuss learners' progress. They use standardisation meetings effectively to share ideas and to review new developments. Staff value the frequent opportunities for both internal and external continuous professional development. BMR has registered all assessors and internal verifiers with the Institute for Learning. Many members of staff have completed key skills qualifications and work related NVQs successfully. A number of assessors have teaching qualifications and the remainder have started to work towards achieving them.

27. Internal verification is satisfactory. Internal verifiers review learners' portfolios regularly. Observations of background theory training in the workplace are insufficient. They do not identify the precise strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning. There are very few identified action points to support improvements in training. The most recent self-assessment report does not evaluate the retail training separately, but some of the overall strengths and areas for improvement match those identified by inspectors for the retail provision.
28. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Their induction includes sessions on understanding equal opportunities and most learners and some employers attend BMR's annual training on equality and diversity. Staff monitor learners' understanding of equality of opportunity appropriately during progress reviews.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

29. Fifty learners were enrolled on apprenticeship programmes at level 2 in business administration, customer service and team leading at the time of the inspection, with a further 18 learners on level 3 management courses. In addition, 42 learners are studying for NVQs on Train to Gain programmes. Most of the learners work in the Greater London and West Midlands areas. BMR runs a Train to Gain programme for women in London to meet regional priorities and to increase the number of female employees with level 2 and 3 qualifications. Learners work in a wide range of businesses. Assessors visit their workplace to carry out training, assessment and reviews of learners' progress, mostly on an individual basis. Learners attend background theory training in the workplace as a group at one employer.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' work skills and knowledge
- Particularly effective responsiveness to meet employers' needs

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress for some learners
- Ineffective planning of some individual learning

Achievement and standards

30. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good work skills and knowledge. They develop an improved awareness of work related legislation and effective work practices and demonstrate increased levels of competence. Some learners have taken on additional responsibilities at work, for example managing businesses in the absence of their line manager. Employers benefit from learners' improved performance and in particular the development of their management skills. Learners' self-confidence and self-esteem improve and they enjoy their learning, particularly where they can see the positive effect it has on their motivation at work. BMR takes great care to ensure that staff and employers celebrate learners' successes regularly. One of the companies recently achieved a prestigious regional award in recognition of the customised learning programmes it has developed with BMR.

31. Train to Gain success rates are satisfactory. In 2007/08, the overall and timely success rates were 70% and 56%, respectively. The apprenticeship programme is too new to make any judgements about success rates, but retention to date is high and the standard of work in learners' portfolios is generally satisfactory. BMR introduces training for, and assessment of, key skills and technical certificates early in the programme. Some learners' work contains errors in grammar and spelling that staff do not correct.

32. Some learners make slow progress towards achieving qualifications, particularly those in the Greater London region. They have been in training for four to six months, but have not achieved any NVQ or key skills units. One of the employers with a large group of learners restricted access for assessors to the workplace initially due to operational issues. At two other employers, problems with assessors leaving BMR have led to delays in assessment. Recent changes to the assessor team have started to have a positive effect on learners' progress.

Quality of provision

33. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as is the standard of training overall. Many learners benefit from good coaching and individual support. Most workplace visits by assessors are productive and have a clear purpose. At one employer, the background theory training in the workplace is particularly well structured. BMR has developed some good quality learning resources, but these are not always available to all learners. Planning of some individual learning is ineffective. The range of training methods is sometimes insufficient, with too much use of question and answer sheets. Learners complete an individual learning plan, but too many do not meet the targets set for them by assessors. BMR does not identify learners' personal and knowledge requirements in sufficient detail at the start of their training. Staff do not involve employers sufficiently in planning learners' training programmes. The ongoing planning of training during assessor visits is more effective.

34. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods, which are flexible to meet learners' needs. Coverage of personal issues is good, but some progress reviews are insufficiently detailed. Assessors often discuss learners' progress and assessment targets in detail, but do not formally record the outcomes of these discussions.

35. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Responsiveness to meet employers' needs is particularly effective. One large employer has worked well with BMR to develop background theory modules to meet the needs of the business. Another employer has a designated co-ordinator to manage the training programmes across several sites and to liaise with BMR to ensure that they rectify any issues jointly and quickly. BMR has recruited learners from a wide range of small employers across the regions. Staff plan visits well to integrate with employers' work patterns and to cause minimal disruption to the business and learners' personal commitments. The initial planning of training does not always match learners' potential and prior attainment, but most learners benefit in a number of different ways once they start their training with BMR.

36. Advice, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Induction provides learners with appropriate information, which staff check and reinforce later during their training. Most learners receive regular visits from assessors who check learners understanding of equality and diversity and health and safety carefully in progress reviews. Most employers provide appropriate support for learners in the workplace.

Leadership and management

37. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work well together and communication is good. Where assessors' personal circumstances change, managers take particular care to

ensure that they can continue to support learners effectively. Assessors take part in useful professional development activities that help them to support learners and employers.

38. The arrangements for quality improvement are weak. Observations of assessors are regular and internal verification is satisfactory, but the arrangements to assure the quality of background theory training in the workplace are insufficiently evaluative. Staff do not receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their performance. BMR produces a lot of data about learners which it analyses in detail, but it does not use the outcomes carefully enough to monitor learners' progress. The self-assessment process incorporates the views of staff, learners and employers but the most recent report does not identify the specific strengths and areas for improvement of the business administration programmes. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider/college 2004 to 2006

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	22	100	49	32	38
		timely	12	92	28	42	21
	05/06	overall	27	56	58	48	52
		timely	28	32	37	25	34
	06/07	overall	16	69	65	31	61
		timely	14	43	47	21	44

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes** managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2007/08	overall	22	71
		timely	18	58

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider before inspection