

Talent Training (UK) LLP

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Talent Training (UK) LLP is a limited liability partnership based in Newcastle upon Tyne and has been in existence since April 2007. It holds a contract with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace through Train to Gain programmes. It provides training and assessment in engineering and manufacturing, retail and commercial enterprise, preparation for life and work and business, administration and law sector subject areas.

The most recent inspection report was published in March 2009. Talent Training was judged to be good in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards and leadership and management. Quality of provision and equality of opportunity were judged to be satisfactory. Of the four subject areas inspected, engineering and business, administration and law were judged to be good. Retail and commercial enterprise and preparation for life and work were satisfactory. Procedures for safeguarding did not meet current government requirements. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

<p>What improvements have there been in arrangements for self-assessment and quality improvement since the last inspection?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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The previous inspection identified that the self-assessment report was critical, evaluative and broadly accurate. The new self-assessment report is currently being developed for publication in December. The process is inclusive and takes account of learners', employers' and staff views in reaching evaluative judgements on the provision. The use of and reporting on data have improved to give staff and managers timely information on performance. The quality improvement plan identifies actions and targets for improvement but the implementation of some actions has been slow. For example, the development of the observation of teaching and learning process and the implementation of some quality improvement strategies.

Outcomes for learners

<p>What improvements have been made to success rates and outcomes for learners in 2008/09?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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Provider data show that in 2008/09 overall success rates are good at 82% and timely rates have increased by 7% from 2007/08 rates to a satisfactory 68%. Since the inspection, the economic downturn has impacted significantly on a number of large

employers where the provider delivered NVQ training. A number have ceased trading, whilst others have reduced the size of the workforce through redundancy and the number of sites at which they operate. Talent Training takes appropriate action to attempt to complete the NVQ qualifications with learners under the threat of redundancy. Additional assessors are placed within companies to try to enable learners to complete more quickly. However, some learners leave without having the opportunity to complete their qualification. The impact on overall and timely success has been significant in business administration where overall and timely success rates have fallen to 59% and 36% respectively. Of the 913 learners enrolled in companies affected by redundancy and closure, over a third of learners were working towards NVQs in this area of learning. Most were unable to complete their programme.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving staff skills through training and development? Reasonable progress

At the inspection Talent Training was not recording development needs arising during performance appraisals and did not sufficiently promote the sharing of best practice. Since the inspection the economic context and changes in funding arrangements have affected how Talent Training manages staff development. The company has responded quickly to external circumstances by undertaking a comprehensive skills audit involving all staff. The company has a detailed skills and qualifications analysis and has identified the training needs of all staff in line with business priorities. Staff are participating in a diverse range of courses including teaching qualifications, assessor and verifier awards as well as occupational qualifications. The timing of training is appropriately planned to take advantage of times when access to employers and learners during the peak trading seasons is limited. Talent Training does not apply and use the outcomes of observations of teaching and learning systematically to inform staff development plans.

What progress has been made in improving arrangements for additional learning support? Reasonable progress

The previous inspection identified that the promotion of skills for life provision within the NVQ curriculum was insufficient. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners are now provided with good support. Talent Training identified that East European learners with specific ESOL needs are concentrated in two workplaces and have appropriately prioritised these for support. Two interpreters provide effective support at the induction and assessment stages of the programme which reassures learners and improves their engagement in the learning process. This support effectively maintains the pace of achievement for these learners. The promotion of skills for life within the NVQ curriculum has improved. Significantly more learners now take literacy and numeracy qualifications than at the inspection. Talent Training

includes company terms and generic business phrases in some literacy and numeracy materials ensuring that the content of sessions is more relevant to learners. However, some of the language used is too complex for the level of learners identified with support needs. Talent Training continues to provide effective initial assessments of literacy and numeracy for all learners. Learners with identified support needs are given appropriate support and are set individual achievement targets in their support plans. Provider data shows high overall and timely success rates in 2008/09 of literacy and numeracy qualifications.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to ensure learners are safeguarded? Reasonable progress

The previous inspection identified that procedures for safeguarding learners did not meet current government requirements. Talent Training has taken successful action to improve its approach to safeguarding. All staff have undergone enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks (CRB), the details of which are recorded on a single central register. A minority of staff who have been recruited in the last two to three months are awaiting the return of CRB checks. A senior manager is the designated safeguarding officer who is supported by a deputy safeguarding officer.

Internal safeguarding training has been implemented for staff and all staff have enrolled on an e-learning level 1 safeguarding training programme. Staff have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities under safeguarding. The safeguarding policy is clearly defined and includes appropriate risk assessment for disclosure. The provider employs the services of a local legal firm to advise on safeguarding matters and to ensure that they operate within the law. A small number of safeguarding incidents have been identified and appropriately recorded and addressed by a senior member of staff who is the designated safeguarding person. A service level agreement with employers outlines Talent Training's responsibilities under safeguarding, equality and diversity and health and safety.

What progress has been made to improve the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity? Reasonable progress

Inspection identified that further work was required to improve the recording and monitoring of incidents and complaints affecting learners. Since the inspection significant progress has been made in implementing a rigorous complaints process. Complaints are now dealt with quickly and effectively with a senior manager taking direct responsibility. Talent Training now maintains good records of complaints and incidents and action taken as a result. The company takes any issues of poor practice or behaviour very seriously and initiates appropriate action where necessary.

The previous inspection identified that Talent Training made insufficient use of data to review the performance of different groups and identify any achievement gaps. This remains an area for improvement. Recently the company has begun to evaluate the performance of different groups to identify achievement gaps. They have identified that there are variations in achievement between men and women, but have not yet undertaken any analysis to review the reasons why. Talent Training continues to satisfactorily promote equality and diversity to employers and learners.

What progress has been made to improve the use of feedback from users to inform quality improvement?

Reasonable progress

At inspection the gathering and use of employers' views was identified as being too informal. The collection and analysis of learners' views were satisfactory. Since inspection the company has continued to conduct learner surveys to evaluate training but has been slow in analysing the findings to identify improvements. Talent Training has plans to improve electronic systems for collating learner feedback in January 2010. The company is now working more closely with individual employers to evaluate specific training programmes rather than focusing on broad surveys. This has led to significant improvement of programmes. For example, on the business improvement techniques course, learning materials and portfolios have been radically simplified and made more accessible to learners. Internal verification processes have been modified to increase the amount and quality of feedback from users.

What progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching, training and learning?

Insufficient progress

The previous inspection identified that quality assurance checks on some key learning processes were insufficient. Observations of teaching, training and learning had been introduced to monitor and improve the quality of provision but were in early stages of implementation. Since the inspection there has been insufficient progress on implementing an observation of teaching and learning process. Few formal observations have taken place. Emphasis has been placed on improving assessment activities in the workplace.

A team of lead internal verifiers who each have responsibility for a specific sector subject area are sufficiently focused on monitoring and improving the quality of delivery. They meet monthly to review and evaluate progress to date. They have been effective in standardising procedures for learners at recruitment and induction and have introduced a standard approach in a portfolio of evidence compilation. Some staff training has taken place for trainer assessors on accrediting prior learning and in ensuring teaching and learning meets the individual needs of all learners. However, this has yet to be evaluated to judge the impact and measure any improvement in practice. Internal verification procedures are being standardised and

extended across all occupational areas and focus better on identifying weak and best practice.

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