

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: The Training Partnership (UK) Ltd  
Date of visit: 19 August 2008

### Context

The Training Partnership (TTP) is a privately owned company limited by guarantee. Its main offices are in Stoke-on-Trent. The managing director has overall responsibility for work-based learning. An operations manager and two contract managers, supported by the quality manager and staff development officer, manage the provision provided to learners. Six assessors with employers provide training and assessment in the workplace.

TTP has a contract with the Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning. At the time of the monitoring visit, the company had 23 apprentices and 20 advanced apprentices in retail and commercial enterprise and 16 apprentices and six advanced apprentices in business, administration and law. This represents 11% of the company's business. The company is a substantial provider of subcontracted training and assessment to colleges across England.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate inspected TTP in February 2007. Overall effectiveness and leadership and management, including quality improvement and equality of opportunity, were satisfactory. Provision in retail and commercial services was good and business, administration and law was satisfactory.

### Achievement and standards

Has TTP maintained and improved its achievement and standards?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the overall framework success rate for apprentices and advanced apprentices was low, well below the national average and had declined slightly from the previous year. Since the inspection, the success rate has increased very substantially and in 2006/07 it was just above the national average. In 2007/08, data from the provider and the LSC indicated that the overall framework success rate remained at the national average. However, the number of learners that completed successfully by the targeted end date remained low. In 2007/08, the advanced apprentice overall framework success rate was higher than that for apprentices and the overall framework success rate for business, administration and law learners was

better than that for retail and commercial enterprises. Success rates in 2007/08 for key skills, technical certificates and the NVQ were similar to the overall framework success rate.

### Quality of provision

Have progress reviews improved?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the standard of progress reviews was a key challenge. TTP has provided additional training for assessors to improve progress reviews. Managers previously did not audit reviews. They now do so to ensure that assessors complete them effectively. At the inspection, learning targets in progress reviews were vague. They now contain more detail, are precise and most have dated deadlines. Although issues remain with learners completing units by the target date, assessors now frequently discuss and record progress with learners. Managers regularly check that this is happening, discuss with assessors when learners' progress is slow and take action to resolve lateness in meeting a target date. The involvement of employers in progress reviews was a concern. This remains a difficult area for the provider but assessors have received training on improving how they engage with employers; more employers are now involved in progress reviews and staff record employers' involvement on the review forms. Assessors no longer dominate reviews and now involve learners in discussing how they are progressing. The provider recognises that it still has to ensure that learners receive a copy of their training plans.

### Leadership and management

Have issues with planning and management of training been resolved?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection the planning and management of training was weak in the sector subject areas and in leadership and management. Staff now assesses learners' skills including literacy, numeracy, language and vocational at the start of their training. Assessors bring this information together in a training plan to manage and arrange the different individual learning and assessment that needs to take place for the learner to develop their skills and achieve the framework. This did not happen at the previous inspection when the main focus was assessment of learners' competencies rather than managing and providing training in the workplace. All training provided by employers is now co-ordinated through the training plan. Theory sessions include plans to outline what training and learning is to take place. This did not happen at the previous inspection. Managers now regularly observe the learning process and check paperwork to ensure that training for learners is planned, co-ordinated and takes place effectively.

How effective are self-assessment and the post inspection action plan in improving provision?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, inspectors were broadly confident in the reliability of self-assessment and found the process inclusive. Since then self-assessment has continued to improve through the better use of management information and audits based on the new quality management system. Self-assessment is now an integral part of TTP's management and business review process. Self-assessment focuses clearly on analysing learners' performance against measurable objectives. Staff and managers participate thoroughly in self-assessment and feedback from learners and employers informs the process effectively. Managers recognise that the self-assessment report at the time of the monitoring visit, although informative and judgemental, did not cover all areas for improvement and did not always provide sufficient text and evidence to support judgements and grades. Planning for post inspection actions and to improve provision is thorough and effective. Managers monitor and provide clear summaries of actions to resolve issues and, together with other staff, are clear about actions they take to raise standards for learners.

Has TTP increased the effectiveness of the quality improvement arrangements?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, TTP demonstrated sufficient capacity to make improvements and had broadly effective quality improvement processes. However, a key challenge for the provider from the inspection was to move the focus from assuring the quality of the provision to managing and promoting its improvement. Since the previous inspection, managers have introduced a new quality management system which focuses on improvement. The company has restructured the quality department, appointed a new quality manager and involved staff in the development of the quality management system. Quality improvement objectives are now a key part of performance targets for managers and staff. Improved management information systems, particularly the new on-line facilities, enable managers to assess the performance of staff and learners more effectively and help them to take prompt action to remedy problems. Observations of all aspects of training are now in place as well as a thorough analysis of the outcomes managers use as the basis to provide training for staff in areas needing improvement.

How effective has TTP been at improving learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, inspectors found TTP policies and procedures for equality and diversity were appropriate. Staff received training on equality of opportunity and regularly discussed this area at meetings. Assessors covered equality and diversity effectively during learners' induction. However, a key challenge was to develop learners' knowledge of current equality and diversity issues. Since then TTP has

made improvements to ensure assessors take a more systematic approach to providing training on equality and diversity to learners and better record the training they provide. At most progress reviews, discussions and reinforcement now take place on equality and diversity using topical themes to extend learners' knowledge and understanding of this area. Managers audit progress reviews and observe reviews and other training sessions, including induction, to ensure that assessors introduce and reinforce promotion of equality and the understanding of diversity, particularly the coverage of current issues. Since the previous inspection, managers have provided assessors with further coaching and training to develop their confidence and competence in discussing equality and diversity with learners.