



Foreword

Neil McIntosh, Chief Executive, CfBT Education Trust

‘The full consortium of our Improvement Programme partners are supporting this additional push for Skills for Life improvement.’

In these tough economic times, it can be all too easy for employers, and policy makers, to neglect quality in skills and work-based learning. The Ofsted report *The impact of Train to Gain on skills in employment*¹ was therefore very timely.

Inspectors drew their conclusions from analysing 97 Train to Gain inspection reports and from their interviews with dozens of employees, supervisors and managers, at many different companies. They also spoke to teaching staff, assessors and managers at 48 colleges and other Train to Gain providers.

Ofsted found many strengths in Train to Gain. They concluded that ‘almost all the employees surveyed made improvements to their knowledge, understanding, motivation, team-work, self-confidence and self-esteem.’ This is extremely encouraging for the programme, and enhanced by the report’s estimate that nearly 70% of Train to Gain participants gained nationally recognised qualifications.

However Skills for Life is an area of significant weakness in much Train to Gain provision. To quote from the key findings, ‘Insufficient skills for life provision was offered by providers or taken up by employers and employees. Few providers had

specialist staff to offer effective skills for life training.’

Approached by LSIS

These findings about Skills for Life were no great surprise; in fact Ofsted’s use of the term ‘training’ in respect of literacy and numeracy was perhaps the greatest surprise for many of us in the whole report. Later in November, we were pleased to be approached by LSIS to help to implement their developing plans for rapid improvement support. By Christmas, plans were finalised, contracts were agreed, and the first providers had signed up for support from the newly launched Skills for Life Support for World Class Skills. This intensive programme of support comprises consultancy support and professional development for managers and staff at 200 providers, as well as support in helping staff to become qualified, and five projects to establish effective on-the-ground Skills for Life practice in Train to Gain.

The full consortium of our Improvement Programme partners (NIACE, LSN, NRDC and LLU+) are supporting this additional push for Skills for Life improvement, as are colleagues at the LSIS Move On programme, who are arranging additional training events for Train

¹ *The impact of Train to Gain on skills in employment*, Ofsted, Nov 2008. See www.ofsted.gov.uk

Continued overleaf...

‘We are pleased, through our network of extremely able and experienced Development Advisers, to be helping so many providers to help so many employees to improve those skills most fundamental to employability: Skills for Life.’

to Gain staff and brokers. LSIS colleagues running the World Class Skills programme, which supports effective Train to Gain provision, are finding that providers are so keen for support in this area that requests are still coming in.

We are working closely with colleagues delivering the World Class Skills programme to ensure that Skills for Life support is well aligned and responds to the providers needs. Providers are very keen to learn how to embed Skills for Life effectively. It appears that demand for support may outstrip supply in the immediate short term.

Effective practice projects

In the summer, we plan to publish the results of the effective practice projects, and any associated learning deriving from them, so that all providers can apply better practice, for the benefit of the employees they serve.

Each of these five effective practice projects involves around eight providers and focuses on one of these themes:

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- Engaging public, private and voluntary sector employers in order to identify and meet their Skills for Life needs
- Developing flexible ways of delivering and funding Skills for Life within the Train to Gain framework
- Developing and implementing effective assessment and ILP processes appropriate for employer-facing provision
- Developing a professional workforce for Train to Gain
- Developing teaching and learning approaches and resources to reflect the employer context

In the current economic climate, many organisations and businesses – whether public or private, or charities like CfBT – pay increasing attention to the skills and motivation of their staff, and to the responsiveness of their service. We are pleased, through our network of extremely able and experienced Development Advisers, to be helping so many providers to help so many employees to improve those skills most fundamental to employability: Skills for Life.

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