

Davidson Training UK Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51492

Name of lead inspector: Charles Clark HMI

Last day of inspection: 16 October 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Davidson Training UK Ltd (DTUK) is a private limited company established in 1997 and is based in Gravesend, Kent. DTUK has had a contract with the Central London Learning and Skills Council (LSC) since March 2000. In March 2000 the company took over a contract from Employer Direct, formerly based at FOCUS Central London Training Enterprise Council (TEC), to which it was previously subcontracted. DTUK provides a comprehensive range of assessment and training in retailing, customer service, and business administration.
2. The provision has expanded since the previous inspection and is more focused on business administration and no longer offers hairdressing. DTUK offers apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships, Train to Gain and adult apprenticeships. Retailing was not inspected as the number of learners was so low. All learners are of employed status before they start their programme of training and all training takes place in the workplace. DTUK now has a staff team of 17. The management structure has changed in line with this expansion and includes two directors. The managing director plays an active role within the business and is assisted by the business manager. There are three internal verifiers who are also qualified assessors, a training operations manager who is also a qualified assessor and internal verifier as well as nine assessors and three administrators. Approximately 72% of learners are female and 31% are from minority ethnic groups.
3. Unemployment in London in 2008 was 7.4% compared with 6.2% nationally. The proportion of school leavers gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including mathematics and English, was 64%, compared with 65% nationally.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	76 learners
Apprenticeships	172 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Grade 1
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	1
Subject areas	Grade
Administration	1

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of DTUK's provision is outstanding. DTUK has expanded since the previous inspection and has focused on business administration. The managing director provides a clear vision and strong leadership which is promoted well to a very committed staff team. All staff have regular motivational briefings and are well informed about the current status and future direction of the provision. Teaching and learning are good and procedures and documentation are now standard across the company. Success rates are excellent. Data are used very effectively to manage the provision. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is excellent.

Main findings

- Overall success rates for learners are outstanding. The success rates for Train to Gain are high and exceed the national rate. Success rates for apprentices are high and improving. The majority of apprentices achieve on or before their target completion date. Advanced apprentices' achievement was slightly below the national rate in 2007/08 but there is now a significant upward trend.

- Learners develop a very good range of workplace and social skills that includes knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. They develop strong personal skills and greatly increased levels of self-confidence. They are recognised as valuable members of the workforce and many of them have been promoted or have been given additional responsibility.
- Learners benefit from very good safe working practices. There is a particularly strong emphasis on corporate and personal safety. This is further reinforced very well through the review process. Learners acquire a very good knowledge of safe working practices and feel safe.
- Assessment practices are good. Assessment planning is very thorough and good use is made of information technology to record evidence and track learner achievement. Feedback to learners is supportive and motivational. Assessors use a wide range of good assessment methods.
- Learners benefit from well-delivered training in both highly effective individual coaching sessions and group teaching. Tutors know their learners well and adapt sessions effectively to meet the learners' needs and also to maximise their and the employers' resources. However, session planning is insufficiently recorded.
- In the best cases target setting is clear, identifiable and time-bound and used well to monitor learner progress. The target setting and completion of the individual learning plans is satisfactory. However, many learners are insufficiently clear about what training and development is needed to meet their learning goals. DTUK has recognised this as an area for development.
- The provision is highly tailored to incorporate employer, learner and commercial needs. DTUK actively responds to employer requests for bespoke training. Tutors have a very good understanding of employer needs. Employers are fully involved in the training and many are learners themselves.
- DTUK staff are highly flexible, supportive, approachable and accessible. They have a really good understanding of learners' personal barriers such as memory difficulties and respond with support specific to individual needs. All learners benefit from a comprehensive initial assessment.
- Strategic management is excellent at DTUK. The managing director and the senior management team produce a well-researched business plan. Communication is excellent and staff are knowledgeable and committed. All share a clear vision of the direction of the company business.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a clear policy and procedures that learners understand. Staff training in equality and diversity is excellent. It is regular and delivered through innovative thought provoking exercises.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are good. DTUK has an appointed officer to manage all aspects of safeguarding. DTUK has a good policy statement, which refers also to employers. There is a good action plan for the organisation and all staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance.

- DTUK has made good progress in improving the quality of provision. Managers and staff have reviewed and improved procedures and documentation. They have established a particularly robust internal verification system and they have developed electronic tracking and learning. DTUK provides good value for money. Staff are well qualified, experienced and access good continuing professional development. The new premises are well resourced.

What does DTUK need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring of target setting and individual learning plans to ensure that staff meet the company procedures to secure improvement.
- Improve the quality and detail of session plans so that they incorporate individual learning needs, teaching methods and delivery timescales.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good level of help and support provided by assessors
- courses that fit in well with working days
- the rapid response made to requests for help
- being given the opportunity to move on to bigger and better things
- courses that build confidence
- being able to meet targets and achieve qualification
- being respected
- feeling safe.

What learners would like to see improved:

- some group training sessions
- the provision of events such as an away day to focus on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)
- the number of qualifications offered to improve career progression.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- having a very good relationship with the company
- the very friendly nature of the company
- DTUK's good understanding of employers' needs
- the good quality feedback received from assessors
- the very good training provided.

What employers would like to see improved:

- there were no requests for improvements from employers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

5. DTUK has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. DTUK trains more learners and has recruited more staff to meet the needs of the organisation. The management structure has been revised to include a business manager and other senior staff. The business plan and the quality improvement plans are very well written and thorough. Plans have been researched carefully to reflect the needs of learners, employers and the local community. Strategic management is excellent and the managing director provides strong leadership to a committed and well-informed staff team.
6. The self-assessment process is excellent and includes views from staff, learners and employers. The self-assessment report is very well written with valid judgements and is constructively self-critical of provision. Improvements to the provision include the introduction of electronic tracking of learner progress, improved recording of internal verification and the development of electronic learning materials. Some poor target setting, identified by inspectors, was also recognised by DTUK and plans are well developed to improve this. The development of the provision has been planned carefully and the resources available meet the projected future growth. Overall success rates for apprentices, advanced apprentices, and Train to Gain learners are excellent.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

7. The overall success rates for learners are outstanding. The success rates for Train to Gain are high and exceeded the national rate by 20% in 2007/08. In the current year learners are achieving above the national rate. Success rates for apprentices are high and improving. The majority of apprentices achieve on or before their target completion date. However, advanced apprentices in 2007–08 achieved slightly below the national rate but there is now a significant upward trend and the majority of apprentices are achieving within the stipulated timescale. Learners develop and achieve their key skills in good time to complete the apprenticeship framework. There are no significant variations between groups of learners.
8. Learners develop a very good range of both workplace and social skills that includes knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. Learners enjoy and benefit from their training programmes. They develop strong personal skills and are able to effectively speak up in meetings, make good presentations and work in teams very effectively. They have increased self-confidence and recognise their own ability to perform well in the workplace. The good achievements of additional qualifications and support given to learners has contributed to them being recognised as highly valuable members of the workforce and many of them have been promoted or have been given additional responsibility. Many learners have progressed on to other courses that further enhance their value in

the workplace and their own sense of worth. The additional employability skills are helping the very few learners not employed to actively seek full-time employment.

9. Learners benefit from very good safe working practices. DTUK comprehensively checks all workplaces. There is a particularly strong emphasis on corporate and personal safety in most coaching and training sessions. Learners have a very good understanding of equality and diversity.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

10. Assessment practices are good. Assessors have good and up-to-date occupational knowledge, which they use to the full benefit of the learner. Assessment planning is very thorough and good use is made of information technology to record evidence and track learner achievement. Feedback to learners is supportive and motivational. Assessors use a wide range of good assessment methods, including professional discussion and the use of photographic and video evidence. Prior learning is mapped across and the standard of work in learners' NVQ portfolios is satisfactory.
11. Learners benefit from well-delivered training in both highly effective individual coaching sessions and group teaching. Individual coaching is particularly good. Tutors know their learners well and adapt sessions effectively to meet the learners' needs and also to maximise their and the employers' resources. Good use is made of information and communication technology and tutors regularly use interactive learning in many sessions. However, lesson planning is insufficient in detail and does not identify how the topic will be delivered, what resources will be used and sometimes whether the learner has any specific learning barriers. Lesson plans also omit timescales.
12. In the best cases, target setting is clear, identifiable and time-bound and used well to monitor learner progress. The target setting and completion of the individual learning plans are satisfactory. However, many learners are insufficiently clear about what training and development is needed to meet their learning goals. There is an over-reliance on verbal communication that is sometimes insufficiently recorded. DTUK has recognised this as an area for development and has carried out staff coaching and support to bring about improvements.
13. The provision is highly tailored to incorporate current employer and commercial needs within the NVQ. Many employers suggest topics that they want incorporated in training and tutors work with both the employers and learners to provide these. Tutors have a very good understanding of employer procedures and are able to include this within the topics. Line managers are fully involved in the training and many are learners themselves. Staff are mindful of business needs in all activities. For example, visits take place at times

that are both convenient to the needs of the business and allow assessors to capture naturally occurring evidence.

14. DTUK is working effectively with unemployed adults to help them acquire new skills and find employment. Many assessors network effectively within the area with other individuals undertaking teacher training and benefit from shared good practice.
15. DTUK staff are highly flexible, supportive, approachable and accessible. They have a really good understanding of learners' personal barriers such as memory difficulties, personal and medical problems and respond with support specific to individual needs. All learners benefit from a comprehensive initial assessment of prior learning and experience to inform the training programme. However, there is no systematic or structured testing of literacy or numeracy levels. Induction is satisfactory. DTUK has links with specialist support agencies which they use when appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

16. Strategic management is excellent at DTUK. The managing director shows good leadership skills and communicates very effectively with the staff team so that all staff are knowledgeable and committed to moving the company forward. The business plan is very well researched and is not only focused on the learners' experience but also on meeting the needs of the profession and the local community. The management structure is fit for purpose.
17. DTUK has made good progress in improving the quality of the provision. All procedures were reviewed at the time of the implementation of the new management structure. All procedures and documentation are now standardised across the company. The management information system has been greatly improved and data are used routinely to manage the provision effectively. The internal verification system is particularly robust. DTUK has developed an electronic tracking system to monitor learners' progress and has made significant progress in the implementation of electronic learning programmes. Plans to implement electronic individual learning plans are well developed.
18. DTUK engages very well with learners and employers and ensures that feedback is gathered on a regular basis. DTUK has worked well with a national management consultancy to develop company strategy and has contributed to several national conferences to share this work. DTUK also networks with other local training providers.
19. DTUK provides good opportunities for continuing professional development and offers some excellent in-house training. Materials for training in equality of opportunity, health and safety and safeguarding are very good quality and use a variety of different well-designed media. Staff are well informed about these issues as well as professional and company matters and ensure that this information is passed on to learners.

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20. DTUK has good safeguarding arrangements. There are clear roles for staff, who understand their responsibilities, and the policy statement recognises the link to employers. Staff, who all have enhanced CRB clearance, have undertaken training in safeguarding and a readily accessible file lists the appointed safeguarding officer, agencies and contacts and reporting forms, and contains full guidance. Assessors have a good understanding of safeguarding and check at reviews how learners are cared for. Assessors challenge inappropriate behaviour and treatment of learners. They readily point out potential hazards to employers and health and safety is a feature of reviews. DTUK is fully aware of the requirements to engage with the Independent Safeguarding Authority in the near future.
21. Arrangements for equality and diversity are outstanding. DTUK has very effective policies and procedures that promote social inclusion, reduce barriers to learning, protect learners from bullying and harassment, and meet current legislation. Equality and diversity have a high priority throughout the organisation, are common in its culture and underpin the learning process. They are featured in the strategic plan, and there is an effective action plan with realistic targets. Frequent training for staff is excellent and based around innovative and thought-provoking exercises developed by DTUK. Staff awareness of equality and diversity is very good, as is that of learners. Employers all complete a needs analysis which includes equality and diversity. Many employers report that the good understanding developed among their employees is having a positive impact on their business. This is particularly noted where learners are in contact with the public. DTUK analyses recruitment and achievement data for equality and diversity. The clear results have been used to develop a good action plan to attract more men onto the programmes and target learners from areas with a high minority ethnic representation. Progress is good and is closely tracked against the action plan.

Information about the inspection

22. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Davidson Training UK Ltd

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14–16	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	248				248
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	1				1
Capacity to improve	1				
Outcomes for learners	1				
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	1				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>					
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>					
Quality of provision	2				2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	1				1
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>					
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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