

Sheffield City Council Learning, Skills and Employment

Reinspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Mike Berry HMI

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Type of provider: Local Authority

Address: Sheffield City Council, Learning, Skills and
Employment, 145 Crookesmoor Road,
Sheffield, S6 3FP

Telephone number: 0114 266 7503

Introduction

Sheffield City Council Learning, Skills and Employment (LSE) was inspected in April 2009. Overall effectiveness was found to be satisfactory for the provider but the work-based learning (WBL) remit was judged to be inadequate. The subject area of business, administration and law was also judged to be inadequate. Ofsted is responsible for reinspecting all provision that is inadequate.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Subject area/type of provision	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Business, administration and law	4	3

Context

Currently, 28 apprentices and 14 advanced apprentices are enrolled in business administration. Most learners are in placements within Sheffield City Council. The majority of training and assessment is carried out in the workplace. Learners can attend the training centre at Red Tape Central to develop their knowledge for the technical certificate. The programme is managed by the programme leader and delivered by two assessors and a key skills tutor. Courses are also provided for Train to Gain and learners aged 14 to 16, in addition to a number of short courses in business-related subjects delivered in the community.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall. Success rates have much improved since the previous inspection. In 2008/09, the overall success rate for business administration apprentices was 78% and for advanced apprentices 67%. During this period, 67% of apprentices and advanced apprentices completed their training programmes within the planned period of study.
- Current learners make good progress relative to their prior attainment. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners enjoy learning and are particularly well motivated to achieve. More than half of the current learners have gained additional level 2 qualifications in workplace health and safety.
- Learners develop good skills which contribute effectively to their employability and economic well-being. They benefit from increases in their self-confidence. Learners develop skills in a good variety of working practices and routines, and extend their understanding of the theory that supports their work roles. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work.
- Learners feel appropriately safe and secure in their working environments. They adopt safe working practices, are aware of internet safety measures and know

what to do if they are harassed or bullied. Assessors do not check in sufficient detail learners' understanding of health, safety and equal opportunities during their reviews.

- Planning for assessment is good. Learners are clear about what assessors expect of them and what they need to do between assessor visits. Assessment records are detailed and clearly referenced to the NVQ performance indicators. Assessor feedback is good in helping learners to progress. However, assessors and learners do not make sufficient use of technology to produce and record evidence for the portfolios.
- Assessors provide particularly good support to learners. They work very effectively with the learners to provide individual and regular support in their workplaces. Learners speak highly of the support they receive. Assessors have a good understanding of the work routines of the council departments. Learner progress reviews are satisfactory. Assessors set good individualised and specific targets for learners.
- Supervisors provide good workplace training and understand well the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks. Assessors do not record sufficiently, in the individual learning plans, the workplace training that learners will receive when they start in their placements.
- The programme meets the needs of learners and employers well. Learners make a good contribution to their workplaces where they develop their work roles and take on more responsibility. Optional units are carefully selected to meet employer needs and to assist learners in developing their job role. Assessors are flexible when carrying out workplace assessments to meet the needs of learners and employers.
- Learners make good progress into further education, training and employment. Learners progress well between the levels. LSE's good development of the initial training programme enables a significant number of learners to build on prior attainment and experience to access the apprenticeship programme.
- LSE makes good use of local information and partnership arrangements to inform the apprenticeship programme, to widen participation and to facilitate progression. The provider has engaged with other programmes and initiatives in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and economically inactive groups and to advise on the recruitment of apprentices.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information and advice to help them make informed choices. Staff provide good support for learners to promote their learning and development. LSE ensures that learners are provided with the opportunity to attend workplace interviews. However, a few learners wait too long between their interview and starting in their placements.
- The programme leader promotes high standards and expectations, and the team works well together. The work-based learning team uses the management information system satisfactorily to monitor assessor targets, which they review

in individual monthly meetings. Learners who are at risk of not achieving within the planned timescales receive extra support. The use of data has much improved since the previous inspection.

- Quality assurance processes have improved since the previous inspection. The programme manager monitors regularly the completion of learner reviews and individual learning and assessment plans. Observations of assessment and reviews to improve performance have taken place recently. However, at the time of the reinspection it is too soon to judge the impact of these activities.

What does Sheffield City Council Learning Skills and Employment need to do to improve further?

- Continue to use data regularly and effectively to set and review targets, to monitor learner performance and progress, and further improve success rates.
- Increase the use of technology in order to better support learning, to record evidence for the NVQ and to improve the efficiency of assessment.
- Promote health and safety and equality and diversity more effectively in learner progress reviews through more meaningful discussions so that learners better understand the impact on them and their work roles.
- Identify better the workplace training learners will receive and record this on the individual learning plans, so that learners are clear about what training they will take in their placements and how this matches with the NVQ.

Additional Themes

Inspectors explored the following themes as part of this reinspection.

How effectively is the self-assessment process used to improve the outcomes for learners and the quality of provision? Reasonable progress

Self-assessment is increasingly effective in driving quality improvement. Staff are more effectively involved in, and have ownership of, the self-assessment report. Subcontractors are involved but the council recognises that the incorporation of learner and employer views is insufficiently developed. Self-assessment at subject area level effectively informs the overall judgements. Coordination between the various remits and funding streams is good and the report reflects the diversity of provision. Accurate and reliable data are used to good effect to inform judgements. The self-assessment process has become more cyclical, extends over most of the year and links more effectively to other quality improvement activities. Quality groups covering all remits and funding streams meet regularly to review the approach to self-assessment. The 2008/09 self-assessment report effectively incorporates the new common inspection framework. The report has a clear focus on what needs to be done to improve the quality of work-based learning. It is suitably self-critical and evaluative. The self-assessment report informs a very good, detailed and well-monitored quality improvement plan. Comprehensive targets and actions within the plan identify clear accountabilities and suitable timescales which are systematically helping to improve outcomes for learners and the quality of provision.

Have the overall and timely success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships improved? Are current learners making good progress towards their qualifications? Reasonable progress

LSE's overall rates and rates completed within the planned time for apprentices have improved significantly and are satisfactory in 2008/09. However, these have dipped but remain satisfactory in the current year. Overall rates and rates completed within the planned time for advanced apprentices have improved slowly but are still low. In the current year they have improved significantly and are high.

In health, public services and care, overall success rates for apprentices in 2008/09 have improved significantly but remain low. Rates completed within the planned time have improved and are satisfactory. In the current year these success rates have declined and are low. For advanced apprentices, overall success rates, though improved, remain low. Rates completed within the planned time have not improved but are satisfactory. In the current year, overall rates and rates completed within the planned time have improved significantly and are satisfactory.

In hospitality, overall rates and rates completed within the planned time have improved significantly and are high. In construction, overall rates and rates completed within the planned time have improved and are high though they dipped in the current year. In information and communication technology, overall rates and rates completed within the planned time have improved and are satisfactory but they declined in the current year. In horticulture, overall rates and rates completed within the planned time have declined and are low. Most learners make good progress. The proportion of learners beyond their planned completion dates has significantly reduced.

What actions have been taken to improve the quality of training for apprentices? Have target-setting and learner progress reviews improved? Reasonable progress

Many actions have been taken to improve the quality of training for apprentices. The sharing of good practice between subject areas has greatly increased and much is focused on improving teaching and learning. A good range of staff training is helping teachers improve their practice. Most staff have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure teachers keep up-to-date in their subjects. The observation process has become more rigorous and confirms the quality of teaching is improving. Arrangements for ensuring the quality of on-the-job training are less well developed. Induction for learners has improved and this has reduced the number of early leavers. The use of target-setting has improved. Learners are set challenging short- and long-term targets through improved and satisfactory monthly and quarterly reviews. Learner progress reviews have not yet been incorporated into the observation process. Many learners starting on apprenticeships have low levels of previous attainment. The arrangements to identify the support needs of learners are highly effective. Support for literacy and numeracy is very effective and the support for more complex needs is good. Learners value greatly the personal and pastoral support they receive from teachers and assessors.

What improvements have been made to ensure that leadership and management are consistent across the work-based learning provision? Significant progress

LSE have made significant improvements to ensure that leadership and management are consistent across work-based learning. A very effective restructure of the provision together with the appointment of a manager with specific responsibility for strategy and work-based learning have made accountabilities clear. The service now has a clear and specific focus on the issues arising from inspection. Staff have a much better understanding of strategic aims and operational issues and are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. The service has significantly improved both physical and staffing resources with a new centre for business administration and much investment in staff training in teaching and learning. Further new building

and refurbishment is soon to begin. Information, advice and guidance processes are greatly improved. Excellent improvements have been made to the collection, analysis and use of data. The data team has been strengthened and makes available a wide range of timely and accurate reports. It now works closely and productively with curriculum staff. Curriculum managers use data very effectively to inform their decisions and to set team targets, although they do not yet have direct access to the data systems. Overall, the better availability and use of data has contributed significantly to the improved success rates.

How effective are the arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and diversity within the work-based learning provision? Reasonable progress

LSE has made reasonable progress in promoting equality and diversity within the WBL provision. An equality and diversity management group provides a clear lead for the development of equality and diversity. The group meets on a monthly basis to monitor progress towards equality and diversity action points in the development plan. The service continues to use good partnership working to target under-represented groups and to recruit them to the provision. All staff are now trained in a range of equality and diversity topics. The observation process is beginning to identify how well equality and diversity are incorporated into teaching and learning. Information is routinely collected on learners' ethnicity, gender and disability to identify where groups are achieving at different rates across the provision. Managers in WBL are not yet using these data to identify learners' achievement gaps or to take relevant actions. Initial assessment is used successfully to identify learners with literacy and numeracy support needs. Very effective support enables these learners to overcome barriers and achieve well. The service is not currently analysing the success rates of learners who receive support against those who do not.

How effective are the safeguarding arrangements in protecting learners? Reasonable progress

LSE has made reasonable progress in developing safeguarding arrangements. All staff have received additional, in-depth training approved by the local safeguarding boards. Lead officers have completed safer recruitment training and have cascaded this to the wider workforce. The service has developed some very good and challenging training packages for both staff and learners on e-learning and 'grooming' of vulnerable people. All staff, including those not in direct contact with learners, are Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked. The service intends to extend this good practice by using Independent Safeguarding Authority processes. A single central list of CRB checks is maintained. Learners feel safe in the training centres and in the workplace. They are fully aware OF what to do if they are in danger or suffer abuse. The sharing of good practice across all remits and within WBL is helping to improve the arrangements for safeguarding. The management of specific cases is sensitively undertaken but staff do not always follow processes outlined in the

procedures. Central monitoring of the progress and closure of cases is not well developed. Staff use quarterly progress reviews to ask learners appropriate questions on safeguarding but this is not included in the monthly reviews.

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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