



National Audit Office

Train to Gain: Developing the skills of the workforce

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

1 This report examined programme design, implementation and management, and the role and performance of skills brokers and training providers, specifically:

- Do the Department and LSC have effective programme management and implementation processes in place to deliver Train to Gain?
- Are skills brokers able to provide an effective service that contributes to Train to Gain objectives?
- Are Train to Gain providers able to provide an effective service to employers?
- Is there evidence that Train to Gain is starting to achieve its intended objectives?

The methods used to collect evidence are described below.

Quantitative data analysis

2 We obtained and analysed management and performance data on Train to Gain, including: the LSC's 'Train to Gain datacube' which collates information from Individual Learner Records, Broker Management System and funding system; and the Statistical First Releases on Train to Gain published by the Data Service (www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics)

3 We also used other survey data, including the National Employer Skills Survey (2004, 2005, 2007) and the Labour Force Survey to analyse the situation before and during Train to Gain.

Literature review

4 We reviewed a range of published and unpublished research and other reports on Train to Gain and the Employer Training Pilots, as well as skills policy more generally. The sources included:

- evaluations and reviews commissioned by the Department and the LSC (<http://research.lsc.gov.uk/evaluation/published/traintogain>), and carried out by Ipsos MORI, IFF Research and the Institute for Employment Studies;
- reviews of the Employer Training Pilots, carried by the Institute for Employment Studies, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Ipsos MORI;
- various reviews of Train to Gain and brokerage by GHK Consulting, the Office of Government Commerce, Ofsted, HM Treasury and the Department's and the LSC's internal audit teams; and
- programme documentation held by the LSC and the Department.

Meetings with government departments, stakeholders and key interest groups

5 We held discussions with key officials from the Department, the LSC (national office and regional offices, National Employer Service and Internal Audit), to gain an understanding of the main issues affecting Train to Gain and the strategic direction of the service. These meetings covered a wide range of issues, including design and development of the service, piloting, programme management, brokerage, marketing, evaluation, and provider assurance. We also worked with the Department's and the LSC's internal audit teams during autumn 2008 as they prepared an internal audit report on the programme. To understand the service in practice we visited training providers and brokers in selected regions.

6 We conducted semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders and key interest groups for their views on issues affecting skills training and Train to Gain. These included:

- Association of Colleges
- Association of Learning Providers
- Confederation of British Industry
- Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform
- Electrical Contractors Association
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Learning and Skills Improvement Service
- Ofsted
- Unionlearn
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills

Focus groups

7 We commissioned Carol Goldstone Associates to conduct focus groups with Train to Gain brokers and training providers to obtain views on the design, implementation and performance of Train to Gain. Six focus groups and 12 depth telephone interviews took place between January and February 2009 in Bristol, London and York. The participants were:

- 23 skills brokers, including managers, team leaders and front-line brokers; and
- 34 representatives from 27 training providers, covering the range of provider types.