

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of provider: Shape Accredited Training Centre
Date of visit: 30 April 2009

Context

Shape Accredited Training Centre (Shape) was formed in 1978 as part of the Cleveland Youth Association. Shape's head office and main training centre is in Middlesbrough. Shape contracts with North East Learning and Skills Council for work-based learning.

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in December 2007 when leadership and management, capacity to improve and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. The sector subject areas of health, public services and care and preparation for life and work were also satisfactory.

Since the previous inspection, the profile of the provision has not changed. Shape continues to offer programmes in health, public services and care, with apprenticeships in care and early years, Train to Gain early years and dental nursing and Train to Gain for adults in social care and dental nursing. Shape also offers an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme in preparation for life and work. Currently, 150 learners are enrolled, of which 47 are advanced apprentices, 50 are apprentices, 45 are E2E learners and eight are on Train to Gain programmes.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has Shape made in improving achievement and progress rates?	Reasonable progress
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Shape has made reasonable progress in improving the achievement rates of all learners. Since the previous inspection, success rates in health, public services and care have improved. Overall success rates for apprentices improved from 58% in 2006/07 to 76% in 2007/08, significantly above the national rate of 62%. Success rates for advanced apprentices also improved in the same period from 50% to 61%. The progress of learners also improved from 47% of apprentices completing by their target end date in 2006/07 to 68% in 2007/08. While remaining below the national rate of 42% in 2007/08, the numbers of advanced apprentices completing by their target end date increased from 23% in 2006/07 to 30% in 2007/08. Train to Gain success rates have also improved, from 60% in 2006/07 to 75% in 2008/09.

At the time of the previous inspection, progression rates and the quality of destinations of learners on E2E programmes were improving. Progression rates continue to improve, from 49.5% in 2006/07 to 61.3% in 2007/08. The number of learners progressing to further education and apprenticeships has also improved from 25.9% in 2006/07 to 35.8% in 2007/08, with a 60% progression rate in the first eight months of the contract year for 2008/09.

Quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving lesson plans, schemes of work and the planning of learning for E2E learners?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, planning of learning for E2E learners was ineffective. Since then, Shape has made insufficient progress in tackling this area for improvement. Changes have been introduced to improve the flexibility of the programme to meet learners' individual needs, and new units of learning have been added. Good communication within the staff team ensures that learners receive particularly effective individual and additional learning support, to supplement the formal sessions. Learners' progress is recorded well but the formal planning of their individual programmes is insufficient. The operations manager has taken action to improve lesson plans and schemes of work, while retaining flexibility to enable the programme to meet the needs of the individual learners. However, planning of learning remains a developing process. The revision of lesson plans and schemes of work is not yet complete. Lesson plans are detailed, but are not systematically cross-referenced to schemes of work, and do not clearly identify how learners' individual needs will be met. Various aspects of the programme do not have a syllabus or context statement. Session times are not clearly identified in the schemes of work.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in improving the quality of accommodation and resources?	Reasonable progress
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Shape has taken reasonable action to improve the quality of accommodation and resources. Since the previous inspection, the allocation of the budget to improve resources has been increased and a detailed refurbishment plan and budget developed and implemented. Actions have been taken to provide additional resources and funding to ensure ongoing improvements. Two outreach centres are no longer used and a third outreach centre has been updated through redecoration and the installation of new information technology (IT) equipment. Good relationships with partners provide support for the refurbishment and redecoration of the buildings. At the main centre, investment has been made in new IT equipment, staff and learning resources, and a new electronic whiteboard has been purchased. Learners are involved with the refurbishment of some parts of the building as part of

their community work. Learning resources have been revised, in conjunction with learners. The senior management team is working hard to identify sources of funding to make further improvements.

How much progress has Shape made in improving the management of staff performance?	Reasonable progress
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Since the previous inspection, Shape has developed and implemented a new staff performance review process that includes annual performance reviews and quarterly individual staff meetings. It has made reasonable progress in implementing the system and in improving the management of staff performance. All staff now have clear targets that are linked to both learners' achievement and targets within the quality improvement plan, although some targets are weak. This is identified in both the self-assessment report and the supporting quality improvement plan.

Data is used well to support the new performance management process. All information from learners' files is now on the management information database. Assessors are responsible for managing this process, providing them with better knowledge of individual learners' progress. New simplified reports are produced for both the board and all staff to clearly identify and monitor progress. Training for staff ensures that they understand and use these reports in their weekly team meetings. A new recording and reporting process to monitor the recruitment, retention and achievement of learners contributes to planning. These reports contribute to ensuring the continued improvements in learners' progress and staff performance.

How much progress has Shape made in improving the thoroughness and accuracy of the observations of teaching and learning?	Insufficient progress
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Action has been taken since the previous inspection to improve the thoroughness and accuracy of the observation of teaching and learning. However, progress is slow and the new systems have not yet had sufficient effect on the quality of learning.

Three senior managers are now responsible for the observation process. Planning of the process is clear, with an annual schedule for initial observations. Arrangements to improve the consistency of observation grades are incomplete. No moderation process or clear criteria are in place which apply to all the observation records to ensure the consistency of observation grades. Formal systems for sharing and reviewing practice have not yet been developed. Shape has not published any quality standards for sessions. In some lesson observations, the grade does not appear to match the lesson summary. For lessons which are graded satisfactory or inadequate tutors receive detailed feedback and agree an action plan with their manager. A second observation takes place, but for some tutors this is four or five months after the initial observation. The coaching process has brought about improvement but Shape has no specific action plan to improve teaching and learning.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has Shape made in improving the thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process?	Reasonable progress
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At the time of the previous inspection, the self-assessment process and report were satisfactory although it was insufficiently critical with some over-grading. Shape has made reasonable progress in further developing this process.

The self-assessment process is inclusive. Shape invests considerable amounts of time in this process. All staff are involved in an annual, one week self-assessment event. Evidence and data is provided centrally as well as by staff, learners and employers. The self-assessment report is written clearly and realistically with judgements appropriately based on evidence. It is very detailed with evaluative and clear content. The report uses data well to evidence judgements in sector areas.

The use of the post-inspection action plan and development plan based on the self-assessment report is satisfactory. The development plan is detailed, with clear arrangements for monitoring actions. The quality improvement plan clearly indicates action to rectify areas for improvement and to maintain strengths. However, it does not include actions to improve satisfactory aspects of provision. The plan is monitored on a quarterly basis and outcomes reported to the board.