

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of provider: Independent Training Services Ltd

Date of visit: 4 August 2009

### Context

Independent Training Services Limited (ITS) is a registered charity. Since the previous inspection, ITS has increased the number of staff by 10 to 58 due to an expansion of its provision. ITS contracts with South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for young people in motor vehicle; care; retail and commercial enterprise; business administration; customer service; information and communication technology (ICT); and entry to employment (E2E). Currently 230 LSC funded learners are enrolled, of whom 110 are on E2E. ITS subcontracts some of its E2E provision to five providers: Barnsley Community Build, Take 2, Riding for the Disabled, Barnsley Premier Leisure, and Dimensions Training Solutions. At the previous inspection, ITS subcontracted to three providers. ITS has a Train to Gain subcontract from the Yorkshire Training Partnership; 52 learners are on this programme. Since the previous inspection, ITS has gained a subcontract from Leeds College of Technology to deliver an information technology (IT) user qualification at level 1 to employed learners; five learners are on the programme. Since November 2008, ITS has a subcontract from Community Training Services (CTS) for a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) adult employability skills programme; 25 learners are on this programme. Since January 2009, ITS has a direct contract with the Local Education Authority to engage young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in July 2008 where overall effectiveness, achievement and standards, quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. Health and social care, and employability training were satisfactory. Retail and commercial enterprise was good. The contributory grade for achievement and standards in Train to Gain was good.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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Progress in improving achievement and standards is reasonable. At the previous inspection, achievement and standards were satisfactory overall but good on Train to Gain. E2E progression rates were satisfactory at 54%. Progression rates are now at 57% with 30 learners still to finish the programme. Clear plans are in place for these

learners to progress into further education, training or employment. ITS predicts that the overall progression rate for 2008/09 will be similar to the 62% in 2007/08. The number of E2E learners achieving nationally accredited qualifications increased from 326 in 2007/08, to 664 in the current year.

Overall apprenticeship success rates have improved since the previous inspection from 66% in 2007/08 to 73% in the current year. Timely success rates have increased from 54% in 2007/08 to 60% in the current year. Success rates in Train to Gain demonstrate an improving trend. At the previous inspection, Train to Gain success rates were good at 83% and currently stand at 88% for 2008/09 to date.

On the new DWP programme, success rates for progression into jobs are at 32%, and at 53% for the achievement of learning aims including qualifications in employability skills, literacy and numeracy.

#### Quality of provision

What progress has been made to improve target-setting and progress reviews?	Reasonable progress
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Progress in improving target-setting and learners' progress reviews is reasonable. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Trainer/assessors are now responsible for learners' progress reviews. The quality team carried out a detailed review of this area which highlighted a range of areas for improvement. The operations manager now oversees Train to Gain and work-based learning programmes. A detailed monitoring form was introduced for progress reviews. Monthly monitoring of a sample of targets and reviews now takes place and results in comprehensive individual staff action plans. A similar E2E passport check form is in place. However, it focuses on compliance rather than on monitoring the quality of completion of the passport. This process has been recently extended to include ITS's five E2E subcontractors but it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of this.

Four staff development sessions have taken place on target-setting and progress reviews. One focused on good practice in reviewing and recording progress and the use of the progress review monitoring form. Subsequent quality checks indicate improvements in target-setting and recording progress. Reviews of documentation indicate that progress recording is now more detailed and targets have improved.

#### Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve the E2E management structures?	Reasonable progress
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Progress in improving the E2E management structures is reasonable. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. E2E roles and responsibilities are

clearer and two new learning support posts support the administration processes. Key workers now have a caseload of learners to support. Comprehensive staff training has taken place on initial assessment. A review of documents indicates improvements in the recording of initial assessment outcomes. A new learner health risk assessment record provides additional useful information. The learner passport is now more structured and training has taken place to support this. Recording of activities and progress is more structured and comprehensive.

At the previous inspection, assessment of individual achievement of key objectives took place at the exit review. Clear actions have taken place to improve this. The review of the first key objective takes place at the initial six week review. Learners' receive a bonus payment as they achieve each of their key objectives, whereas these linked to attendance previously. A newly introduced learning support review for literacy and numeracy now provides additional information to the overall learner E2E progress review. ITS has participated in the foundation learning tier and the functional skills pilots.

What progress has been made to further develop the provision?	Significant progress
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Progress in further developing the provision is significant. A clear strategy is in place to develop partnerships with local employers, the local authority, and voluntary and community organisations to extend the provision. A partnership with Barnsley Premier Leisure has led to collaboration to deliver work-based learning in a range of sport and fitness options. ITS now has a Train to Gain subcontract to develop IT skills in the community with employed people. Since the previous inspection, provision is developing to meet the needs of young people in the NEET group. One programme provides advice and guidance, work taster opportunities and supports progression into further learning or employment. ITS is strategically developing its adult provision through a new employability subcontract which started in November 2008. Learners enhance their employment opportunities through work-placement and complete national awards in employability skills, literacy and numeracy.

The developing employer engagement strategy includes an individual quarterly review with employers and a recently developed company apprenticeship handbook. In February 2009, ITS held a recognition awards ceremony for employers. Plans are in place to hold the next one in October 2009. A marketing plan is being developed.

What progress has been made in promoting and monitoring equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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Progress to develop equality and diversity is reasonable. At the previous inspection, this area was satisfactory. An equality and diversity forum is now established. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection are now rectified. For example, an online learner programme supports the promotion of equal opportunities. The

induction programme and individual reviews better promote equality issues. ITS made a substantial investment in an accredited software to raise learners' awareness of equality and diversity. After a successful trial with learners, plans are in place to implement it fully. Staff have completed equality and diversity training.

ITS has taken action to increase participation by underrepresented groups. The proportion of males joining care programmes has increased significantly. Actions to attract more females into occupations such as motor vehicle maintenance has had limited success. ITS has made strenuous efforts to attract hard to reach groups, such as Asian males who are NEET and asylum seekers, with limited success. ITS is not complacent and is continuing to work with schools and others such as Connexions to increase the recruitment of underrepresented groups. Ongoing developments at ITS include the establishment of a free helpline for employers on equality and diversity issues. A similar, confidential helpline is in place for learners.

What progress has been made to improve safeguarding arrangements?	Significant progress
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Progress to improve safeguarding arrangements is significant. Strengthened arrangements to safeguard learners are in place and meet statutory requirements. Meetings, attended by the four designated child protection officers, take place each month to review child protection and safeguarding duties and to ensure that best practice is being adhered to. All staff have had relevant training in safeguarding and child protection. ITS has close links with the local safeguarding board. ITS managers work effectively with other local providers to offer training on child protection and safeguarding and to raise awareness of this issue.

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to improve action planning? Have the strengths in self-assessment identified at the previous inspection been maintained?	Reasonable progress
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ITS has taken reasonable actions to maintain the strengths in the self-assessment process; the process remains clear, comprehensive and inclusive. The recent work of the learner involvement forum has strengthened the self-assessment process. This aims to ensure that learners' views link systematically into the self-assessment process. Learner survey outcomes are scrutinised to identify discrepancies between the outcomes of the observation process and learners' feedback. Actions to incorporate employers' views in self-assessment are underway but are in the early stages of development. Staff are involved in identifying strengths and areas for improvement within their own areas. Effective use of data supports judgements in the self-assessment report.

Areas for improvement relating to quality assurance, identified in the previous inspection, are now rectified. Action plans clearly identify timescales and outcomes are measurable. Individuals responsible for specific actions are clearly identified and staff are accountable for meeting targets. A monthly review helps to identify where ITS is on track to meet targets, and importantly, where it is not. It is too soon to assess the effectiveness of these improvements on learners' achievements overall. However, to date, more learners are completing their training in good time, and a greater number are making good progress.

What progress has been made to improve quality assurance arrangements?	Reasonable progress
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Progress to develop quality assurance arrangements is reasonable. At the previous inspection, quality assurance was an area for improvement. The observation process is strengthened by an increase in the size of the observation team. Staff development for the observer and the observed improves understanding of the process. The introduction of regular standardisation meetings ensures that the grade awarded for the observed session matches the written report. A review of the outcomes of learners' surveys takes place to identify any discrepancies between the outcomes from the observation scheme and learners' views. Data indicates a close correlation between learners' survey results and the outcomes of the observation scheme.

The review of policies and procedures is now more systematic. A review and impact assessment has taken place for most policies including safeguarding, whistle blowing and harassment. A review of action planning has taken place and now has less focus on compliance and audit and an increased focus on sustaining improvements.

The sharing of best practice is more systematic, as is the opportunity for all staff to contribute to ways of improving the quality of provision. A good example is the greater use of e-learning to reach the most hard to reach learners.