

Bassetlaw Training Agency

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 54810

Name of lead inspector: William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

Last day of inspection: 30 July 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited
Priorswells Centre
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Information about the provider

1. Established in 1978, Bassetlaw Training Agency Ltd (BTA) was sponsored by the voluntary sector and became a company limited by guarantee in April 1988. Based in Worksop the company specialises in providing training and support to meet the needs of learners and the local community in an area of considerable social disadvantage.
2. BTA receives government funding from Nottinghamshire Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) to provide apprenticeship programmes in health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprises and business administration and law and to provide an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme in preparation for life and work. A small number of learners are on Train to Gain programmes in early years and business administration.
3. BTA is located in Bassetlaw local authority, where in 2009 only 35.5% of 16 year olds achieved A* - C at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared with a national average of 50.9%. BTA is situated in, and draws many of its learners from an area of very high deprivation and its mission is "to provide a positive learning experience which raises achievement and puts learners first – learn – develop – move on".

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Entry to Employment	43 learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	4 learners 69 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Child development and well being	3
Preparation for work	3

Overall effectiveness

4. BTA's provision is satisfactory overall. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners make good progress and acquire good skills and knowledge. However, success rates and progression into employment are showing signs of improvement having declined recently. Learners gain a good range of additional qualifications and feel very safe. Teaching, learning, and assessment are satisfactory overall, although teaching sessions sometimes lack variety and pace. The needs and interests of learners and employers are met appropriately. Support for learners is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Safeguarding is good and meets current requirements. Equality and diversity are satisfactory, which reflects learners' understanding. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. BTA demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners generally make good progress, acquire good knowledge and skills and produce a high standard of work. Learners feel very safe both in placements and at BTA. They have a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities in both settings.

- Apprenticeship success rates have improved but remain well below sector averages. In-year retention is very high. E2E progression declined in the last year and is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Sessions for literacy and numeracy are well planned but sometimes lack challenge, variety and pace. Too many childcare taught sessions lack structure and focus. Assessment is satisfactory as are resources.
- BTA meets the needs and interests of learners and employers satisfactorily. E2E learners and employers benefit from work placements, which develop learners' skills and confidence. Health and social care learners have opportunities to enhance their learning through a range of enrichment activities. Good partnerships enhance learning across the provision.
- BTA provides excellent dyslexia support and good pastoral and additional learning support. Information advice and guidance is good and supports learners well in their career choices.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. BTA has a clear strategy and mission, which is well understood by staff and responds appropriately to national, regional and local demands. BTA sets realistic targets across the organisation.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. BTA has a strong commitment to creating an anti-bullying environment. It has a designated officer for safeguarding and staff training has been carried out. BTA meets current government requirements. Learners feel safe.
- Equality and diversity are satisfactory. BTA has an acceptable equalities policy which includes bullying and harassment. On the apprenticeship programme, male learners have tended to achieve less well than female learners. The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning is satisfactory and learners' understanding is also satisfactory.
- BTA is in the early stages of developing its learner voice. It carries out surveys on learners and employers but does not formally involve them in their quality improvement processes. The self-assessment is broadly accurate. Outcomes of teaching and learning observations are not sufficiently collated to identify issues and drive forward improvements.

What does BTA need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the achievement gaps between different groups of learners are analysed and monitored with action plans where required so that all learners achieve their potential.
- Ensure that teaching and learning have greater variety, pace and challenge to better engage learners and extend their understanding.
- Maintain the focus on employment through the transition to foundation learning so that learners are well prepared for work.

- Ensure that equality and diversity are strongly promoted in teaching and reviews to improve learner understanding and preparedness to work in diverse and multiracial settings.
- Continue to develop the learner voice and employer engagement so that their views are used to plan, manage and improve the provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being able to concentrate more on Maths and English
- the people at work placement are all very helpful and friendly
- the warm environment makes you more confident
- completing health and safety, first aid and manual handling
- the really supportive assessors
- having fun whilst learning
- getting real experience in the workplace
- being valued and respected
- learning with friends.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more visits in the workplace from assessors.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the prompt action taken when placements prove unsuitable
- BTA's levels of support and attention to the needs of vulnerable learners
- assessors who have good experience
- good communication from BTA
- a trusted business relationship with BTA
- the high standards in childcare practice.

What employers would like to see improved:

- longer placement hours with more assessor support
- quicker completions for some learners
- the introduction of a forum for employers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

5. BTA has satisfactory capacity to improve. It has resolved most, but not all of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. BTA has a clear strategy that is well supported by staff. Communication and team working are good. Success rates for apprentices and progression for E2E learners have experienced a recent decline in performance. The self-assessment is well established and involves staff well, although quality improvement plans vary in their effectiveness. BTA have an observation of teaching and learning system but outcomes are not sufficiently analysed to drive forward improvement. BTA is in the early stages of engaging learners and employers in its quality improvement processes.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

6. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall. Many learners have few or no qualifications on entry to the programmes and make good progress given their starting points. E2E learners demonstrate good vocational skills in their work placements and childcare learners acquire good knowledge and skills that improve standards of care in the workplace. The standard of learners work is good. Many learners gain useful additional qualifications, which are relevant to their programme and future employment.
7. Overall success rates for apprenticeships rose substantially in 2008/09, from a very low base, but remained well below the average. In the past two years male learners, have achieved less well than female learners. BTA data for 2009/10 shows success rates improving marginally. However, its in-year retention for the first year of the 2010/11 cohort is very high and compares favourably with the same period last year. Progression into employment for E2E learners has declined in the last year and is satisfactory.
8. BTA pays good attention to safe working practices across its provision. Learners feel extremely safe both in their placements and in the training centre. BTA completes systematic risk assessments of employers' premises. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities in both settings and know who to contact if they have problems. Learners have reasonable opportunities to contribute to the community or to benefit from enrichment.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

9. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Much teaching lacks the challenge, variety and pace to engage learners fully. Sessions relied heavily on learners spending too much time on self-directed research tasks. BTA's promotion of equality and diversity in teaching is satisfactory. Assessment is

generally thorough and well recorded. Reviews are particularly effective for E2E learners. Learners generally have a good understanding of the progress they are making.

10. BTA meets the needs and interests of learners and employers satisfactorily. Initial assessment and induction are thorough and ensure that learners' needs are well reflected in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Learners' benefit from achieving a range of relevant additional qualifications, which enhances their future prospects. Effective partnerships with local organisations ensure that BTA is equipped to meet the range of learners' needs.
11. BTA provides a very good range of work-placements for all learners, which are used well to develop their skills and confidence. E2E placements are particularly well thought out to provide learners with opportunities, which progressively extends their learning. Employers are actively engaged in supporting learners in their programme.
12. BTA provides particularly good support for learners. It provides excellent dyslexia support, which ensures that many learners are diagnosed with dyslexia for the first time and receive support, which enables them to complete the programme. The pastoral support is also good with learners receiving effective support on a range of personal issues. Information advice and guidance supports learners well in making their career choices.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

13. Leadership and management are satisfactory. BTA has a clear business plan which takes appropriate account of national and regional priorities. They have a good understanding of their local market and good networks with local organisations. Staff are committed to BTA's strategy and mission with its strong emphasis on working with disadvantaged learners. Communication is good. BTA sets appropriate and realistic targets, particularly for learner recruitment, however the regular monitoring of learner achievement and progress is underdeveloped. BTA sets appropriate performance targets for staff and has a well-established appraisal system, which identifies staff development needs well. Staff are appropriately qualified with most staff having or working towards a teaching qualification.
14. BTA has good safeguarding arrangements. It prioritises safeguarding exceptionally well and consciously creates a safe environment where often previously bullied learners can flourish. BTA has a policy for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, which is regularly updated with changes in the law. It carries out regular training for all staff on safeguarding and has a designated child protection officer who has undergone additional training. BTA has productive links with the local social services department. BTA takes swift and appropriate action when incidences occur to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. BTA complies with the requirements to complete criminal record bureau (CRB) checks on its entire staff.

15. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. BTA sets appropriate targets for recruiting different groups of learners, such as male learners; learners from disadvantaged postcodes and learners with a disability. However, the monitoring of their achievement and progress is underdeveloped. Equality and diversity is covered adequately in induction and reinforced in reviews by the use of prompts. However, learners' understanding of equality and diversity are no more than satisfactory. BTA has appropriate policies and procedures, which incorporates bullying and harassment, but has yet to reflect the most recent legislation. BTA require employers to adopt their own equality policy if they do not have their own. The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching is satisfactory. BTA offers good support for learners with specific learning particularly dyslexia.
16. BTA is in the early stages of developing its learner voice. They carry out surveys for learners at various stages of their programme. Issues are resolved informally but do not lead to formal action plans or development plans. Employer surveys are also carried out, but have a low response rate. BTA has no learner or employer forums and is in the early stages of devising a learner representative system.
17. BTA has a well-established self-assessment process. The report is informed by the quality improvement plans of course teams. All staff have good involvement in the process. The quality improvement plans are used well by the E2E team as a tool to drive forward improvement. However, the health and social care team use it less effectively. The report does not sufficiently reflect learner and employer views. BTA has an observation of teaching and learning policy and procedure. Outcomes of observations lead to individual action plans, but are not sufficiently collated or analysed to drive forward improvement. Additionally the observation framework does not sufficiently identify the need for the promotion of equality and diversity within teaching and learning. Resources are broadly satisfactory as is value for money.

Subject areas

Child development and well being

Grade 3

Context

18. Forty learners are following apprenticeships in children's care learning and development. The majority of these learners are 16-18 years old on intermediate qualifications. BTA places learners in nurseries and other childcare establishments across the Bassetlaw district. A minority of learners are employed. Learners attend BTA's training centre in Worksop for one full day per week to participate in workshops and formal taught sessions covering the technical certificate, knowledge and understanding, key skills and portfolio building.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall. Learners develop good personal and social skills and enjoy their learning. Many learners make good progress relative to their prior attainment. Learners develop useful literacy, numeracy, and key skills required to complete their programmes and develop their potential within the workplace.
- Success rates have been improving but remain below national rates. However, current learners are making good timely progress in the development of their occupational knowledge and skills and wider learning skills.
- Learners increase their employability by developing valuable skills and knowledge which employers value, with many learners gaining useful additional qualifications. A high number of learners progress onto more advanced courses within BTA and gain employment within the childcare sector. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work.
- All learners feel that the learning environment is safe and welcoming, and they feel respected as individuals. They follow safe working practices and have a satisfactory understanding of the risks associated with the childcare sector. Learners demonstrate mature attitudes and behaviour.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Initial assessment and induction are particularly thorough and a very detailed profile of the learner and their learning needs are contained within the ILP.
- Assessment is thorough and reliable and assessment plans are well documented. All learners know the level of progress they are making and what they need to do to complete their programme. Support with literacy and numeracy is satisfactory.
- BTA's promotion of equality and diversity in teaching is satisfactory. However, staff do not always maximise opportunities in some taught sessions and reviews to promote it. The range of work-placements is very good and employers support learning well.

- The range of learning opportunities, choice of levels and additional qualifications are satisfactory. Well planned provision provides coherent progression routes. There are good arrangements for off-the-job training but the quality of teaching is variable. Assessment visits are flexible to suit learners' and employers' needs.
- BTA has good partnership arrangements with schools, employers and community groups which enhance learning and stimulate interest in wider learning and career pathways. They also have strong connections with the local community, which they use well to promote social inclusion and personal development.
- BTA provide good personal support for learners. Staff are particularly skilled at recognising barriers to learning and act quickly and efficiently to help learners continue their programme. Learners feel respected and cared for. They value the support and respond positively. Additional support needs are effectively identified and remedied.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. BTA does not have effective arrangements to collect and analyse the views and opinions of its users. The quality improvement plan is satisfactory. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall but some buildings require refurbishment and more frequent maintenance. Safeguarding is satisfactory. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but does not sufficiently identify areas for improvement.

What does BTA need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase the rate of completion within planned end dates by focusing on those learners who are identified at risk of not completing within their agreed timescale and providing increased support to help them achieve.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by introducing more thorough and effective quality systems to monitor and improve the performance of tutors.
- Better promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity by maximising opportunities in all aspects of the learning process to raise awareness of the breadth and impact of inequality and difference within all aspects of life and work.

Preparation for work

Grade 3

Context

19. Currently 15 learners aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on the E2E programme. A total of 51 learners joined during 2009/10. They attend the training centre in Worksop for literacy and numeracy, which is accredited at entry level, level one and level two. In addition, they complete vocationally related training and take part in extension activities. Learners spend the rest of their time on work placement.

Key findings

- A high proportion of learners achieve additional qualifications related to their vocational area and employment in general. These include certificates in manual handling, first aid, health and safety, computer literacy, and units towards qualifications in child care and customer services. In 2008/09, the majority of learners gained at least one certificate. For many this was their first accredited success. Learners demonstrate good vocational skills in their work placement.
- Learners' progression into employment, further education and training shows a declining trend over the past three years. In a difficult economic climate, many learners choose temporary and part time employment rather than substantial employment or the kind of training that counts as a positive progression for E2E. Pass rates for literacy and numeracy awards have also declined in the current year.
- Learners feel safe in their placements and in the training centre. BTA completes systematic risk assessments of employers' premises. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities for safe practice and know who to contact if they have problems.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners demonstrate good vocational skills in the workplace, although training is informal. Sessions for literacy and numeracy are well planned to include knowledge and skills required for accreditation, but sometimes lack challenge and variety of pace and style to suit different individuals. The topics are insufficiently related to vocational or personal experience. Resources are satisfactory. Equality and diversity are promoted by taking account of individual learners' needs and difficulties rather than proactively celebrating differences.
- Learners benefit from particularly detailed reviews of their progress, both in the workplace and for their literacy and numeracy attainment. Assessment is satisfactory, ensuring that learners are allocated appropriate support for their skills development. Targets set in the reviews are specific, wide-ranging and well understood by learners. Employers are actively involved in setting targets and evaluating progress.
- BTA makes very effective use of work placements to develop learners' skills and confidence. All learners are allocated a placement promptly. They progress from

a more sheltered environment to more challenging placements when they are ready. The wide range of vocational areas represented help learners make informed career choices. Employers' needs are well served by the placements. Many learners gain employment with their work experience provider.

- BTA has good partnerships with a range of employers, with the local youth offending team and with specialist agencies for accessing additional services to enhance the programme. It contributes to local networks of E2E providers on curriculum development.
- BTA provides particularly good pastoral and additional learning support. Where learners need individual support for literacy and numeracy, it employs the services of a specialist agency. Learners are screened for dyslexia and, where needed, they receive a full assessment, resources and excellent support from a dyslexia support service. Individual learners attend anger management sessions and interventions to improve their health and well-being as part of their E2E programme. BTA is meticulous in tracking absence, illness and personal issues, with input well documented in the learners' files.
- The E2E team has an energetic approach to developing and providing the programme. It is well advanced in its plans for implementing the new foundation learning programme. The quality improvement plan is used as a working document to analyse changes needed. The self-assessment report does not reflect the recent decline in outcomes for learners and action needed to improve this.
- BTA has a strong commitment to dealing with the needs of vulnerable learners and narrowing the achievement gap for all learners in their care, by treating them as unique individuals. However, it does not regularly analyse achievement data for different learner groups. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity.

What does BTA need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more learners gain a positive outcome earlier in their programme, while still having the incentive to stay on for a positive progression into employment, further education or training.
- Ensure that learning in literacy and numeracy sessions is more active, more varied and related more precisely to each learner's vocational and personal needs.
- Make the promotion of equality and diversity more proactive through curriculum development, in analysing data on achievement for different groups of learners and in raising the understanding of learners about other cultures.

Information about the inspection

20. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of BTA's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, 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.
21. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the agency. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Bassetlaw Training Agency

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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	56	56
Part-time learners	0	0
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4	
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?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	n/a	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	n/a	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
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	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	n/a	
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?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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