

Keeping It Simple Training

Focused monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Anthony Ward HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Keeping It Simple Training Ltd
Sentinel House
1 Ashley Road
London
N17 9LP

Telephone number: 020 8275 4235

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Keeping It Simple Training Ltd (KIS) is a training and enterprise organisation based in Tottenham Hale, North London. The organisation is wholly owned by Monument Equity Employment & Training Services. The Learning and Skills Council London North fund KIS to deliver work-based learning which comprises over half of its provision. KIS became the Train to Gain Consortium Lead of the North London Consortium in August 2006. The Consortium has 15 delivery partners.

KIS was inspected in December 2008. The overall effectiveness and main aspects of the provision were judged to be satisfactory, as was the provision in Entry to Employment (E2E) and on Train to Gain. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which include the two mandatory themes of outcomes for learners and self-assessment and improvement-planning. At the time of the monitoring visit, 448 Train to Gain learners were on programmes across the consortium and 19 learners were on the Entry to Employment programme. Nearly half of all learners do not speak English as their first language.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement-planning

Question

What progress has been made in making the self-assessment process sufficiently self-critical, leading to quality improvement?

Reasonable progress

KIS has made reasonable progress in developing effective quality improvement through self-assessment. At the previous inspection self-assessment was satisfactory. KIS developed a comprehensive post-inspection action plan which it has used effectively to improve its provision. It has also developed appropriate guidance on self-assessment for all consortium members. Keeping IT Simple's next report is not due until December and it is too early to judge the full impact of the self-assessment process. Senior staff are, however, well aware of those areas which require further development and have plans in place to address them. Quality improvement processes are in evidence across a wide range of activity. Quality management has improved significantly; for example, KIS now sets clear targets for overall and timely success rates and monitors these carefully, progress tracking is sophisticated and audit procedures are thorough. Communication has improved and quality is a high priority; for example, a quality improvement group is in place which has developed a useful quality assurance framework. KIS collects a wide range of data. However, in some areas, for example performance of different groups of learners, analysis and presentation is still not sufficiently developed to inform management decisions effectively.

Outcomes for learners

Question

What progress has been made in improving the success rates, especially timely success, of learners in the main Train to Gain programme but also in the small E2E provision?

Significant progress

KIS has made significant progress in improving the success rates of learners. At the previous inspection, achievement and standards were satisfactory. Success rates on the main Train to Gain programme were satisfactory at 77%; however, timely success rates were low at 18%. According to the provider's records, success rates have improved significantly and have risen to an overall rate of 86% and a timely rate of 62% for 2008/9. Tracking of learner progress has improved and appropriate targets are set and monitored frequently.

The progression of E2E learners was satisfactory, although the attendance rate was too low. Attendance is still a cause for concern. Progression has improved slightly and the percentage of those achieving their key goals has improved significantly. The achievement of adult literacy and numeracy qualifications, which was low, has improved significantly and is now at least satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Question

What progress has been made in improving planning and coordination of E2E learners' programmes including the availability and achievement of accredited qualifications?

Reasonable progress

KIS has made reasonable progress in improving the planning and coordination of E2E learners' programmes. It was insufficient at the previous inspection and too few qualifications were available. Following a thorough review, KIS has significantly increased the emphasis on preparing learners for employment and apprenticeships. Its approach to helping learners identify their career aspirations and the steps needed to fulfil them is much improved. Recent appointments of new staff, including a curriculum manager, form part of useful increases in programme resources. KIS has further developed the volume and quality of the already good personal support it provides learners. It has put in place effective measures to improve day-to-day operation of the programme, ensuring learners routinely receive a personal weekly timetable so that they and their tutors are clear where they should be at all times. It has introduced a small number of appropriate additional, mainly vocational qualifications and has well-developed plans to extend these. However, it has yet to fully implement planned improvements to the curriculum and the scheduling of learning sessions. New appointments are too recent to have affected some weaker aspects of curriculum coordination, such as duplication of content across different learning sessions.

Question

What progress has been made in improving the poor attendance of E2E learners?

Insufficient progress

At the previous inspection, Entry to Employment programme learners' attendance was poor at below 50%. Since then KIS has made insufficient progress in improving attendance, despite concerted action. It has significantly increased the emphasis at induction on the importance of punctual and regular attendance. The staff now routinely telephone learners who do not arrive at classes on time, clearly recording reasons for absence and offering highly practical help to make attending possible. All staff are well informed of learners whose attendance is poor, and this regularly forms the basis of specific individual interviews held with learners. Learners are clear about the explicit links between absence and potential suspension of their weekly education maintenance allowances. Attendance has improved but remains too low, with particularly poor attendance at some sessions. For example, only two out of five recently planned individual interviews to discuss apprenticeships took place due to learner absence. KIS is actively developing the Entry to Employment curriculum to make it more attractive to learners.

Leadership and management

Question

What progress has been made in the coordination and development of the Train to Gain consortium, including productive links with employers?

Significant progress

KIS has made significant progress in the coordination and development of the Train to Gain consortium. At the previous inspection this was an area for improvement. Central management had only recently been put in place to standardise consortium systems and practice, identify and share good practice and develop the consortium in a planned and strategic way. The consortium is developing well and success rates are significantly higher. Communication within the consortium has improved and members meet regularly and value the benefits that this close working brings. Quality audit is now frequent, thorough and detailed. Appropriate targets are agreed and KIS regularly monitors members' performance and follows up agreed action plans. Members report high levels of satisfaction with the management and support KIS offers. An example of this is the good support given to the consortium to develop matrix accreditation and improve the effectiveness of its delivery. KIS has standardised documentation across the consortium and, although this has duplicated the paperwork for some providers, it has improved the transfer of information. KIS has established specialist teams to work with local employers to ensure that links with employers have increased and improved.

Question

What progress has been made in the development of safeguarding procedures?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, Keeping IT Simple's arrangements for safeguarding learners met current government requirements. Since then it has made reasonable progress in their improvement. It has revised and strengthened its overall policy on safeguarding. The policy is now clearer and more detailed. KIS has developed a sound plan for all its staff to receive safeguarding training at level 2, with the first two staff members booked for training imminently. Most of its younger learners on work placements are in areas where safeguarding is well established, such as childcare and youth work settings. KIS is actively exploring how to extend this to other areas where demand for work placements is growing, such as retail and hospitality. Discussion of safeguarding now forms a routine item during review meetings with subcontractors. Some subcontractor staff are also following externally provided safeguarding training. KIS acknowledges that it needs to provide more clarity to subcontractors about its expectations and carry out more formal monitoring of their safeguarding arrangements. Its links with a range of relevant local authority departments are extensive and improving, but not yet sufficiently developed with the local safeguarding board.

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA
T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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