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Ms J Leeming  
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Dear Ms Leeming

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in apprenticeship training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 November 2009 to look at good practice in hospitality and catering apprenticeship training.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with key members of staff, views of learners and employers, examination of documentation and the observation of resources and training activities at a college subcontractor.

Features of good practice

- The high overall and timely success rates with four of the five subcontractors used to deliver apprenticeship training.

Compass has been successful in improving both overall and timely success rates in the past year by some 26 percentage points. Subcontractors are used to deliver training and four of the five used have very high overall success rates with no significant difference between overall and timely rates. Key factors in raising success rates have been tighter monitoring of subcontractors' performance, improved support for learners and improved delivery of key skills. New learners are being placed with one of four high-performing subcontractors and current projections indicate that this should have a continued positive impact on improving success rates.

- The high numbers of women apprentices in training.

Unusually for hospitality, there are high numbers of women apprentices. Currently, over two-thirds of apprentices are women. This is representative of the company as a whole. One of the key success factors in recruiting women apprentices is the high number already within the company.

- The particularly effective promotion of training opportunities within Compass and the hospitality industry as a whole.

Compass has produced a managers' guide to qualifications that promotes the benefits of training for the workforce effectively. It explains all the training opportunities available within the company and the benefits of trained staff being more likely to stay with the company and progress further within their work. Managers are encouraged to nominate members of staff who would benefit from training as apprentices. Staff nominated need to demonstrate a clear commitment to training. Part of the managers' role is to appoint a mentor to support the learner, through coaching, within the particular work environment. In some workplaces, two mentors ensure that all shift patterns are covered and that learners have continuous support. High-end industry skills are also promoted well. Apprentices can compete in a junior chef of the year competition where the prize is to cook with an internationally renowned chef. In addition to the internal promotion of training, Compass has been very active in promoting careers within the hospitality industry to students aged 12 to 16. The students have the opportunity to attend a 10-week course on Saturday mornings at a range of over 20 hospitality venues around England, such as colleges, called the 'Compass Group Junior Chef Academy'. Sponsorship includes paying for staffing and equipment. The programme is beginning to lead to students progressing into training within the industry, although not necessarily with Compass.

- The good management of subcontracted provision following the closure of the main subcontractor leading to much improved success rates and training experience of learners.

Compass faced many problems following the collapse of a very large work-based learning provider two years ago where most of their learners were placed. Although most of the displaced learners were transferred to another large provider, its performance was poor and did not meet the required standards. Compass has appointed a dedicated qualifications manager and has carefully selected high-performing subcontractors, working to thorough service-level agreements. One of the key improvements has been the education of the managers and learning mentors about the differences between National Vocational Qualifications and apprenticeship programmes. The subcontracted training providers have planned the apprenticeship programme into a series of key visits which all parties involved in training are aware of. The delivery methods used provide more intensive support over a shorter period of time. This allows the apprentice to have more focus on achieving their learning goals and to see progress quickly. Both the learner and their mentor become more motivated by the success in achieving targets. The use of data within the organisation is good and Compass is aware of the

performance of their subcontractors, which is a key focus of discussions during contract management meetings.

- The good use of different models of delivery for on- and off-the-job training to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Learners receive their training through either an on- or off-the-job training model, depending on the circumstances of where they live and work. An off-the-job training model, known as the 'Academy', uses a classroom in a college one day each week, enabling learners to focus on learning away from the workplace. For both models a lot of evidence, such as reflective learning statements, learning logs or projects, is completed at work, along with assessment. Compass has invested in producing good training support materials, such as an induction handbook and online training in health and safety. Learning, for apprentices who train on-the-job, is planned out between the mentor and the learner with four-weekly reviews held to ensure that learners stay on target. Both mentors and managers help to ensure that learners are provided with learning and assessment opportunities. Key skills are contextualised to hospitality and completed early in the training programme.

#### Areas for development

- Continue the focus on developing training models that meets the needs of learners in the workplace.

Much progress has been made in a short period of time in establishing models of training with good subcontractors, where assessors work closely with managers and mentors to meet learners' needs. There is a need to continue to evaluate the most effective features of on- and off-the-job training models and share good practice between subcontractors to further improve training.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop apprenticeship training in your organisation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Phil Hatton  
Her Majesty's Inspector