



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cambrian Training Company
The Offices
Coed y Dinas
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 8RP**

Date of inspection: March 2012

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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Context

Cambrian Training Company is a privately owned training provider based in Welshpool. The provider works across Wales in partnership with a wide range of businesses. All learners are in employment and most enter training through the close working relationship that the provider has with employers.

The provider specialises in delivering training in:

- Hospitality and catering;
- Food and Drink manufacturing;
- Health and Social Care;
- Team Leading and management;
- Customer Service and Retail skills; and
- Business Administration.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 420 learners on Welsh Government funded training programmes with the company.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Adequate
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Overall, the rate at which learners attain their qualifications is good. Recent unverified data shows attainment is being maintained at a good rate. Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) subjects are not effectively reinforced throughout the training programme, and as a result many learners demonstrate limited understanding and knowledge of the topic. Learners do not benefit from constructive written feedback from assessors that enables them to improve their future performance across most parts of their training framework. Overall, the quality of planning of training and assessment by training officers varies too much.

The provider's management have prioritised and focused well on learners attaining their qualification framework. However, quality assurance procedures and processes do not focus enough on improving all aspects of training and assessment. The provider's managers do not put enough focus on key issues, in particular the development of all learners' basic and literacy skills and the development of training officers to enable them to effectively support learners to improve these skills.

Whilst there continues to be regular, mainly electronic, communication between the provider and its sub-contractors, the lack of regular meetings has meant that opportunities have been lost to further improve the work of the partnership for the benefit of learners.

Prospects for improvement

The provider's capacity for improvement is good because:

- the managing director has a clear vision of what the provider needs to do to work towards excellence in the delivery of training;
- the impact of the downsizing of the management team is beginning to establish greater clarity in roles and responsibilities; and
- the provider has maintained a strong focus on key aspects of training, including the rates at which learners attain their training frameworks.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the provider must:

- R1 develop and implement a clear strategy to develop all learners' basic and literacy skills;
- R2 improve the quality and consistency of assessing and learning;
- R3 make sure that managers translate the provider's strategic objectives into effective operational activities;
- R4 improve the management of partnership working with sub-contractors.
- R5 ensure that all quality processes are accurately and fully completed and robustly monitored by managers; and
- R6 do more to promote and embed the language and culture of Wales and ESDGC to all learners.

What happens next?

Estyn requires the provider to address the recommendations from the inspection and to integrate their proposed actions into their improvement plan to DfES. The Estyn link inspector will monitor the progress the provider is making against the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Overall, the rates at which learners gain their qualifications are good. Over the last three years, the attainment rate has improved. In the period 2009 to 2010, attainment rates were just above the national average. Unverified data for 2010 to 2011 shows that success rates have been maintained. However, the rate at which learners progress to the next level of training is judged as adequate. Learners perform equally well on both Foundation and Apprenticeship programmes. Almost all learners complete their qualifications within the timescales stated in their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).

Almost all current learners make good progress in their training programmes. Many develop and demonstrate good practical competence and theory knowledge in their workplaces. All learners are employed and benefit from good assessment opportunities in their workplaces.

Overall, learners' work in National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) portfolios meets the required standard. On many programmes, learners have the opportunity to use electronic portfolios. However, when using these portfolios learners do not benefit from constructive written feedback from training officers that enables them to improve their future performance.

Generally, learners are not developing their literacy skills in systematic way due to the differences in the quality of support given to them by sub-contractors. Learners do not benefit from corrections and constructive written feedback from training officers. Many learners do not develop their spelling and grammar skills well enough as part of their vocational courses. Most learners use an appropriate range of vocabulary and are able to express themselves well.

Overall, learners make satisfactory progress in developing their Essential Skills Wales (ESW) qualifications. Almost all learners complete these early on in their training. A few learners complete these at a higher level than required by their frameworks. However, ESW does not always have a clear relevance to the vocational award. All learners showed good occupational skills.

All learners develop a basic understanding of ESDGC during their induction programme. However, these subjects are not effectively reinforced throughout the training programme, and as a result many learners demonstrate limited understanding and knowledge.

Approximately 9% of learners across all training programmes can speak, read and write in Welsh. Overall, the provider does not do enough to encourage all learners to develop their use of the Welsh language and appreciate the culture of Wales.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Overall, most learners demonstrate an adequate awareness of health and safety and wellbeing in their workplaces.

There are appropriate procedures in place for the vetting and monitoring of work placements.

A very few learners demonstrate a reasonable understanding of wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. However, many do not demonstrate a clear understanding of wellbeing issues. Most learners do not benefit from challenging questions from training officers that will develop and extend their knowledge and understanding. For example, questions often relate to healthy eating only.

Nearly all learners feel safe in their work placements and most know whom to contact if they have a problem.

Overall, most learners enjoy their training programmes. Most display confidence and are well motivated to complete their training and achieve their qualifications. A minority of learners are able to help plan their training and assessment activities.

Nearly all learners benefit from good work placements that serve their local communities well. A few learners are involved in charity work and have participated in local and national competitions and awards.

Good relationships exist between learners, training officers and employers. All learners are employed, and punctuality and attendance are good.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Adequate
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Learning experiences: Adequate

Overall, the training that the provider delivers meets the needs of learners, employers and the wider community very well. The provider has good, long-standing working relationships with a wide range of employers including small to medium size enterprises and large companies throughout Wales. The provider delivers qualifications that service the local economy and have recently introduced qualifications for the recycling industry. The company particularly supports the hospitality industry. All employers are highly committed to training and give their learners very good levels of support

A small Essential Skills Wales (ESW) team was established in August 2011 and covers the whole of Wales. The team conducts the delivery and assessment of all essential skills across all vocational routes. However, learners are not challenged enough to achieve higher level essential skills when appropriate.

Essential skills are completed or well underway before the start of the learners' vocational qualification. This makes integration and linking to the vocational area difficult. Although learners have access to the provider's useful Moodle site for essential skills learning materials, the main learning and assessments take place in

the workplace, and therefore learners' access to the site is limited. Essential skills learning packs are clear and informative. However, they do not always effectively test for learner understanding and do not link to the vocational subject well enough.

Overall, the promotion of the Welsh language and the culture of Wales are underdeveloped. Training officers do not always do enough to encourage all Welsh speaking learners to use and develop their skills.

A few learners demonstrate a good understanding and are able to relate ESDGC well to their work environments. However, ESDGC is not embedded into the training process. The provider has recently developed 'eco-footprint' information and learning packs at levels 1 and 2. The provider is currently working with a partner on good practices in ESDGC. However, it is too early to judge the impact on learners.

Teaching: Adequate

Most training officers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Many use a wide range of training methods, including demonstrations and group discussions that interest and stimulate their learners. The relationship between training officers and their learners is good and this helps build learners' confidence.

Most sessions are well structured and reflecting the needs of the employer and the use of safe practice during on-the-job training.

In a few sessions, there is good and appropriate use of questioning to check learners' understanding. However, overall, training officers' questioning skills are not developed well enough. In a few sessions, trainers do not explain theories well enough to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Overall, the quality of planning of training and assessment by training officers varies too much. In a few sessions, planning and preparation are good and there are detailed assessment plans. Many training officers do not plan to vary their delivery and assessment enough to meet individual learners' needs. This lack of planning means that the pace of a few sessions is too slow and does not provide enough challenge for the learners.

Overall, training officers do not take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' essential skills. In many sessions, there is a lack of focus on integrating Welsh language and culture and ESDGC into learning.

Many training officers give effective verbal feedback to learners. However, the quality of written feedback is too varied and often lacks detailed explanations or helpful guidance. In a few examples, learners' written work had not been marked or assessed. Most training officers discuss short-term assessment targets with their learners. A few produce agreed written assessment targets, which are checked at the next assessment visit. As a result, learners do not always have a good enough written record of the progress they are making.

Learner progress reviews too often focus on action points for the next session or identifying tasks to be completed. They do not always review the learning that has

taken place. Most training officers do not involve learners well enough in reviewing their own learning.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The provider has good policies in place to promote the health and wellbeing of its learners. There is a clear personal harassment and bullying policy and the number of reported incidents is minimal.

There are appropriate arrangements for safeguarding learners. The safeguarding policy is clear and well written and is updated annually. The policy is supported well by good recruitment practices. The provider makes sure that sub-contractors adhere to these effective arrangements.

There is a useful online induction pack for learners, covering health and safety and rights and responsibilities at work. The provider is in the early stages of developing a range of online support materials for health and wellbeing. Learners receive lists of useful telephone contacts for help and support. The provider has led on the introduction of a National Union of Students (NUS) apprentice discount card that helps learners to save money in the same way as other students.

Overall, there are not enough opportunities for learners to address their personal development. The provider does not pay enough attention to the barriers that learners face in achieving successful outcomes. These barriers and the available support are not identified clearly enough or explored fully during learner induction sessions. The provider recognises this and is training an additional learning coach. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of this particular initiative.

Arrangements to identify and support learners with essential skills needs are not effective enough. Training officers identify learners' learning styles and essential skills needs. However, it is not clear how training officers use the results of these assessments to provide the necessary support for learners. Not enough staff are trained to support learners to improve their literacy skills and become independent learners. The arrangements to monitor the progress that learners make in this area are underdeveloped.

Provision for learners with other and more complex learning needs is too limited. Training officers are not fully aware of the range of additional needs or how to meet them. The provider does not monitor this area well enough and so cannot be clear about the range of help it needs to develop and deliver.

Learning environment: Good

The provider promotes a clear ethos of equality and diversity. A good variety of methods is used to make information available to staff and learners. There is a good range of policies and procedures available on the provider's intranet site. The equality and diversity policy is reviewed annually and is supported by an effective action plan that is distributed to all staff.

Equal opportunities guidance, appeals procedure and health and safety information are included in the learner induction programme and are monitored throughout the year. Equal opportunities are promoted well throughout the period of training. There is a useful session where staff question learners' understanding. However, reinforcement and development of learners' understanding are not embedded well enough into the learning experience.

All learners have employed status and are well supported by their employers. Overall, the provider and employer premises are good and fit for purpose for both on and off-the-job training. In some cases the premises and equipment available for learners at their place of work are of a very high standard. The facilities at learners' places of work provide good opportunities for them to develop practical competence and provide good evidence for their NVQ portfolios. The provider works closely with employers to ensure that learners work in a safe and healthy environment.

In the workplace, specialist equipment is up-to-date and provides learners with resources to develop their job skills well. Learners are encouraged to use the e-portfolio process to progress and record their work. Paper-based portfolios are available for learners who prefer to work in 'hard copy'.

The provider's premises are modern and well equipped and provide a good learning environment when required. They also provide good accommodation for the administration of the work-based learning contract and management of the provider. The provider's Centre of Excellence for commercial food preparation is a good quality facility, located near to the main offices.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Adequate
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Leadership: Adequate

The provider has a well-defined management structure, with clear lines of accountability and responsibility across staff at all levels. The directors provide direction and set a well understood vision for the company.

The provider has completed a comprehensive staff review and re-structure as a result of a decrease in the size of its contract with the Welsh Government. This has also included changes to its sub-contracting arrangements. Senior managers have completed this process with minimal disruption to learners. However, they have lacked sufficient focus on some key issues, such as ensuring that there is enough focus on the development of basic and literacy skills for all learners and the development of training for officers on how best to support learners to improve these skills.

The managing director has a clear vision of what the provider needs to do to achieve excellence in the delivery of training. However, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of these strategies on the full range of training activities.

Directors and managers share a common understanding of the importance of accurate and timely data relating to learners' performance. They collect and analyse data regularly and know how well they are performing in comparison to other training providers in Wales. This information is also readily accessible to all staff.

The provider has responded well to local and national priorities for education and training. The company effectively contributes to a wide range of local and national initiatives.

The provider has invested heavily in information technology, including a robust data management system, e-portfolios for learners and a Moodle site for communicating with staff and sub-contractors. Meetings are regularly held with Heads of Curriculum, minuted, and the outcomes disseminated through Moodle. However, meetings do not always include sub-contractor partners. This means that not all sub-contractors are fully aware of the full range of procedures, practices and developments across all partners. It also restricts the identification and sharing of best practice across the provider and all of its sub-contractors.

Improving quality: Adequate

The provider uses detailed procedures for self-assessment annually that cover most aspects of training. The provider takes good account of the views of learners and employers who complete useful satisfaction questionnaires. Learners take part in learner voice forums and have the opportunity to discuss issues with the managing director through an MD question time. The provider works very closely with employers on a day-to-day basis. Staff are shareholders of the company and as such are able to attend shareholder functions to formally feed back to managers.

The provider's system for planning improvement begins with curriculum area reviews. Curriculum area leaders complete standardised self-assessment documentation that informs the provider's self-assessment report and quality development plan. However, in the majority of cases, curriculum leaders do not use the available up-to-date data on learner performance to inform the document or set targets. In a minority of cases, the document is not fully completed.

The self-assessment process is informed by peer observations between training officers. However, there is not a close enough match between the judgment awarded and the text within the observation report. In a minority of cases the judgements are over generous. The observation report focuses clearly on training officer activities. The reports show limited development by training officers and also limited understanding by learners of essential literacy skills or wider key themes, such as ESDGC. The reports do not include information about the performance of learners.

The provider uses benchmarking data well, particularly in its areas of specialisms, where it benchmarks itself against UK wide providers.

The provider is very active in its support for the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW). It takes full advantage of its membership to share and receive good practice throughout the network across Wales. Staff from the specialist areas of the provider are very active in the various occupational networks through the UK. The provider also encourages learners to take part in competitions on a national and international level, such as the WorldSkills event in 2011, where it carried out a butchery master class on Welsh lamb.

Partnership working: Adequate

The provider has developed effective working relationships with its four sub-contractors and takes the lead in the planning and quality assurance of delivery of the partnership's programmes. Also, the provider has good working relationships with a wide range of employers. Together with another work-based learning provider, it works with a major food, beverage and restaurant chain in an academy for young learners entering the hospitality industry. This includes joint planning of provision. The partnership working provides a useful range of opportunities for learners to work with good local employers.

Until recently the provider had an inclusive approach to its work with its sub-contractors, including regular meetings together and the sharing of good practice. However, the provider has stopped this arrangement and works with sub-contractors individually. The provider has replaced the regular joint sub-contractor meetings with an individual sub-contractor monitoring process. The provider has worked well and provided good support for a new sub-contractor who has recently joined the partnership.

Whilst there continues to be regular, mainly electronic, communication between the provider and its sub-contractors, the lack of regular meetings has meant that opportunities have been lost to further improve the work of the partnership for the benefit of learners, for example the introduction of a clear strategy to develop learners' literacy skills across the provider and its sub-contractors.

Sub-contractors contribute to the provider's self-assessment report but continue to use their own systems for recruitment, training and development. The provider has undertaken a limited number of peer observations of sub-contractor's staff, which has resulted in little evidence of any subsequent shared training and development of the provider's and sub-contractors' staff.

Resource management: Adequate

The provider's focus on staff training and development is adequate. Managers have added staff training objectives to the latest business plan.

Training officers undertake recognised and accredited assessor and verifier training. Plans are in place for all training officers to undertake the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS) course to improve teaching and learning skills. Plans are also in place to evaluate and improve the literacy and numeracy skills of training officers supported by the essential skills team, but this is at a very early stage.

All staff are appropriately experienced and demonstrate good up-to-date knowledge of their industry and the requirements of learners' qualification frameworks.

Update training for staff is mainly delivered through standardisation meetings and curriculum team meetings, with updates included on the provider's Moodle site. However, sub-contractors' staff are not included within these training opportunities. Overall, the quality of training and its impact on learners are not effectively measured.

The development of and support for support for learners' literacy are at a very early stage of development within the company. Networking with other providers has occurred and the provider has adopted resources developed by NTfW to deliver ESDGC.

The provider has made significant investment in an integrated electronic system, with an aim to reduce environmental impact, delivery cost and duplication of effort. This includes the implementation of an e-portfolio system, the use of the e-pen and the development of resources for Moodle. Sub-contractors are included in these developments. However, all of these initiatives are at a relatively early stage and therefore it is too early to judge their impact on learners.

The provider has a good central management information system (MIS) system, which provides up-to-date benchmarked data on learner and assessor performance.

Overall, the provider gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

Responses to learner questionnaires completed before the inspection were generally positive. Many learners think that they had good information from the provider before they chose their learning programme. Almost all learners enjoy their learning.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mark Evans HMI	Reporting Inspector
Bernard Hayward HMI	Team Inspector
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