

South West Regional Assessment Centre

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Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	10
What learners like	12
What learners think could improve.....	12
Learners' achievements	13

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:

- Construction, planning and the built environment

Description of the provider

1. The South West Regional Assessment Centre (SWRAC) was established in 1996 in response to requirements of the Waste Management Licensing Regulations. Subsequently, SWRAC has developed additional courses and qualifications linked to the waste management industry. Approximately 71% of SWRAC's overall business is government-funded training. The company is owned and managed by three directors. The support staff team are based at SWRAC's premises in Wimborne, Dorset and the company employs 24 assessors and trainers.
2. SWRAC has contracted with the Dorset and Somerset LSC since April 2007 for Train to Gain provision of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) for waste management operations at level 2, in the south of England. Assessment and some training are carried out at learners' workplaces. Training courses take place at SWRAC's centre or on employers' premises. SWRAC subcontracts the provision of information, advice and guidance.
3. At the time of inspection, 85 learners are on SWRAC's Train to Gain programme and most are working in or around Dorset. SWRAC has recently been awarded a further LSC contract to deliver Train to Gain in the South West. This provision was not inspected.
4. In 2006, approximately 68% of the working age population in Dorset were qualified at or above NVQ at level 2 or equivalent qualifications, compared with the national rate of 64%. Unemployment rates are 3.1% compared with the national rate of 5.3%. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the area is 3.2% compared with 9.1% in England.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Construction, planning and the built environment	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of SWRAC's provision is good. Achievement and standards are good, with high overall success rates. Learners make good progress and the development of their work practices is good. They develop an improved understanding of the use of safe practices and the impact of health and safety for their work.
6. The quality of provision is good. Off-the-job training is very good and resources are of a high standard. SWRAC makes good use of the assessment of learners' competence to plan their development programmes but does not carry out sufficient initial assessment of their language, literacy or numeracy skills. The range of learning programmes and activities is particularly effective at developing learners' skills and matches their potential and prior attainment well. The support provided to individual learners is good. The provision of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory.
7. Leadership and management are good. The company's directors are particularly effective in developing appropriate training for the industry and setting a clear direction for the learners' experience on the programme. Management of the programme and resources are good. SWRAC's use of networks to engage employers is also good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. SWRAC's capacity to improve is good. Overall success rates are high across all groups of learners. SWRAC makes effective use of action plans for the development of provision and has made good progress in introducing improvements following self-assessment. Following a review of the programme, additional training opportunities have been provided and incorporated well into the structure of the programme. Arrangements for internal communications at the company's centre have also been improved. Very good improvements have previously been made to SWRAC's training venue. SWRAC ensures that new staff delivering the programme are appropriately qualified with relevant industry experience and all staff are well supported in their work with learners.
9. Overall the company's quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Most of the key aspects of the programme are monitored well. SWRAC responds promptly and effectively to quality issues raised by learners or their employers and as a result of self-assessment. Formal arrangements to obtain feedback from employers and improvements to the collection of learners' feedback have recently been introduced, however, arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in training sessions are insufficient.
10. Self-assessment is good. The company has not previously been inspected and the self-assessment report is the first produced by SWRAC. The self-assessment process is generally inclusive with involvement of all staff and was informed by learners' feedback on their experience of the programme. However, employers and the subcontractor were

not consulted as part of the process. Data is used well to make appropriate judgements about overall success rates and course completion. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified. The self-assessed grades closely matched inspectors' judgements although SWRAC underestimated the quality of their provision.

Key strengths

- High success rates
- Good development of learners' work practices
- Very good off-the-job training
- Good support for individual learners
- Particularly effective leadership
- Good use of networks to engage employers

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient initial assessment
- Insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good. In 2007/08, the overall success rate for the NVQ level 2 in Waste Management Operations is high at 98%, as recognised in the self-assessment. Learners achieve well and performance trends are equally high for different groups. Learners who have not completed recent health and safety training provided by their employer attend an accredited course delivered by SWRAC. The pass rate for this additional qualification is outstanding at 100% for the 339 learners who have participated. Learners also participate in a waste awareness theory course. SWRAC has very recently introduced registration of participants on this course to provide the opportunity for new learners to achieve a second additional qualification.
12. Learners' develop good work practices. For many learners, the development of their workplace skills during the programme improves their job performance. Learners also gain increased awareness of health and safety issues and their knowledge of hazards and risk improves. They develop a better understanding of the use of safe practices and the impact of health and safety for their work, colleagues, customers and the public. Most learners have gained in confidence and self-esteem while on the programme.
13. Learners make good progress relative to their prior attainment. All learners have completed the programme within six months and 58% have completed within a challenging target of three months. The standard of learners' work is good in relation to their learning goals. Learners' attendance is also good.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

14. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Off-the-job training is very good. Learners attend a range of suitable courses while progressing towards completion of the NVQ. In addition to the health and safety and waste awareness courses, SWRAC has recently introduced useful opportunities for training in manual handling and reversing assistant roles as part of the programme. Training sessions are planned and structured well. Tutors use a wide range of techniques to involve learners in the training. Resources, activities and learners' experience are used very effectively to reinforce and develop specific topics. Tutors place considerable emphasis on developing learners' understanding of the concept of waste in their working activities and of hazards and risks in sessions on health and safety. Tutors do not do enough to check learning during some aspects of training however, and learners are not sufficiently involved in the brief induction process.
15. On-the-job training is good. Learners develop an appropriate range of skills in the workplace and some are trained to use highly complex industrial equipment. Employer involvement in learning and their knowledge of the programme is good.

16. Resources are good. Tutors have relevant industrial experience, knowledge and skills. They take effective action to maintain their current expertise in the sector. Most learning materials are very good and the main training venue is equipped to a high standard.
17. The assessment of vocational competence is good and used well to plan and monitor learners' progress. Details of progress are clearly reported and an appropriate action plan is agreed with the learner and their supervisor for completion by the next assessment visit. Target-setting is good. Learners' portfolios contain a wide range of evidence. The use of individual learning plans is satisfactory.
18. SWRAC carries out insufficient initial assessment of learners' language, literacy and numeracy skills. This is recognised in the self-assessment. Learners are encouraged to report any additional learning needs and some informal assessment takes place in the early stages of the programme but this is not sufficiently systematic or formal.
19. The programme and activities meet the needs and interests of learners well. Learning programmes are well matched to learners' potential and prior attainment and are particularly effective at developing their skills. This was recognised in the self-assessment. For many learners, the NVQ is their first formal qualification and most have little prior experience of off-the-job training. Their experience of the programme is good. The programme and training activities are well designed to engage learners effectively in the development of their workplace skills and knowledge. The programme fully meets external requirements and is very responsive to local circumstances.
20. SWRAC responds well to employers' needs. It makes good use of liaison with employers to identify learners' skills needs and to link these to the qualifications it offers. It has flexible arrangements for the delivery of training and assessments to meet the needs of learners' work schedules and avoid disruption to business requirements. SWRAC provides employers with a valuable summary of health and safety areas for improvement that it has identified from discussions with learners during their theory course.
21. Guidance and support are good overall. Support for individual learners is good. Learners with identified language and literacy needs are well supported by their assessors for the requirements of the NVQ. Tutors and assessors provide good support for individual learners throughout the programme. Employers support learners well. They provide cover for learners' shifts to ensure they can attend off-the-job training. Employers and supervisors also arrange effective and appropriate work opportunities for learners to gather evidence for their qualification.
22. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. SWRAC subcontracts this aspect of the programme to an appropriately accredited organisation. Learners are provided with clear information about the service and the self-referral process at the beginning, middle and end of their programme. However, few learners have made use of the advice and guidance available. Learners are on the appropriate level of qualification although they do not receive information about the programme until their induction.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

23. Leadership and management are good. The directors demonstrate particularly effective leadership of their company. They have developed highly appropriate training for the industry and ensure that learners have a good learning experience. New and appropriately qualified staff with relevant industrial experience have been recruited to further develop the company's capacity. All staff take part in an annual team building residential activity that very effectively supports good communications and helps staff to understand their roles in the business. Directors broadly understand and share key priorities for the development of the company in the medium term but formal business planning is not recorded.
24. Management of the programme is good. Training is organised well and offered in a flexible way for employers and their employees. All staff, including the part-time assessors and trainers, are very clear about their roles and how they contribute to learners' success. Frequent and regular contact with peripatetic staff ensures consistency of approach and delivery of good quality training programmes that enhance and develop learners' workplace skills well. SWRAC's management of the subcontracted information, advice and guidance service is satisfactory.
25. SWRAC's use of networks to engage employers is good. Its directors promote effective relationships with a wide range of employers, including local councils, private construction, clinical waste and recycling companies. They have involvement in a broad range of external partnerships and professional organisations. All three directors use their expertise well to plan and develop the specialist training opportunities.
26. Management of resources is good. Staff are well qualified with suitable professional experience. Assessors carry out an annual cycle of continuous professional development. SWRAC holds four assessor meetings each year where practice is shared and well planned training updates are provided. Training rooms in the main centre have excellent facilities and good learning equipment. When training is arranged on employers' premises, SWRAC insists on minimum requirements for the suitability of facilities and resources. Laptops and mobile phones are provided for staff and learning materials are good.
27. SWRAC recognises that it has yet to formalise its strategy for language, literacy and numeracy learning support. Assessors, trainers and employers provide good individual support for learners with additional learning needs. The company has recently advertised to recruit a specialist member of staff. Learners with additional needs have not experienced any significant barriers to achievement and success rates are high.
28. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Staff and learners understand the relevant policies and procedures. The company has a designated member of staff responsible for adult protection and appropriate arrangements are in place for vetting staff. SWRAC recognises the need to introduce training in safeguarding for all staff.
29. The accuracy and understanding of management information is satisfactory. Learners' progress is recorded and monitored effectively. The systems used are well designed and maintained with current data. However, managers make insufficient use of the available data to analyse and monitor trends.

30. SWRAC's arrangements for quality assurance are broadly satisfactory. Procedures for key aspects of the programme are clearly defined and monitored well. SWRAC responds promptly and effectively to queries or concerns raised by learners and employers. Most assessors are observed annually and new assessors more frequently. Overall, internal verification processes are satisfactory although verification of evidence mainly occurs at the end of the programme.
31. Arrangements for the quality assurance of teaching and learning in training sessions are insufficient. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Some mentoring, coaching and informal observation of training is carried out, but suitable criteria are not in place for monitoring the quality of training and learning. Arrangements for observations do not link to staff appraisal and development. Opportunities for trainers to share good practice are mainly informal and are not systematically used to improve aspects of delivery.
32. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. SWRAC has successfully motivated employers and their employees to value achievement of the qualification and participation in related training. Policies for equality of opportunity are satisfactory and recruitment practices are fair. SWRAC's policy covering harassment is thorough and detailed. Learners are clear about their rights and responsibilities with regard to bullying in the workplace and know who to contact with any issues concerning their wellbeing. Formal checking is carried out by SWRAC to ensure employers have appropriate policies that include supporting learners with disabilities and English language needs. Refurbishment of the main centre has included provision of good access and facilities for learners with restricted mobility.
33. SWRAC does not sufficiently promote or reinforce equality and diversity issues with learners. As recognised in self-assessment, SWRAC has not fully developed its approach to equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is not covered during learners' induction or reinforced throughout their training programme. SWRAC has yet to carry out specific training for staff to raise awareness about equality and diversity. This is an action point in the self-assessment report.

What learners like:

- Learning how to work safely
- The materials are very good
- The staff are very helpful, they try their hardest to make sure everyone is successful
- The help with reading and writing
- Everything is explained well
- Learning about the industry as a whole and not just my job
- 'I want to go further now and into management'
- Very good trainers – 'my tutor is brilliant'
- Organisation of the training day – 'the practical exercises are really good'
- 'Learning how important health and safety is to my job'
- Opportunity to get a qualification at an older age
- Learning while at work
- 'I'm not just a dustman but a dustman with a qualification now'
- The time assessors spend with learners – 'the assessor does the same early shifts as we do'

What learners think could improve:

- Information provided about the programme before it starts
- Induction – 'too much is covered in the time and its boring'

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain** programmes managed by SWRAC from **2007 to 2008**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2007/08	overall	339	98%
		timely	237	58%

* 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 qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

*** Includes 'Train to Gain' long course NVQ provision, but not 'skills for life'