

Key Training Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 52847

Name of lead inspector: Harmesh Manghra HMI

Last day of inspection: 19 March 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Key Training Ltd (Key Training), established in 1965, is a privately owned national training company. Key Training contracts with eight Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) in eight regions to provide training for apprenticeship, advanced apprenticeship and Train to Gain for young people and adults in five subject areas. Tyne and Wear is the lead LSC. The business administration and law subject area has the greatest number of learners. The other subject areas with small numbers were not inspected. The provision in Entry to Employment (E2E) was sampled but it was not graded separately.
2. The company delivers its provision from 10 town and city centre sites. The centres are organised in four regions. A regional director manages each region. In the north region, the provision is located in Newcastle, Sunderland, Peterlee and Wakefield. The midlands region includes the provision in Birmingham and Wellingborough with Ipswich, Swindon and Basingstoke in the southern region. London is a separate region. A training and quality director is responsible for the training overall. The company has 104 staff many of whom work across centres. Key Training works with approximately 370 employers. Currently 70% of the company's work is publicly funded.
3. During the inspection week Key Training had 1118 learners of whom 752 were women. The business administration and law subject area has a total of 761 learners including 66 learners on Train to Gain programmes. The programmes include administration, customer service, management and team leading. Of the 695 apprentices in learning, 225 of them are on advanced apprenticeships. Thirty of the 66 Train to Gain learners are working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 3 and 22 are on literacy and 21 on numeracy programmes. In addition, the provider has 75 learners on E2E programmes at its Ipswich and Wellingborough sites.
4. Some 35% of all Key Training learners are from disadvantaged post-code areas compared with the national average of 26% and 18% of all learners are from minority ethnic groups compared with 9% nationally.
5. Key Training was previously inspected in September 2005.
6. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
 - Best Practice

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Entry to Employment	125 learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	660 learners 969 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Business administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

7. The overall effectiveness of Key Training is good. Success rates for the completion of apprenticeships and other qualifications are high. The number of learners completing their qualification in the scheduled time is satisfactory even though the company has reduced the time in which the level 2 learners should complete their qualifications. Learners develop good levels of personal, social and vocational skills. The progression of E2E learners into further education, training and employment is good. Learners develop good levels of literacy and numeracy and gain nationally recognised qualifications.
8. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Initial assessment and induction are good. The programmes are highly effective at meeting the needs and interests of the learners and employers. Key Training has outstanding partnerships with employers and other specialist organisations which it uses extremely well to provide learners with employment, training, and good care, guidance and support. Learners receive very good individual support and help from highly committed staff to overcome barriers and engage in learning. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Some employers are not sufficiently involved in identifying opportunities to gather portfolio evidence and ensure faster progress for all learners.

9. The leadership and management are good. Managers set a clear direction and mission for the company and provide strong operational management to improve the success rates for all learners. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Key Training makes regular, excellent use of learners' and employers' views to improve the quality of its provision. Since its previous inspection, Key Training has continually improved the success rates and the quality of training. The management and promotion of equality and diversity are good. However, some of the centres are not suitable for wheelchair users and learners with mobility difficulties. Key Training does not put sufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Main findings

- Large numbers of learners succeed in gaining qualifications; the majority in the allocated time. Their standard of work is good and is highly appreciated by their employers. Learners enjoy their learning, are well motivated and quickly progress to higher level programmes. All learners, including those on E2E programmes develop highly effective personal, vocational and social skills.
- Key Training enables learners to make very good improvement to their economic wellbeing. Unemployed learners quickly gain employment; while others progress in their jobs and gain promotion. A good number of E2E learners move into apprenticeship, employment or enrol on to a college course.
- Learners feel safe in their workplaces and in the training centres. They are fully aware of whom to approach for advice and support if a safety issue arises. All centres have can be easily reached by public transport. However, some centres do not have adequate facilities for people with mobility difficulties.
- The planning of learning is effective and addresses the individual needs of each learner. Learners carefully choose the units that best meet their needs and build on their existing knowledge and skills. Most employers take an active part in developing the learning plan and work effectively with the company to monitor learners' achievement through the programme.
- Initial assessment and induction are good. Learners' starting points are identified accurately and efficiently through on-line key skills assessment and dyslexia screening. Using information on their existing skills, preferred learning styles and good information and advice, learners work diligently with the tutors to design a relevant, bespoke training plan.
- Assessment in the workplace is regular and highly effective. Assessors make extensive use of technology and a range of assessment methods to ascertain learner progress. They work extremely flexibly to arrange times for assessment to suit learner and employer schedules. Assessors give their feedback promptly to the learners. Learners comment positively about the process and outcomes of the assessment that helps them to improve their skills.

- Learning resources are good. Key Training has invested in an easy-to-use web based portal. Learners use it extensively to communicate with their assessors, submit their evidence and access its library for innovative and informative learning materials. Learners and assessors use the portal at a time and place convenient to them.
- The learners' progress reviews at work are satisfactory. Assessors visit learners frequently for assessment and review their overall progress every eight to 12 weeks. Learners are fully aware of their progress and the work they still need to do. Employers are routinely informed of these reviews but not all employers take a full part in each review.
- Key Training has established outstanding partnerships with a large number of employers and other agencies to enrich the learners' experience. The employers use Key Training as their preferred training supplier. They are very pleased with the quality of the workforce provided. The employers provide regular work experience and employment opportunities. Other benefits include input from specialist speakers, information and advice and other ad-hoc learning sessions.
- Care, guidance and support for learners including literacy and numeracy support are particularly good. Training staff have a detailed knowledge of individual learners and they work efficiently to remove barriers to progression. Induction is good and introduces learners to the structure and demands of the programme and their rights and responsibilities as learners and employees.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Key Training has been very successful at raising the achievement levels of the learners from deprived postcode areas. Learners have a high level of awareness of equality and diversity, health and safety and bullying and harassment issues. Assessors check that the learners are fully protected and reinforce the importance of these issues in their working and personal lives.
- Key Training has excellent systems for seeking learners' and employers' views. It has made substantial improvements to the quality of its training and services as a result of this feedback.
- The company has not paid sufficient attention to improving the quality of teaching and training. It does not clearly identify how more focussed and relevant staff training can improve the quality of the learning sessions.

What does Key Training need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, training and progress reviews by clarifying the purpose of observations. Refine the current system of observations to focus on learning and continuous improvement. Evaluate the observation records to develop regular, appropriate staff training to improve teaching, learning and progress reviews.

- Improve the progress review procedure by engaging employers in the process, so that they become fully aware of their learners' progress and how they can support learners to provide future evidence for the qualifications.
- Formalise the good arrangements for the delivery of literacy and numeracy support and programmes by devising an informative and clear policy on skills for life for the company. Ensure that all learners, staff and employers are fully aware of the importance of literacy and numeracy as life skills and are aware of the new policy and procedures.
- Maintain high overall success rates and continue to improve timely success rates through closer monitoring of individual learners and even better working relationships with their employers.
- Continue to improve provision for learners by developing further the outstanding partnership arrangements. Ensure that the learners and employers continue to be encouraged to contribute their views and are made fully aware of the positive impact their views have had in improving the provision.
- Regularise the current informal arrangements for alternative accommodation for learners with mobility difficulties and communicate this to all current and potential learners and partners. In the medium and long-term, find suitable premises that meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for all learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the quality of training: learners really enjoy their training and making new friends
- the jobs that Key Training helps them to find with many well-known employers
- the confidence that they gain through gaining new skills and knowledge: it helps them understand the company and their job role within it. It also raises their ambition and prepares them well to move on to another qualification
- the quality and flexibility of the training and the well-organised courses
- the learning materials and the style of learning: the computer based learning enables them to learn at their pace and fit around their family and work commitments and it is easy for them to track their progress
- the quality of advice and the exceptional support from Key Training staff to assist them to decide their next step in training and to improve their literacy and numeracy skills
- the relevance of the courses to their job role
- the staff of Key Training and their ability to make improvements.
- the enhanced knowledge gained about equality of opportunity through the training provided.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the excessive amount of paperwork and duplicated assessment evidence
- more information about the courses and what is required to complete training
- faster assessment and feedback on portfolios.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the impact of training on their learners' performance and the high standard of learners work and fantastic progress
- the clear and concise communication with Key Training
- the high expectations and standards that Key Training requires from its learners
- the professional image of Key Training staff
- the partnership approach that meets the individual learning needs of their staff
- Key Training's ability to provide the employers with well motivated staff
- the flexible approach to working with the different shifts and work patterns of employers including on-site training, saves them time and effort.

What employers would like to see improved:

- closer working relationship with the assessor to get ongoing updates on the learners' performance without asking for it
- better information on the training provided for the learners and how it links with their own training
- the efficiency and management of administration processes.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. Key Training has a good capacity to improve. Leadership and management has been further improved since the last inspection and remains good. Success rates are now high and success rates completed in the allocated time have also improved to a satisfactory level. Business planning processes are thorough and have been used to improved the design of the programmes. The processes for user engagement are well established and make excellent contributions to improving the provision. Safeguarding arrangements including health and safety are good. Equality of opportunity have also improved from satisfactory to good. Other areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection such as planning of individual learning , success rates and quality improvement are now strengths.
11. The self-assessment process involved all stakeholders including staff, learners and employers. The report is comprehensive, uses the new Common Inspection Framework format, and draws on a broad range of relevant evidence. It is largely accurate and the resulting quality improvement plan is thorough and strongly focussed on improving quality. Inspectors agreed with the grades proposed by the provider in its self-assessment report. The company is fully aware of the strengths and most areas for improvement within its provision. However, it did not identify the most significant area for improvement in the processes used for observing teaching and learning. Staff turnover has been high and has affected the learners' experience. The newly revised structure for staff and their roles are more appropriate to the business and it is having a substantial impact on the provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. The outcomes for learners are good. Success rates have continued to improve in the previous three years from 63% in 2007/08 to 76% in 2008/09. Current learners are making good progress and in-year success rates are above the national averages at 78%. The success rates completed in the allocated time have also improved and are now satisfactory.
13. Learners on the E2E programme also make good progress. Their rates of progression into apprenticeships, further education and employment are also good. Some 63% of the learners had a positive outcome in 2008/09.
14. The success rates for apprentices aged from 19 to 24 at 94% are outstanding. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are also good at 80% for NVQs and 89% for literacy and numeracy. Some 27% of the early leavers in 2008/09 achieved at least an NVQ or a technical certificate that they valued. All other learners across all groups achieve their qualifications equally well including the high number of learners from deprived postcode areas.

15. The standard of the learners' work and quality of evidence in electronic portfolios is good. Their portfolios include a broad range of powerful evidence generated from their workplaces.
16. Learners thoroughly enjoy their learning, are well-motivated and are very keen to progress to another programme. Learners are highly motivated by the high profile given to celebrating the achievement of learners at each centre.
17. Learners improve their social and economic wellbeing significantly. They develop good work ethic and showing respect to colleagues and customers. Learners on all programmes become highly professional, confident and articulate. Well-developed vocational skills combined with enhanced literacy and numeracy skills significantly improve the employment prospects of the learners.
18. Learners feel safe in the training centres and in their work places. They have fully assimilated the principles of safe working through regular reinforcement of health and safety working practices. Learners are fully aware of their rights at work and their responsibilities for their own safety and the safety of the others.
19. Learners develop good knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their health and well-being. The E2E learners and office apprentice learners have benefited from programmes such as 'Smoking Cessation' and healthy eating habits. However, apprentices and Train to Gain learners are unable to attend or experience such additional sessions or information.
20. Learners make a worthwhile contribution to their local communities. For example, the company worked with a local primary care trust in Birmingham to recruit learners from the local neighbourhood to work in local healthcare practices. Similarly, other learners gain economic independence, acquire new knowledge and develop good levels of sustainable skills that support current and future employment.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

21. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. One-to-one coaching on employers' premises is extremely valuable for the learners. Tutors provide an appropriately challenging learning environment to develop learners' knowledge and skills.
22. Assessment is highly effective. Assessors make regular and frequent visits to the learners' work places to check and validate their learning. Progress reviews are effective at identifying the progress made by the learners. Employers make constructive comments on the progress of the learners. However, some are not fully involved in the planning of reviews.
23. Learning resources are particularly good. Learners make highly effective use of information learning technology to aid their learning. Assessors provide constructive feedback promptly. Learners communicate regularly via email and

upload evidence including video clips and digital voice records for their assessor to review remotely via the e-portfolio platform. They can access the facility from any internet-enabled computer at home or at work.

24. The range, content and context of provision are extensive. The employers choose from a wide range of subjects, levels and qualifications to match their business requirements. The programmes are also highly relevant to the learners' personal, career and/or employment goals. After careful screening of the learners' current level of literacy and numeracy skills, tutors work with the learners to plan their individual learning programme. Employers choose relevant units to customise learning to their business needs. Learners on E2E programmes can progress to apprenticeships once they have demonstrated their competence and motivation.
25. The support for learners on personal and study matters are very strong. Tutors understand the needs and challenges facing the learners and provide timely and appropriate level of support to empower learners to develop independent learning skills. They provide detailed and responsive feedback that helps learners understand the requirements of the course and work. Guidance is also good.
26. Key Training has established an outstanding array of partnerships with employers, Connexions, schools, other learning providers and agencies in the voluntary sector in all regions to enrich learners' experiences. The employers provide invaluable work experience and employment. Key Training adds significant value to the employers through good quality training that develop a well-qualified workforce to meet skills shortages. Other partners provide specialist input to off-the-job training and provide rooms for drop-in sessions that meet the requirements of wheelchair users. Key training works collaboratively with other providers in the country to broaden the choices of training for learners and to share good practice. School pupils also benefit from taster programmes in business administration programmes in some regions.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

27. Managers promote high standards and the company provides a supportive and enabling culture for its learners. Key Training has set a very clear mission and strategic direction that closely reflects national and local priorities. Operational management of the centres across the county is strongly focussed on promoting improvements to the training. Staff, managers and the board of directors make extensive use of the comprehensive range of accurate data on the performance of the programmes, the centres and the company overall. This has been used to target help and support where it is needed most. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Staff training and development is good however Key Training has not provided training for the observers to assess and improve the quality of learning. It does not have a policy on skills for life.

28. Key Training has sound arrangements to safeguard and protect its learners. It checks all staff through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and keeps a central as well as local record. The company has devised meticulous procedures for risk assessment of centres and work places to protect learners. These are regularly monitored. Staff take swift and highly effective action to identify and respond to learners' welfare concerns. Key Training is constantly revising its safeguarding policy in response to government changes and makes good use of external sources to inform its safeguarding strategy and to provide staff training.
29. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is firmly underpinned by detailed policies and procedures to promote equality of opportunity to learners, employers and staff. Learning sessions promote equality and diversity imaginatively. Staff use some high quality video clips to instigate thought-provoking discussions. Learning materials are interesting, imaginative and informative. They deal with most areas of equality and diversity including legislation, discrimination and harassment, grievance procedures and stereotyping. Posters and displays in the centres reflect the diversity of the community and challenge stereotypes.
30. Learners have a thorough understanding of bullying and harassment and know how to challenge the perpetrators. Learners' awareness and understanding of the subject and potential problems are discussed and effectively monitored at progress reviews. Young learners are given a Key Card with details of a confidential helpline that deals with concerns about health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding.
31. The company is working hard to secure premises that provide suitable facilities for learners with mobility difficulties. Alternative arrangements to enable such learners to attend are not publicised.
32. Key Training has excellent arrangements for engaging with the learners, employers and partners. Over the past 18 years the company has successfully refined and developed the process. This is one of the key levers for quality improvement as the company has made numerous changes to improve the provision as a result of the feedback. However, the company does not inform them of the impact their suggestions have had on the quality of training.
33. Arrangements for quality improvement have been strengthened further and remain good. Audits are thorough. Management of the subcontractor is good. Good practice is shared effectively in and between the centres. The company observes all aspects of its interactions with the learners including interviews, sales, recruitment, guidance, reviews and teaching and learning sessions. The observations are conducted against a checklist that measures staff members input without any clear rationale for the observation. Key Training has graded majority of its observations as satisfactory. The company has no clear plans or strategy to improve the quality of all the types of sessions observed.
34. Resources provide good value for money. Learners make very good progress, irrespective of their starting point and develop skills and knowledge and attain

their learning goals at a challenging pace. Learners go into sustainable employment. Success rates into employment are good.

Information about the inspection

35. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Regional Director for Birmingham, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors observed learning and spoke with learners at Newcastle, Ipswich, Birmingham and Wellingborough centres. They also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other 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.
36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider/college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Key Training Ltd

Learning types:
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	1118	1118
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2	
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?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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