

GEN II Engineering & Technology Training Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51952

Name of lead inspector: Ian McMillan HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. GEN II Engineering and Technology Training Ltd (GEN II) is based in West Cumbria and was established in June 2000 by five international companies, AMEC, BNFL (now Sellafield Ltd), CORUS (now TATA), Iggesund Paperboard and UCB Films (now Innova Films). It provides engineering and technology training for its founding companies, as well as for the wider Cumbrian business community. GEN II currently has three skills centres located throughout Cumbria. These are based at ENERGUS Lillyhall in Workington, where GEN II's head office is also based, Carlisle and the Furness skills centre at Ulverston.

2. Over the last 10 years GEN II has grown significantly, increasing learner numbers from approximately 45 to around 630 in 2011. A chief executive leads GEN II; an executive board, a team of directors and 34 training staff, of whom 32 are full-time employees, support him. Most of GEN II's learners are engineering apprentices who are employed by local and regional companies. GEN II also has a small Train to Gain programme in engineering and business administration (business improvement techniques). In addition, GEN II runs programmes for learners aged 14 to 16, a small pre-apprenticeship programme aimed at young people not in education or employment, a response to redundancy programme and higher education programmes with University of Central Lancashire and soon to be with the University of Cumbria. Approximately 40% of GEN II's income is through government-funded training programmes. The North West Skills Funding Agency funds GEN II's apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Three regional colleges provide technical certificate training for GEN II's apprenticeship programmes.

3. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the GEN II:
 - Carlisle college
 - Lakes College
 - Furness College

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	72 learners 556 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Grade 1
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	1
Subject Areas	
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1

Overall effectiveness

4. The overall effectiveness of GEN II's provision is outstanding. Managers at all levels provide highly effective leadership that has successfully raised expectations and promoted ambition in both learners and staff. GEN II's relentless focus on high standards and its excellent support arrangements lead to outstanding achievements. Teaching, training and assessment are highly effective in supporting learning and promoting learners' personal development. Many learners progress within their organisation and achieve at higher levels.
5. GEN II has particularly effective arrangements to monitor and support learner progress. It works very productively with learners, employers and other partners to provide training that meets their needs well. Arrangements to assess learners at work are flexible, efficient and very well managed. Arrangements to safeguard learners are outstanding and well prioritised. Learners say they feel safe and protected. GEN II successfully creates a culture of respect and care for learners and staff. Managers are aware of the need to improve arrangements to analyse the impact of provision, in order to further support planning and development.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. The proportion of learners achieving apprenticeships and Train to Gain qualifications is significantly above national averages; very few learners leave their programmes early without achieving. Nearly all learners achieve within the agreed timescale.
- Progression for apprentices from intermediate to advanced level programmes is outstanding. A significant proportion of GEN II apprentices progress into higher education programmes. Retention and qualification progression rates for current learners are excellent.
- Learners acquire vocational skills and undertake additional qualifications that significantly enhance their future employability prospects and personal effectiveness at work. Employers value these skills highly; many learners improve their economic well-being through increased responsibility at work and through improving the profitability of their employers.
- Learners feel safe; health and learner safety is an exceptionally high priority for GEN II, learners and employers. Good attention is paid to ensuring that learners make informed choices about their health and well-being. Learners make a good contribution to GEN II and to the wider communities it serves.
- Learning and learner development are outstanding and supported by highly effective teaching and assessment. Learning is planned carefully to interest, challenge and motivate learners. Highly effective monitoring of learner progress provides all parties with a clear view of learners' skills and knowledge development. Learners confidently apply new learning in the workplace.
- GEN II's range of programmes is outstanding. Its range of apprenticeship and specialised programmes are extensive and many are designed to meet industry requirements. Careful planning of the provision ensures that learners benefit from a coherent progression route to employment and higher education. More evaluation of the impact of GEN II's programmes is required.
- GEN II has excellent partnership arrangements with local schools, further and higher education providers, employers and community organisations. Learners benefit significantly from these links through excellent employment, work experience and progression opportunities. GEN II and its partners have been particularly effective in their response to redundancies in Cumbria, through their support for unemployed and aspiring engineering apprentices.
- Support arrangements are outstanding and have significant impact on learners' ability to achieve and to progress. The coherence, responsiveness and breadth of GEN II's advice, guidance and support arrangements are commendable. GEN II quickly addresses learners' specialist, academic and progression support needs and provides excellent pastoral support. More evaluation of the impact of both personal and pastoral support is required.
- The arrangements for safeguarding learners and for promoting and managing health and safety are outstanding. This aspect of learners' training is particularly comprehensive and learners demonstrate a good understanding of how to

remain safe. GEN II quickly investigates and resolves any issues of poor safety practices, bullying and harassment.

- Learners benefit from a very strong culture of mutual respect and dignity at work. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and learners develop a good understanding of their role within society and industry. Activities to widen participation and increase the number of female apprentices have been very successful.
- GEN II makes highly effective use of learner and employer feedback to inform self-assessment and improve the quality of the provision. The company understands its strengths and areas for improvement. Employers are highly involved in the strategic management of GEN II but learners' and employers' involvement in operational decision making needs further development.
- GEN II uses its outstanding staff, resources, training facilities, equipment and strong financial management arrangements to provide a highly successful learning environment and outstanding value for money.

What does GEN II need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the focus on learner development and high success rates through the continued scrutiny of individual progress and provision of effective support and guidance.
- Ensure that programmes provide more challenge for learners through opportunities to take higher level key skills and extension activities within lessons.
- Improve the monitoring of support provided to learners and better gauge its effectiveness through closer analysis of all support activities.
- Improve the evaluation of the impact programmes have on the sectors and businesses that GEN II serves, through more detailed dialogue with employers about how training influences their organisations' effectiveness.
- Ensure better engagement of learners and a broader range of employers in decision making at an operational and curriculum level.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the way assessors and tutors are ex-practitioners and meet learners' needs flexibly
- the individual support they receive from GEN II staff
- the initial training that provides an excellent foundation for further progress
- the way tutors set high expectations to succeed and progress
- the opportunity to gain new skills and additional awards.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more interaction with other groups of learners in the training centres
- better information about job placements to clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities
- more opportunities for formal ways to capture group views and feedback.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way GEN II supports the local engineering community through its courses and partnership working
- the flexibility of GEN II's staff in meeting the needs of employers and the learners
- the impact of training on improving performance in the workplace
- the effectiveness of communications from GEN II's staff.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no improvements recommended.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

6. GEN II demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. Success rates have been consistently outstanding since the previous inspection. The provider aspires to excellence through the setting of ambitious yet realistic targets and through the achievement of very high standards and expectations. Learners benefit from high quality staff, facilities and equipment, and from significant investment in resources. For example it is currently investing in the development of a new virtual learning environment and in electronic portfolios. GEN II's board of directors provides a good level of challenge and support.
7. Quality improvement arrangements are highly effective and self-assessment provides an accurate view of the provision. The self-assessment process is highly inclusive with good participation by staff and good use of learner and employer feedback to inform the report's judgements. GEN II has a clear vision and an excellent record of prioritising and addressing the key challenges identified at the previous inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

8. Learners' attainment of qualifications and learning goals is outstanding. Apprenticeship success rates are outstanding and improving. They are consistently significantly above the national average. In 2009/10, 93% of apprentices successfully completed their frameworks and 91% completed in a timely manner. Overall and timely success rates on Train to Gain programmes are outstanding at 93% and 92% respectively. Current learners are making excellent progress. There is no noticeable variation in the success of different groups of learners.
9. Learners achieve an excellent standard of work. In engineering and business improvement programmes, learners apply and demonstrate a very good range of vocational skills. Many Train to Gain learners and apprentices show significant improvement in self-confidence and progress onto other programmes often at higher levels, or with increased responsibility in their job roles.
10. All learners have a particularly good understanding of safe working practices and adopt them well in learning and at work. They feel safe and know their rights and responsibilities at work. Learners quickly improve their confidence and communication skills. Tutors provide them with highly effective support to make effective career and progression choices. Learners are very motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Learners attend well and have excellent records of timekeeping.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

11. Teaching, training and assessment have an outstanding impact on learning and learner development. The high standard of learners' work and outstanding success rates reflect GEN II's successful focus on continuously improving the learning experience. Well-established arrangements to observe key learning processes are in place and managers use the outcomes from the observation process particularly well to prepare individual and organisational development plans.
12. Tutors have high levels of subject expertise, and their enthusiasm, support and commitment inspire learners to develop a particularly thorough knowledge and understanding of their subject area. Learners benefit from extremely well-planned lessons. A wide range of learning activities ensures that learning is enjoyable and that learners are fully involved in their learning.
13. Resources to support learning are outstanding. Learners benefit from using equipment and from experiencing training techniques that represent the highest industry standards. Investment in simulation areas for pneumatics, electronics and in computerised machine tools simulation is very good. Regular and highly flexible assessment practices include very clear feedback on how learners can improve their work.
14. GEN II monitors learner progress frequently and rigorously. Highly effective arrangements identify, challenge and support underperformance. Learners are very motivated and keen to learn. Talented and underperforming learners are supported equally well to attain high standards and succeed. However, GEN II has recognised the need to provide more opportunities for learners to achieve key skills at a higher level and to ensure that extension activities for the more able learner are consistently available in lessons. The systematic assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs at the outset of learning, informs individual learning plans and ensures support is appropriately structured.
15. GEN II meets the needs of learners and employers particularly effectively. They provide an outstanding range of engineering and specialist supplementary awards that meets employers' skills needs and provides excellent employability and progression opportunities for learners. GEN II designs many of its programmes to meet the specific and often complex training needs of specialist sectors like nuclear and manufacturing. Their business unit has developed a highly responsive relationship with key partners, working closely with schools, industry, employers and community groups. It has excellent higher education links that ensure learning pathways from craft training to higher education are clear and accessible for learners. Many learners progress onto higher education programmes.
16. Care, guidance and personal support have an outstanding impact on learners' achievement and progression. Regional interest in GEN II's career and

apprenticeship opportunities is high and is promoted well through local schools. Learners complete a comprehensive induction programme that includes a clear outline of the high standards that GEN II expects of them, and the support that is available to help them achieve and progress. Learners benefit from a well-planned blend of specialist support for those who need it and on-going academic support for functional and key skills. The personal support from learners' tutors and mentors is outstanding. GEN II has a commendable track record of meeting the diverse needs of its learners to ensure they stay on programme and succeed. This includes, for example, the funding of specialist training for learners with speech difficulties and the support provided to learners who are made redundant to complete their qualifications and gain new employment.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

17. Leadership and management are outstanding. GEN II aspires to and achieves excellence through the rigorous setting and monitoring of very high standards and expectations, which staff and learners understand and are committed to meeting. The board of directors provides good strategic direction and challenge for continuous improvement. GEN II's strategic direction is ambitious but realistic. It remains strongly aligned to meeting the regional and national training priorities of the engineering, nuclear and manufacturing sectors. GEN II managed the transfer of learners from two previously unsuccessful contracts very well. Subcontracted provision is very well managed and highly successful. Internal communications are excellent and focus well on improving the provision. Arrangements to monitor staff performance and learners' progress are highly effective.
18. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Two safeguarding officers regularly review and develop the comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures. Appropriate staff have Criminal Records Bureau checks every three years. Risk assessment is well established and staff receive training in recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns. The investigation of all reported concerns is thorough, with the involvement of external agencies when appropriate. The promotion of safeguarding to learners through training during induction and on-going reinforcement during learners' progress reviews is highly effective. Learners have a good understanding of bullying and harassment, including internet safety and cyber bullying, and know how to report such incidents. The support for employers to develop an understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regards to safeguarding is very good. GEN II has a particularly strong focus on the promotion and management of health and safety and records show a yearly decline in reported accidents.
19. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding with a very strong culture of mutual respect and dignity explicitly stated through the company's core values, standards and expectations. GEN II's single equality scheme includes detailed policies and procedures and is assessed to gauge its impact. Arrangements to train and brief staff to update their knowledge and

understanding are effective. Training for learners, during induction and lessons, is comprehensive with highly effective on-going promotion through challenging questioning techniques during learner progress reviews. GEN II manages all complaints promptly and effectively. Celebration of learners' success is very good. Data are analysed to identify any variations in performance across different learner groups. Targeted actions to raise participation by women, and people from disadvantaged postcodes, have been particularly successful.

20. The provider makes very good use of learner and employer feedback to gauge satisfaction levels and to inform improvement activities, although it needs to involve learners and employers better in operational decision-making processes. GEN II uses focus groups well to obtain the views of learners and to gain more detailed feedback on specific aspects of provision following learner surveys. There are many examples where learner feedback has directly led to changes and improvements in the provision.
21. Self-assessment and quality improvement planning is outstanding. Frequent and accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning accurately identifies that a high proportion of lessons support outstanding learning and development. Satisfactory observations lead to targeted support and re-observation to measure improvement. The observation findings directly inform the continuous development of programmes and staff. Arrangements to share good practice are good. The self-assessment report is accurate and appropriately self-critical.
22. Programmes at GEN II provide outstanding value for money. Financial management is strong. Teaching, learning and assessment support outstanding learning, development and outcomes. The company provides high quality staff, facilities, equipment and learning resources which it manages in a sustainable way.

Information about the inspection

23. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's associate director of quality and compliance, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from funding bodies, 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.

24. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. 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)

GEN II Engineering and Technology Training Ltd

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	0	0
Part-time learners	630	630
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Capacity to improve	1	
Outcomes for learners	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	1 1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
Quality of provision	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1	
Leadership and management	1	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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