

Oldham Engineering Group Training Association Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53721

Name of lead inspector: Mike White HMI

Last day of inspection: 6 October 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Oldham Engineering Group Training Association Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity operating under the name of OTC. It is a member-owned organisation with over 70 members. Formed in 1966 by the Engineering Industry Training Board, it became a limited company in 1970. A wholly owned subsidiary, OTC Consultancy Limited, was set up in 1997 to provide health, safety and environmental support to member companies on a commercial basis. The head office and training centre are located in Oldham. An acting chief executive leads a small senior management team and reports to a board of non-executive directors. There are 29 staff of whom 26 are full time and three are part time.

2. OTC contracts with the Skills Funding Agency to provide work-based learning programmes for young people and adults in engineering and manufacturing technologies; retail and commercial enterprise; information and communication technology; and business, administration and law. This inspection did not grade provision in retail and commercial enterprise or information and communication technology. Around 65% of all provision is government funded. At the time of inspection, OTC has 165 apprentices and nine learners on Train to Gain provision. Seventeen per cent of learners are female, 6% are from minority ethnic groups and 10% have declared a learning difficulty and/or disability.

3. The following organisation provides training on behalf of OTC:
 - Oldham College

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	89 learners 246 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	Grade
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Business, administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

4. The overall effectiveness of OTC is good. Outcomes for learners and the quality of provision are good. Leadership and management, the arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable learners, and the management of equality and diversity are all satisfactory.
5. Learners across all the different groups enjoy outstanding success rates. They are very motivated, enjoy their courses and develop satisfactory or better skills in their chosen vocational subject. Current learners are making good or better progress. Despite the variable quality of the targets set during progress reviews, learners have a good understanding of the progress they make. Their understanding of health and safety is good.
6. Teaching, training and assessment are good. The resources provided for learning are satisfactory and are currently in the process of being updated. Engineering and manufacturing technology learners improve their employability through the achievement of additional qualifications. Some learners gain promotion in their workplaces or progress onto higher levels of study.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships are excellent. Current learners are mostly making good or better progress. There is no noticeable variation in the success rates of different groups of learners.
- Learners are very motivated, enjoy their programmes and develop satisfactory or better workplace skills. The progression of learners between levels is satisfactory and some learners progress to higher studies.
- OTC has a strong emphasis on health and safety. Learners have a good understanding of safe working practices, feel safe and are confident in reporting any concerns.
- Good standards of training, coaching, assessing and learning benefit learners significantly and make a major contribution to their success.
- Resources are satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient information and learning technology (ILT) and some traditional machine tools do not have digital readout facilities and are in need of replacement.
- The effective range of provision meets the needs of employers and equips learners with a good range of relevant occupational knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The quality of target setting for learners is variable and where targets lack clarity and precision they are ineffective in tracking learners' progress. Not all learners are fully aware of the targets that have been set and how they are used to guide their learning and development.
- The induction process lacks impact and does not fully engage and stimulate learners. Although basic aspects of the company's policies and procedures, such as health and safety, equal opportunities and safeguarding, are explained to learners, their knowledge and understanding are insufficiently reinforced and extended after induction.
- OTC has maintained effective management of the provision during a period when the leadership provided by the board and senior management was poor. A new management team is in place and establishing thorough systems. However, the non-executive board of directors is not yet sufficiently strong enough to perform its role effectively.
- Staff have received good training in safeguarding but insufficient training has been provided for the board members. Any reported safeguarding incidents are thoroughly investigated. However, the effect of safeguarding arrangements is not systematically reported to the board.
- Learners develop a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. OTC has been proactive in a range of initiatives to increase the participation rates of under-represented groups and while the participation of these groups remains low those that do join programmes achieve very well. There has been no recent equality and diversity update training for staff or board members.
- The current self-assessment process takes into account the views of staff and learners but not those of employers. Feedback from employers has been

collected and analysed in the past. The report is reasonably accurate in its judgements and the areas for improvement identified. The regularly updated quality improvement plan contains clear objectives. Both self-assessment and quality improvement planning have been re-established this year after a period of neglect.

- The views of learners are collected systematically and analysed, and are used to make improvements to the provision. Observation of teaching and learning has been improved and is now satisfactory. Staff have effectively used good practice from other providers to improve the management and quality improvement systems.

What does Oldham Engineering Group Training Association Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve teaching and learning resources, including ILT equipment, computers and engineering resources, to ensure they replicate current industrial and commercial practice.
- Improve target setting so that all learners have specific, challenging, measurable and achievable targets to plan their learning and against which their progress can be accurately judged.
- Improve the effectiveness of the non-executive board of directors by including more members from local engineering companies who are willing to take an active role in the strategic direction and oversight of OTC.
- Firmly establish the new management team and the quality improvement systems by maintaining a disciplined approach and by monitoring their effectiveness so they become fully established and active in improving leadership and management.
- Ensure that all staff and non-executive board members develop their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity and safeguarding by regular annual training and updating activities.
- Enable the board to provide appropriate support and challenge through the provision of regular reports on the impact of equality and diversity activities and safeguarding arrangements.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good training and learning new skills
- the good support from, and regular visits by, tutor/assessors
- the knowledgeable, friendly and supportive staff
- the business administration e-portfolio system which makes providing assessment evidence easy
- the good opportunities to get a qualification at work
- the flexibility of assessors in arranging visits.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the level of support available during staff absence
- the ageing hand-tools and equipment and the purchase of new computers
- having the opportunity to complete the framework faster
- having enough work in the workshops to be kept busy all the time.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good quality training and support from OTC staff
- the regularity of assessors' visits and minimum disruption caused to work routines
- the very relevant training options
- the quick responsiveness to employers' requests.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more information on the types of evidence for assessment that the line manager may be asked to provide
- opportunities to contribute to the provider's self-assessment report
- more frequent updates on learners' progress.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. Success rates have increased significantly in all programmes since the previous inspection and are now at an outstanding level. Staff pay close attention to the progress of learners, providing effective support whenever slow progress is identified. Areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily resolved.
8. The senior leadership and management of OTC have not been sufficiently effective in making and sustaining improvements over the previous two years although programme managers and staff have sustained the quality of the provision. The board of directors has not fulfilled its role, and changes in management have created uncertainty and risked the quality of provision. The management reorganisation in late 2010 established a strong and very proactive management team which quickly implemented appropriate strategies to deal with the identified issues. However, it is still in the relatively early stages of measuring the impact on provision.
9. The self-assessment report correctly identifies the areas for improvement and is reasonably accurate in its judgements. Many of the quality improvement systems had not been sustained continuously throughout the period of weak leadership. The current systems for the observation of teaching and learning are well-designed. They include the use of feedback from learners and employers and quality improvement planning following self-assessment. However, it is too early to judge their full effectiveness.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Overall success rates for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships are outstanding and increasing each year. They are consistently well above national averages. In 2009/10, success rates for the small number of Train to Gain learners were outstanding.
11. In both engineering and business administration the proportion of learners completing within their planned timescales is high. It is well above national averages and increasing each year. Current learners are mostly making good or better progress. There is no noticeable variation in the success rates of different groups of learners.
12. Learners are very motivated and enjoy their programmes, with many benefiting from increased self-confidence. Business administration and customer service learners develop good workplace skills. Engineering learners display satisfactory skills development. The progression of learners between levels is satisfactory. Some learners make very good progress either through promotion within their workplace or to higher-level studies. However, OTC does not maintain comprehensive records of the extent of this progress for all learners.

13. The emphasis on safety in both the workplace and the training centre is strong and learners have a good understanding of safe working practices. They feel safe and confident in being able to report any concerns and they understand their rights and responsibilities at work.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

14. Training and learning are good and carefully matched to learners' abilities and needs. In engineering, coordination of on- and off-the-job learning is good. In business administration, learners receive good training and mentoring from workplace supervisors. In key skills workshops good use is made of occupationally relevant tasks.
15. Engineering learners' portfolios contain a good variety of evidence while business administration learners make good use of the online electronic portfolio system. In both occupational areas, assessors have developed good relationships with employers and learners. Communication with learners between assessment visits to workplaces is frequent and helpful. Internal verification is satisfactorily meeting awarding body requirements.
16. Initial assessment is satisfactory and the results are used appropriately to plan training. The vocational preferences of engineering learners are also assessed in order to advise learners about the most suitable occupational specialism. Induction is satisfactory but, as the provider acknowledges, it is insufficiently interactive and does not fully involve learners.
17. Resources are satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient ILT and some computers process information too slowly. Some traditional machine tools do not have digital readout facilities and are in a planned programme of replacement. Staff are appropriately qualified and they participate in continuing professional development. Opportunities to update occupational expertise are limited.
18. Learners' progress is monitored effectively. In engineering, good use is made of an electronic tracking system to monitor learners' progress and achievements. In business administration particularly good use is made of the online electronic portfolio system for monitoring learners' progress.
19. The quality of target setting is variable with some targets lacking clarity and precision. Although targets are recorded they are not always explained to learners. While employers are very supportive and take a keen interest in learners' progress, some employers are not present during the review of learners' progress. Some written progress reviews contain grammatical and spelling errors.
20. The provision very successfully meets the needs and interests of learners and employers. Engineering learners have good opportunities to enhance their skills by taking additional National Vocational Qualification units. A programme of

vocational enrichment activities, including visits to a machine tools exhibition and a major car manufacturer, makes a good contribution to learners' awareness of industrial and technological processes. Business administration learners have fewer enrichment activities and their range of additional accredited and non-accredited courses is insufficient.

21. Partnership working is satisfactory. OTC is very successful at finding employment for learners at the start of their apprenticeship programme. When companies wish to recruit additional apprentices, OTC provides a good service to them by recommending suitable candidates. In business administration, good recent attempts to develop the provision through networking with local organisations have not yet led to a significant increase in learner numbers.
22. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance. When they encounter personal problems, tutor/assessors provide satisfactory support and, when required, arrange for learners to seek advice from local specialist agencies. OTC does not, however, have a qualified information, advice and guidance worker.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

23. Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. The leadership of OTC was weak for more than a year, during a period which saw changes of chief executive and chair of the board of directors. During this time, the use of central management systems declined. However, staff made their own arrangements, managing the training effectively and ensuring that learners were not adversely affected. Towards the end of 2010 a reorganisation took place with the appointment of new managers. The introduction of new business planning, systems and performance indicators ensured OTC's service to employers, and success rates, continued at the same standard.
24. The board of directors has been insufficiently effective over a period of several years. It has not given sufficient strategic direction to the company as the self-assessment report acknowledges. It has an insufficient number of active directors and has not adequately monitored all aspects of OTC's performance, other than financial performance.
25. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and led by a designated senior member of staff. A single central record shows that Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out for all appropriate staff. Reported incidents are thoroughly investigated with good use made of links with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and other external organisations. Procedures for supporting employers to provide appropriate arrangements for safeguarding apprentices are good. Learners receive appropriate information on health and safety and have a good understanding of it. The induction training and discussion during progress reviews provide learners with a satisfactory understanding of safeguarding. All staff have appropriate safeguarding training. However, although planned for the near future, members of the board have not received the necessary training. While the board has reviewed and approved the

safeguarding policy, and made recommendations for strengthening aspects of safeguarding, there is insufficient reporting of safeguarding arrangements to the board.

26. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. OTC's commitment to providing a safe and healthy environment, treating everybody fairly and providing effective support is underpinned by an appropriate range of policies and procedures. Induction and progress reviews provide satisfactory coverage of equality and diversity. Complaints are investigated thoroughly and appropriate actions taken. OTC has been proactive in a range of initiatives aimed at increasing the participation rates of under-represented groups and while these have had limited success those that have joined programmes are very successful. Although refresher training is currently planned, neither staff nor members of the board have recently undertaken equality and diversity training. Reporting to the board on the outcomes of equality and diversity activity is insufficiently systematic.
27. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are currently satisfactory after a period when they had not been adequately maintained. The observation of training records are satisfactory, containing clear judgements on the trainers' performance and suggestions for improvement. Following a gap of over two years, the most recent self-assessment report, written in April 2011, identifies most of the areas for improvement and is based on contributions from all staff and learners but not employers. The current quality improvement plan is good, with clear targets and regular monitoring of progress. Feedback from learners and employers has been systematically collected and analysed over many years and used to improve the quality of the provision, such as the redevelopment of the engineering facilities. New staff have identified and used good practice from other providers but good practice is not always transferred within the company.
28. OTC provides satisfactory value for money. The funding it receives is used to enable a high proportion of learners to succeed. The company is investing in new facilities and equipment.

Subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Context

29. A total of 131 learners are enrolled on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship training programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies. Two per cent of learners are female, 2% are from minority ethnic groups and 12% have declared a disability. Learners attend either the provider's training centre or Oldham College for their technical certificate tuition. Assessment takes place in the workplace with assessors visiting learners at least monthly. The training and assessment team comprises one engineering development manager, five instructors, three training advisers and an essential skills coordinator.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices are excellent and well above national rates. Success rates for the small numbers of Train to Gain learners are also excellent.
- Learners' work is of a good standard. Employers value the improved knowledge and skills learners acquire, with some learners involved in demanding site installations. Learners confirm that they enjoy their studies which make good improvements to their economic and social well-being.
- OTC has a strong emphasis on safety during practical sessions and there is regular reference to safe working practices during workplace progress reviews. Learners feel safe, show a good understanding of health and safety, and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work.
- Teaching and training are good. The planning and delivery of training sessions are good. Instructors and training advisers make good use of their vocational qualifications and experience in training activities to benefit learners. The training process is effectively enhanced by the use of workplace mentors.
- The thoroughly planned assessment arrangements meet the needs of learners. Portfolios include a wide range of assessment evidence. Progress reviews provide learners with a good understanding of the progress they are making. However, the quality of target setting at reviews is variable as is the involvement of employers.
- The provision meets the needs of learners and employers very effectively. Learners benefit from a carefully planned schedule of industrial visits to enhance the learning experience. Many learners enhance their skill development by completing relevant additional training units. Progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is satisfactory. Some learners progress onto higher-level studies. However, data are not kept or analysed to show the overall extent of learner progression.

- Partnership working and communication with employers are satisfactory. Well-established arrangements with member companies support the continuous recruitment of apprentices. Employers provide good support for learners which helps them to succeed.
- Information, advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. The well-planned recruitment and selection process includes a series of information events for potential learners. All applicants complete a diagnostic assessment to determine a suitable level of programme. Arrangements to support learners' personal and social needs are satisfactory.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements. Performance management of staff is effective, with frequent individual meetings that are used effectively to identify any training needs. Training programme issues are discussed at management and team meetings but the meetings are insufficiently frequent.
- The self-assessment report judgements are consistent with the inspection findings although no grade is given. The self-assessment report correctly identifies the areas for improvement and contributes to a comprehensive quality improvement plan.
- Resources for engineering training are generally satisfactory, with a range of spacious well-ventilated practical workshops. However, much of the machinery is becoming out-of-date. OTC is currently investing in a programme of planned renewal. Access to information and communication technology facilities for computer-aided design and key skills delivery is available in a dedicated classroom although there is no interactive whiteboard.

What does Oldham Engineering Group Training Association Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that learner targets for achievement are clearly identified and understood during progress reviews to support learners in making progress.
- Encourage attendance of employer representatives at all learner progress reviews so that employers can more effectively contribute to learner development.
- Plan a schedule of management and team meetings to monitor the effectiveness of programmes and implement action planning for improvement.
- Continue to implement the development plan for upgrading the majority of existing machine tools and equipment in practical workshops in order to provide relevant vocational skills development.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

30. A total of 33 learners are enrolled on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes in business administration and customer service. Twenty-seven per cent of learners are male, 15% are from minority ethnic groups and 6% have declared a disability. Most training and assessment take place in the workplace and assessors visit learners at least monthly. Almost half of the learners are employed in the public sector. The assessment team includes one full-time coordinator who is also an assessor and internal verifier, two part-time training advisers, an essential skills coordinator and an additional internal verifier.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are excellent. Success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices have been consistently very high over a four-year period, and are well in excess of national rates for both overall success and for completion before planned end dates. There is no difference in outcomes across different groups of learners. The Train to Gain success rates in 2009/10 were outstanding.
- Learners enjoy their learning programmes. They are particularly keen and motivated to succeed, contributing very effectively to their learning and development. Learners make good progress. They develop in confidence, becoming more competent in dealing with customers and better able to contribute to their work teams. The standard of evidence in the majority of learners' electronic portfolios is good.
- Learners develop good work skills, improving their employability and promotion prospects. Some learners have taken on more responsibility or have gained promotion, for example taking responsibility for managing warranty contracts. Employers see improvements in their business performance. The number of learners progressing to a higher-level qualification has increased. However, OTC does not collect and evaluate learner destination data.
- Learners have a very clear understanding of their workplace rights and responsibilities and adopt safe working practices. They feel safe and most can explain safeguarding and equality and diversity. However, assessors sometimes miss the opportunity to expand discussions with learners during workplace visits and progress reviews.
- Assessment practices are good. The training advisers' regular visits to the workplaces are very productive. Assessment plans are very clear and learners have a good understanding of what they need to do to progress. Assessment feedback is constructive, providing learners with clear direction. Assessors rigorously monitor learner progress in achieving the units of the qualification and their frameworks using the electronic portfolio tracking system.

- Coaching and training are good overall. Learners derive considerable benefits from the training and mentoring provided by workplace supervisors and the support from assessors. A few learners attend the centre for technical skills training and key skills development.
- Target setting and completion of individual learning plans are satisfactory. Overall, the reviews of learner progress are good with very good support from the majority of employers. Learners value the feedback they receive. However, the review records are inconsistent and some fail to record in sufficient detail learner development and progress, and the impact on their work performance.
- Programmes successfully meet learner and employer needs. They are skilfully planned to accommodate learners' work routines and personal circumstances. Communication with a range of employers is good. Some learners have achieved additional non-accredited qualifications mostly in health and safety in the workplace. However, too few learners have the opportunity to work towards relevant additional qualifications or higher levels of key skills.
- OTC works closely with a number of agencies and providers to benefit learners and to provide recruitment opportunities for apprentices. OTC is effective in meeting the business needs of a range of private and public sector employers.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. They receive sufficient information to make informed choices regarding their learning programmes. Assessors provide timely support to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Induction is satisfactory. On completing their training programme, learners receive satisfactory advice and information on the next steps for their development.
- Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. Communication and teamwork are good and staff are well supported. An electronic portfolio system provides good monitoring of individual learner progression. More recently staff have been set performance targets which are monitored monthly using the thorough management reporting system.
- Learners' views are routinely sought to improve the provision. The recently reviewed quality assurance processes have been implemented. However, some of the quality measures, such as monitoring of learner reviews, are not yet sufficiently effective in ensuring improvement. The outcomes of the observations of teaching and learning, reviews, assessment and induction do not yet sufficiently contribute to improvements.

What does Oldham Engineering Group Training Association Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Introduce a systematic recording scheme to evaluate and understand the patterns and trends of learners' progression to higher levels, other associated courses or within their employment.
- Provide learners with more opportunity to work towards relevant additional accredited or non-accredited qualifications or higher levels of key skills to enhance their employability.

- Increase discussions on equality, diversity and safeguarding during induction and reviews so that learners increase their understanding and are fully aware of the dangers of using the internet.
- Ensure the recording of reviews is improved so that all learners have sufficient detail about their progress towards achieving their learning programme and the links with their workplace training.

Information about the inspection

31. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
32. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They 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)

Oldham Engineering Group Training Association 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	174	174
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	4	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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