

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Bridge Training Limited  
Date of visit: 30 March 2009

### Context

Bridge Training Limited (BTL) is a private training provider based in central Gloucester. It was established in 1989 and became a limited company in 2002. In January 2009 it moved to a new site. BTL provides entry to employment (E2E) programmes funded by Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Local Skills Council's (LSCs). It offers training on projects funded through the European Social Fund, and as a subcontractor for a Department for Work and Pensions prime contract holder BTCV. It also holds contracts with local schools to provide vocational learning for year 10 and 11 pupils, which is not in scope for this inspection. Government funded training accounts for around 80% of its income. BTL employs 23 staff, 14 of whom are trainers and tutors. The managing director is responsible for the overall management of the company's performance, supported by a senior management team. In the current year 84 learners follow E2E programmes, taking up options in construction, beauty therapy, and information and communication technology (ICT). At the inspection in November 2007, BTL was found to be satisfactory in all of its provision, and good for equality of opportunity.

### Achievement and standards

How much progress has BTL made in improving the overall achievement rates?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Most vocational programmes showed achievements of 100% in 2007/08 although the number of learners was low. Provider data for the current year shows a small decline, although BTL are confident that those learners still on programme will achieve. Since the previous inspection achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications has continued to improve considerably, although achievement rates overall are still not sufficiently high. The provision of literacy and numeracy training changed in September 2008, and early indications show a further improvement in achievement rates.

Progression rates are satisfactory, but have improved since the previous inspection, and continue to improve. The progression of minority ethnic groups, and female learners, have improved significantly and are now above the overall rate for BTL

learners. Progression to further education has risen considerably, reflecting the change in the economic climate. Although attendance rates fluctuate month by month, they have increased by 18 percentage points since the previous year and are now satisfactory. The average length of stay of a trainee has risen from 14 weeks in 2007/08 to an average of 18 weeks in the current year.

#### Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in the setting and reviewing of learners' targets?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Since the previous inspection, BTL has implemented a new system for setting, recording and reviewing individual learning targets. This includes greater involvement by tutors at each stage of the process, and is supported by improved record keeping. Vocational targets are now clearly based on the results of initial assessment and are challenging in most cases. Assessment is now ongoing throughout the learner's programme, rather than loaded toward the end. This enables better monitoring of their progress and more discussion with learners on how to improve. Learning targets are reviewed by the tutor every four weeks, and a full review of learners' progress is summarised by the review co-ordinator at the end of the programme. Most learners follow courses in at least two vocational areas and have individual learning plans for each area of learning. Consequently a formal system to ensure that all tutors access review information and see learners' targets from other areas of their programme has not yet been implemented.

How much progress has BTL made in developing the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA)?	Insufficient progress
--	-----------------------

The new learner review system allows tutors to record progress of personal and social development through a scoring system, which provides learners with a clear indication of their progress. Targets for these social skills and personal goals are not set at initial assessment, but at the first progress review after four weeks. However, it is not clear what information is used to set these targets. At subsequent reviews, much emphasis is placed upon recording learners' attitudes to training, conforming to deadlines, and actions required to improve these. There is little evidence to show that progress in other social skills is monitored, or that any personal development goals or targets are achieved. Although an appropriate procedure is now in place, there is insufficient consistency across the organisation in its use.

How much progress has been made to ensure that learners gain sufficient experience of work?	Insufficient progress
---	-----------------------

BTL have revised their process for identifying and providing work experience for learners. A greater emphasis is now placed on finding part- time jobs for learners to

enable them to gain higher employment skills, rather than attending unpaid placements. However, this has not yet resulted in sufficient improvement since the previous inspection in opportunities for learners to gain experience of work. Although the proportion of learners with jobs or attending work experience placements has more than doubled, it is still too low. BTL provides training in skills for employment, such as interview techniques, but they are not sufficiently planned as part of the learners' training programme, and BTL does not monitor whether all learners receive the training.

### Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in developing further BTL's quality assurance systems?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

Since the previous inspection, a new training manager has been appointed to take responsibility for developing and standardising operating processes to support the quality improvement system. Several new procedures have been implemented, and others have been improved. Regular training meetings have been introduced to ensure that good practice is shared, problems are discussed, and actions for improvement are considered. The lesson observation scheme and the course review process have been updated to provide more accurate reports on performance. Responsibilities and accountabilities are clear and staff have received appropriate training on conducting reviews.

Lesson observations are more thorough and staff are now encouraged to be more critical in the analysis of their own and their team's performance. However, a system is not yet in place for judgements from lesson observations and the subsequent identified strengths and areas for improvement, to be moderated for accuracy and consistency. Action plans for improvement from lesson observations and course reviews are produced for staff and teams. It is too early to see evidence of any formal checking of progress of actions, although impact in learner performance can already be seen.

How much progress has been made to the self-assessment process to ensure that it drives forward improvements?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

The self-assessment process is planned effectively and based on the common inspection framework. BTL regularly surveys the views of learners and external partners about provision, and incorporates their comments into the process. However, views of learners are not yet taken into account sufficiently at course level. Staff are consulted through regular team meetings, and encouraged to be open and critical about their teams' performance in course reviews. Biannual away-days provide a good opportunity for all staff to share experiences and good practice,

analyse the performance of their team and the organisation as a whole, and plan for improvement. Staff now feel more involved in the whole self-assessment process.

BTL have made reasonable progress since the previous inspection in ensuring that the self-assessment report now more accurately identifies the strengths and most weaknesses of the organisation. The resultant development plan broadly reflects areas for development, but does not fully capture all the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, a more detailed action plan for the current year is being produced as part of the development of a more thorough quality improvement system.