

Childcare Training Consultancy

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Childcare Training Consultancy (CTC) was founded in 2000 to provide training in health and social care. It has been a wholly owned subsidiary of the Career Development Center (CDC) since May 2006 and no longer maintains its own staff. Staff have caseloads spread across both contracts. The current managing director took over in January 2009 and the joint staff has since been restructured. CTC has 221 learners, mostly in East London, with a few in the East of England. Most are taking child or adult care NVQs, but a few are working towards management or business administration qualifications. In previous years a large number of learners were enrolled on literacy and numeracy qualifications, and some on customer service, but the company has no current learners on these programmes. The apprenticeship programme has also been discontinued.

The provider was first inspected by Ofsted in February 2008 and was judged satisfactory. A monitoring visit in December 2009 identified a significant number of areas where CTC had made insufficient progress since that inspection.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has CTC made in ensuring that the self-assessment process is comprehensive, uses data analytically, and effectively contributes to quality improvement? Reasonable progress

In the six months since the previous monitoring visit, CTC has made reasonable progress in improving self-assessment processes. Management has reviewed self-assessment activities and has started them earlier than last year. Quality improvement plans have improved so that they prioritise more clearly and focus more on the impact of measures. More actions have been delegated to operational staff. A new quality manager was appointed in January 2010. The quality team is more representative and better coordinated with assessor teams. Standardisation processes are now coherent between regions. Information is better used, more comprehensive and consistent. Staff are piloting new approaches to motivate learners, although it is too early to see their impact. Verifiers collect more direct feedback from learners to follow up issues raised in reviews.

However, information collected about the quality of provision is not sufficiently used in self-assessment. Observations of key processes are too focused on compliance and do not sufficiently record their impact on learning. The use of trends or demographic data to measure impact is limited. Although surveys are used extensively to gather information, some is interpreted and used inappropriately. Judgements are too optimistic. Staff are still insufficiently involved in developing the report.

Outcomes for learners

How effectively are CTC's actions improving outcomes for learners? Reasonable progress

Childcare Training Consultancy has continued its reasonable progress in improving outcomes since the previous monitoring visit. Overall success rates were consistently below average and fell in 2008/09. Timely success rates rose but were only above national average in level 3 social care. In-year data for learners beginning their programmes since September suggest considerable improvement in expected success rates, although this cannot yet be confirmed. The company has taken successful steps to identify and address the causes of poor performance. New induction procedures identify starting points more accurately and set clearer expectations for employers. Programmes have been modified to take better account of employers' working patterns. Achievement charts involve learners in recording their own progress. A greater focus on monitoring interim progress and timeliness is showing clear impact. However, CTC does not sufficiently analyse the differences in success between different groups and consequently has no strategies to bridge them.

Skills for life courses have been temporarily halted to ensure staff are equipped to deliver them properly. CTC has discontinued its unsuccessful customer service provision to focus on its expertise in care and early years.

Quality of provision

What progress has CTC made in developing arrangements to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs? Insufficient progress

At the previous visit, CTC had no written plan to meet learners' skills for life needs. Assessment and review documents did not record additional support. Since then, initial skills for life assessments are shared with assessors. However, individual learning plans do not always contain additional support information about literacy, numeracy and language skills development. Assessors signpost learners well to other skills for life providers, but do not always know or record whether they take up the offer. No further skills for life assessments measure learners' progress or the impact of CTC's own support. Assessors often provide informal support but records on individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed. Many staff have increased their awareness successfully by completing their own level 1 and 2 qualifications. The previous monitoring visit noted a newly developed skills for life strategy and staff training plan. The strategy is not used and few staff recognise it. The training plan is being implemented and most staff needing teaching qualifications have achieved or are working towards their award. Staff provide additional literacy support for a few learners taking early years qualifications, which is integrated into their vocational qualification. However, these learners do not complete the literacy qualification.

What progress has CTC made in improving the use of individual learning plans to review learners' progress?

Reasonable progress

At the previous monitoring visit, insufficient progress had been made in using individual learning plans to review progress. Since then, improvements to their format include prompts for assessors in gauging learners' understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity. A bank of questions usefully focuses assessors' attention on the experience of learners at work. However, CTC pays insufficient attention to promoting equality and diversity and health and safety awareness. Questions asked are often closed and do not explore ethical dilemmas or encourage professional discussion. The most recent review forms include prompts to explore safeguarding, and a bank of questions is being developed to support assessors.

Progress review records better reflect the progress learners make in achieving their qualification. Learners know exactly how much further work they need to do to complete their qualification. Targets set during progress reviews remain general, although expectations about deadlines are clear. Assessors now use individual learning plans systematically to drive progress in frequent, regular reviews which help learners to move forward.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in implementing safeguarding arrangements?

Reasonable progress

The previous monitoring visit identified insufficient progress in arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Since then, CTC has further developed a safeguarding policy and procedures. A clearly-written policy provides good information on identifying key signs of abuse and a useful referral form. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are satisfactorily completed for all staff with access to learners, and CTC keeps a single record of completed checks, accessed only by two authorised persons. There is a named safeguarding officer. All staff have received training, which is reinforced on a rolling programme. It covers all necessary information and encourages discussion. CTC keeps clear records showing who has and has not attended training. Induction arrangements make clear references to safeguarding policies and procedures. Recent versions of individual learning plans and review forms include helpful prompts for assessors about safeguarding.

CTC does not complete risk assessments on newly-recruited staff yet to receive CRB clearance. The policy does not specify arrangements for new staff to have supervised access to children, young people and vulnerable adults, or criteria for acceptance of criminal offences that do not pose a risk to children and vulnerable adults. It is not clear about responsibilities for decisions to manage risks.

How well has CTC improved its use of data to monitor programme performance?

Reasonable progress

At the previous visit CTC had made insufficient progress in improving its use of data. Progress is now reasonable. Team managers have made significant progress in risk assessing their caseloads and in the detail and currency of the information they record. Progress monitoring is much sharper. This is having a clear impact on success rates and the rate of progress. Higher level management reports are better used to focus on timeliness, individual assessor performance and regional variations in success.

However, CTC makes insufficient use of some information it records about learners and their progress. Better and more detailed initial assessment records learners' starting points and needs more clearly, but this is not captured in a way that enables managers to monitor distance travelled and the effectiveness of interventions. Reports to monitor the proportions of demographic groups are regular. However, CTC does not routinely use them to compare relative achievement and progress. Managers do not sufficiently use trends in CTC success, achievement and retention or refer to national averages to inform judgements in the self-assessment report.

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