

INSPECTION REPORT

Gordon Franks Training & Personnel

09 September 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Gordon Franks Training & Personnel is a training partnership based in Birmingham, which provides work-based learning in retailing, customer service and transportation, and foundation programmes. It provides a Life Skills programme for learners with additional learning and social needs and basic skills training for 18 to 24 year old clients under a New Deal contract with Jobcentre Plus.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is adequate to meet the needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the leadership and management of Gordon Franks Training & Personnel are outstanding. The quality assurance is good and equality of opportunity is outstanding. The quality of the Life Skills programme is outstanding and the New Deal 18-24 provision is good. The quality of work-based learning in retailing, customer service and transportation is satisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	1
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	1
Quality assurance	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	2
Life Skills	1

KEY STRENGTHS

- focused and strong motivational leadership
- particularly good staff recruitment and development
- excellent training provided for disadvantaged learners
- strong focus on continuous improvement
- good pastoral and training support for learners
- outstanding foundation Life Skills programme

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor learning environment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better support for learners who speak English as an additional language

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days inspecting Gordon Franks Training & Personnel (GFTP) in September 2002. The inspectors carried out 33 interviews with members of staff, interviewed 51 learners, seven workplace supervisors, three partners, and visited 17 work placements. The inspectors observed 10 learning sessions and examined a range of documents, including learners' portfolios, individual learning plans, policies, procedures, records of meetings, promotional material, achievements data and reports from the Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and awarding bodies. The inspectors also examined the most recent self-assessment report, which was produced in May 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	9
Total	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	10

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. GFTP is a training partnership based in Birmingham, where it has one training centre. It employs 29 staff, of whom eight work part time, including three self-employed consultants who assess learners in the workplace. GFTP provides work-based learning for 167 young people in retailing, customer service and transportation. The learners follow national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeship programmes. Life Skills training, including literacy and numeracy, is offered through a 12-week programme for disadvantaged young people. Basic skills training is offered through the New Deal full-time education and training option for 18 to 24 year old clients, for 20 weeks. Clients over the age of 25 attend an eight-week basic skills pilot programme under New Deal 25+. GFTP has 38 clients on these programmes. GFTP has a contract with Birmingham and Solihull LSC to provide work-based learning and a Jobcentre Plus New Deal contract.

3. The main areas of employment in Birmingham are tourism, leisure, retailing and business and finance. The city is a major manufacturing centre. According to the 1991 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 21.5 per cent, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent. In May 2002, the unemployment rate in Birmingham was 5.4 per cent, compared with a national rate of 3 per cent.

4. According to the Birmingham Local Education Authority, there are 141,000 adults aged 19-24 with basic skills needs in Birmingham. In 2001, the proportion of Birmingham school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades C or above was 41 per cent, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory in retailing, customer service and transportation. Learners have access to a good range of well-established national employers who provide work placements and jobs. Learners are well supported in the workplace and there is good off-the-job training for non-employed learners. Staff are well qualified and experienced and have held high positions in the industry. Key skills are taught well alongside the NVQ qualification.

6. Learners' achievement of qualifications is poor. Most of the learners have additional social and learning needs. There is some poor planning of training. Employed learners do not take full advantage of the off-the-job training offered to them.

New Deal 18-24

7. The training in the New Deal 18-24 basic skills programme is good. There is good personal support for clients. They achieve a good range of additional qualifications, including health and safety and first aid. The achievement rate for basic skills qualifications is also good. There is an effective partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Referrals are appropriate and are dealt with promptly. GFTP's staff carry out assessments on Jobcentre Plus premises and clients visit the training centre before they attend training. Clients understand the importance of the basic skills training and how it can help them to progress on to other training or employment. There is a narrow range of learning materials and resources. Retention rates are satisfactory, although attendance rates are poor.

Life Skills

8. Life Skills training is outstanding. The course is well structured and innovative and uses a range of very effective and non-traditional teaching methods to engage learners. Learners receive excellent support from well-qualified and motivated staff. There is good, regular assessment of learners throughout the training programme. They follow clear routes of progression into full-time education, further training or employment. However, the learning environment is poor.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

9. GFTP was formed in 1983 by the husband and wife team who now own and manage it. The managing director is responsible for strategic and operational management and quality assurance. The other founder is responsible for personnel and facilities and is also a member of the senior management team. The managing director is supported by five team leaders, who comprise the senior management team. GFTP has a quality assurance policy and procedures, and an equal opportunities policy. The quality assurance policy covers all of the key processes of learning. Team leaders are responsible for quality assurance within their department. One member of the senior management team is responsible for equality of opportunity. GFTP is organised into the three key areas of retailing, Life Skills and New Deal provision. Since 1997, it has held the Investors in People award, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. GFTP also holds an externally accredited award for literacy and numeracy. The company produced its third self-assessment report in September 2001, and updated it in May 2002.

STRENGTHS

- focused and strong motivational leadership
- particularly good staff recruitment and development
- very good communications
- good business planning
- excellent training provision for disadvantaged learners
- extensive use of data to improve learning
- strong focus on continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- poor learning environment
- inadequate internal audit of quality assurance

10. GFTP's managing director provides strong motivational leadership. There is a clear understanding of how the behaviour and attitude of the managers and staff towards the learners impacts on the organisation. Change, innovation and creativity are encouraged by extensive staff development and there is a calm, positive and welcoming atmosphere. The managing director improves the provision of learning continuously by motivating learners and staff, through the use of an extensive library of resources on current learning styles and methods. The managing director attends seminars regularly and shares learning with GFTP's staff.

11. Staff recruitment and development are particularly good. The staff recruitment process at GFTP is thorough. Candidates are subjected to individual and group

interviews, psychometric testing and a range of other recruitment processes. One of the most successful and effective practices is a group presentation, which ensures that candidates understand the client group and their needs. There is a comprehensive induction process. For the first three months, there are weekly interviews with the managing director, who provides them with constructive feedback on their performance, discusses their concerns and invites them to suggest possible improvements. Each new member of staff is assigned a colleague as a mentor. GFTP's staff are well qualified and experienced and take on full responsibilities when they feel ready. Many of them have held senior positions in their fields of expertise before joining GFTP. Staff training is excellent. This is linked to the business plan and their individual professional and personal needs. In addition to the wide range of formal training sessions, each member of staff has a day allocated each quarter to carry out any other personal development activity. There is no restriction on the type of activity but, on completion, staff must discuss the impact on their personal development with colleagues. Staff participate in a wide range of activities, including those which involve them confronting their own fears and barriers to progress. The staff development needs are linked to the annual staff appraisal. Staff retention rates are excellent. In all areas of teaching and support for learners, staff show a very high level of commitment to, and understanding of, learners' needs.

12. GFTP has very good formal and informal communications, which focus on the needs of the learners. There are well-attended monthly senior management and weekly team meetings. In addition, staff share good teaching practices among themselves every day. Internal verifiers meet monthly to share good practice and ensure standardisation across awards. Assessors meet monthly with internal verifiers to discuss the progress of individuals towards completion of their qualifications and assessment practice. Written minutes are produced following every meeting, but some do not contain clear action points, responsibilities or timescales for completion. Groups of staff are brought together to discuss and share ideas on specific projects, such as the development of a company-wide database and the introduction of an initiative to make learning fun. There is frequent informal communication between all staff. The managing director and senior managers have an open management style, and staff are encouraged to contribute ideas for improvements to training. Parents, teachers and careers advisers attend a presentation evening to celebrate learners' success. GFTP's staff work closely with a wide range of local and national organisations, including the probation service, careers and social services, and specialist services designed specifically to help learners with dyslexia and provide mentoring support. Managers work with a range of consultative groups, educational development organisations and specialists, to develop and pilot new initiatives to improve learning.

13. There is good business planning. The annual cycle of strategic and operational planning involves all staff. The managing director gives the five senior team managers an indication of targets and new initiatives to consider for the coming year. Each individual team develops a strategic plan, which is approved by the managing director. The plan includes measures of performance and staff development needs. The individual team plans are shared between teams. To meet the plans, teams are

encouraged to identify and use innovative and imaginative methods to train, motivate and retain learners. All staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities within the business planning cycle. An action plan is produced, which details individual components of the strategic plan, and identifies individual responsibilities and timescales. The plan is expanded to ensure that sufficient detail on each component part is documented. Progress towards meeting the key performance indicators is discussed at team and management meetings. Plans are modified and updated during the course of the annual cycle to respond to learners' and business needs.

14. The three linked premises which constitute the training centre provide a poor environment for learning. Little effort has been made to make the training rooms and public areas bright and cheerful. Colour schemes are drab and parts of the building are poorly maintained, with some broken windows and damp walls. Learners' work is displayed poorly and does not reflect the innovative and good work produced by them. The multi-cultural diversity of the learners is not reflected in the environment through pictures and posters.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 1**

15. Equality of opportunity is outstanding at GFTP. There is a clear policy on equality of opportunity, which is evident in all of GFTP's practices. Learners from minority ethnic groups comprise 27 per cent of the total learners. This compares with 7.8 per cent for the West Midlands area. Training is promoted to all sections of society and learners are recruited through local schools, Connexions, the Youth Offending Team and foster-care and after-care teams of the social services. GFTP is recommended to many learners by friends and relations who have had a very positive learning experience.

16. Equality of opportunity has a high profile throughout GFTP and is central to its work. The management team is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and it is a fixed agenda item at all progress meetings. The company has a policy statement, with a supporting code of practice, which is given to all employers and they are required to adhere to them. Staff have attended awareness training and are sensitive to race, gender and disability issues. They have links with local organisations working with minority ethnic groups.

17. Equality of opportunity is communicated through the comprehensive induction process for staff and learners. All learners understand what to do if they experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace. In one instance where a learner was subjected to harassment, GFTP responded quickly and effectively by finding an alternative work placement and removing the employer from its approved list of work-placement providers.

18. There is excellent training provision for disadvantaged learners. Learners with additional learning needs and additional support needs have individually designed training programmes to meet their requirements. Individualised goals are set and there are support workshops every fortnight to meet these needs. Where necessary, individual support is provided and good use is made of other agencies to support their learners. For example, some learners receive dyslexia support. There is good progression into employment for disadvantaged learners. Where progression into full employment is not possible, learners are referred to a local supportive employment organisation. Some learners testify to having achieved more in the short period they spend with GFTP than in their entire school career.

19. GFTP's training premises on the first floor are inaccessible to learners and staff with mobility difficulties. There are narrow corridors and steep stairs. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report and alternative accommodation is arranged to meet the needs of learners with mobility difficulties. Data are collected with regard to gender, ethnicity, and disability of learners.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

20. There is good collection, analysis and use of data in GFTP. A wide range of data is collected, analysed thoroughly and used by staff to manage, plan and improve training. Graphs are produced to provide staff with a clear indication of actual performance and trends against key performance targets identified in the business plan. Analysis of data on referrals, interviews, starts, leavers, achievements and progression is carried out monthly. Information on learners leaving training is further broken down into specific areas, such as leaving to go into employment, further education, referral to other training providers, or a variety of personal and social reasons. The results of this analysis are used to plan initiatives to improve retention rates. Feedback on GFTP's performance is sought from employers and referral agencies twice each year and the results are analysed to identify weaknesses, highlight concerns with individual employers, and develop appropriate strategies to improve training. Data are collected weekly from some learners and over a longer period from others. Managers consider carefully what questions to ask learners when requesting feedback, and change questionnaires to ensure that each department receives the most appropriate feedback. Learners are asked to give feedback on the effectiveness of the induction process, key skills workshops and support workshops. Data are being used to pilot benchmarking, to enable comparisons between training programmes.

21. There is a strong focus on continuous improvement at GFTP. Teams and individuals regularly share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. For example, successful teaching techniques used in the Life Skills programme are being extended to retailing training. Information and skills learned during staff training is shared with colleagues. All tutors are observed regularly and given constructive feedback. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and the self-assessment report produced in May 2002 accurately reflects the findings of the inspectors. Detailed action plans to deal with weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report have been used for the past three years. Internal verification is thorough and a risk assessment of the processes has been carried out against the new national code of practice for assessment and internal verification. Internal verification is well planned to cover all assessors and learners. Internal verifiers regularly interview learners. Feedback from learners is used to improve assessors' practice. Assessors are observed during all stages of the assessment process and are given detailed feedback, including identification of training and development needs. There are regular meetings between assessors and verifiers to ensure standardisation and to share best practice. All assessors update their vocational experience regularly and maintain a log of all personal development activities and training. Employers are visited regularly and monitored for the quality of support, training and any other issues. There are no subcontractors.

22. The internal audit procedure is not fully developed to cover all key processes. The audit process ensures that procedures comply with contracts but does not check the quality of records, such as training plans and reviews. Some training plans and reviews do not give sufficient information to enable managers to monitor learners' or staff's performance against targets adequately.

Good Practice

Many of the learners have learning difficulties and disabilities, and are unable to find jobs in the open market. GFTP has links with an agency working with such learners, which promotes them to national employers who want to attract a diverse workforce. This agency prepares the learners for work with reputable employers by helping to tailor their curriculum vitae and prepare them for interviews. The learners can continue to receive this help as long as they need, in order to gain sufficient confidence to keep a job. In the past year, 11 learners gained a job through this agency.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	132	3

23. GFTP offers NVQs and advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships in retailing, customer service and transportation. There are 132 learners, with 65 foundation apprentices, nine advanced apprentices and 58 learners working towards NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3. Thirty per cent of the learners are on work placements and 70 per cent are employed. Learners are placed in a range of independent and national companies. GFTP has five assessors who are occupationally competent and experienced in the assessment process. They visit learners in the workplace every two to four weeks to carry out assessments and to review their progress. Induction is carried out in the training centre and in the workplace. As part of the induction process all learners participate in an initial assessment of key and basic skills, and an assessment of occupational competence, to establish the correct entry level to the training programme. Training is carried out in the workplace and at the training centre.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			6		8		12		10							
Retained*			0	0	2	25	2	17	2	20						
Successfully completed			0	0	1	12	2	17	1	10						
Still in learning			3	50	5	62	0	0	1	10						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			114		95		91		85				85			
Retained*			8	7	46	48	45	49	32	38			0	0		
Successfully completed			3	3	38	40	43	47	31	36			0	0		
Still in learning			57	50	8	8	0	0	0	0			0	0		

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			131		49		31		51							
Retained*			16	12	24	49	18	58	24	47						
Successfully completed			10	8	19	39	15	48	19	37						
Still in learning			57	44	1	2	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- particularly good induction for non-employed learners
- excellent work placements
- good key skills provision
- good pastoral and training support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates
- inadequate planning of some aspects of learning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of individual learner's progress
- better take up of off-the-job training

24. Induction is particularly good for the non-employed learners. GFTP provides all learners with a week-long induction programme at the company's training centre in Birmingham. This induction prepares learners well for a career in retailing and raises their awareness of the options available to them. Subjects such as health and safety, security and consumer law are covered imaginatively and thoroughly. The induction ends with a presentation by the learners on subjects covered during the week, to which employers and GFTP's staff are invited. Learners speak enthusiastically of their experience and are proud to receive a certificate of attendance. Learners' confidence is improved greatly during the week. Evidence from the induction is used for the communication key skill. Employed learners are invited to attend this induction but rarely attend. These learners receive an induction in the workplace, but it is not as

thorough or memorable.

25. Work placements are excellent. Most learners have placements with well-known high street stores and businesses, all of which are committed to training and developing their employees. Learners are treated like employees and benefit from good company training. GFTP sets high standards in selecting employers and only uses employers committed to training learners. If employers fail to meet this criteria, learners are found alternative work placements. Many learners use their work placements to find jobs in the businesses. Employers are keen to develop the potential of learners who have additional learning or social needs. Workplace supervisors are very supportive of the learners. Many supervisors identify learning opportunities for learners and encourage them to work on their NVQ portfolio of evidence during working hours.

26. There is good key skills provision for all modern apprentices at GFTP. All learners are offered a specific week-long course at the training centre for key skills development. This course provides background knowledge and practice in all aspects of key skills. Learners use the evidence from this course in their portfolios of evidence. Learners who are unable to attend the course are offered fortnightly training sessions, which cover the same work. Key skills are taught alongside the NVQ programmes. Learners collect evidence towards these qualifications at the same time as evidence for the NVQs. Frequently, learners are achieving their key skills before units of their NVQ. Employed learners are invited to these training sessions but usually do not attend due to work commitments. Key skills training for these learners is carried out individually in the workplace.

27. There is good pastoral and training support for learners at GFTP. There is a wide range of off-the-job training at the training centre, including a week-long course for key skills and fortnightly training for basic skills. There is a good mentoring service for learners. Vulnerable learners, and those showing poor commitment to their qualification, are visited every two weeks by one of the two mentors. Mentors have access to a large number of outside agencies dealing with such issues as homelessness and drug misuse. They have successfully helped several learners to renew their enthusiasm to continue on their training programmes. The mentors work alongside learners in the workplace, which is a particularly effective method of identifying problems and gaining learners' trust.

28. Achievement of qualifications across all of the training programmes is poor. Achievement of NVQs is particularly low and has fallen from 29 per cent in 1998-99 to 16 per cent in 2000-01. In the past 16 months, only 10 learners have achieved their NVQ of the 131 who started. However, the 57 learners still in training are making good progress and are likely to achieve their qualifications shortly. Many of the learners working towards NVQs have additional learning or social needs. Achievement rates of qualifications on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme have fallen from 35 per cent in 1998-99 to 22 per cent in 2000-01.

29. There is inadequate planning of some aspects of learning. Some learners are

making slow progress. All learners have an individual learning plan, which is completed at the start of their training programme. However, the learners do not receive a copy and the assessor does not refer to the plan when reviewing learners' progress. An assessment plan is used to chart learners' progress, on which target achievement dates are entered, but these coincide with the end of funding. Many learners fail to complete their qualifications within the funding time. GFTP continues to support these learners beyond the end of their funding entitlement, but assessment plans are not updated with revised target achievement dates. During the regular visits, assessors complete an action plan with details of work to be completed before the next visit, including the plans of training. Details of work to be completed are usually not demanding or specific enough to drive achievement forward. The assessment process is led by the assessor and assessment practices are satisfactory. A variety of evidence is used to confirm learners' competence, but learners are rarely encouraged to present their own evidence. Most learners have a poor understanding of the assessment process and the content of their portfolio. Employers are insufficiently involved in the assessment process. They are rarely involved in the learners' progress reviews but are usually informed of the contents. There have been many examples of learners having more than one assessor during their time on the programme, which has contributed to their slow progress. Assessors are required to visit learners every two weeks, but these visits are sometimes unproductive, with no assessment taking place because of the changes to the learners' schedule. Sometimes, learners do not remember to bring their portfolios to work for an assessors' visit, assessors are then unable to carry out any assessment and a journey is wasted. The monitoring of individual learner's progress towards their qualifications is informal but satisfactory. Data on learners' progress are not entered onto the management information system and there is no management overview of each learner's progress.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	33	2
Life Skills	28	1

30. GFTP provides the Life Skills programme from its training centre in Birmingham for learners aged between 16 and 18 years. The learners are referred to GFTP by Connexions, local schools or other agencies. There are 28 learners, of whom 19 are men, 11 are women, and 11 are from minority ethnic groups. A team leader manages the programme, supported by a deputy and another full-time member of staff. All staff have teaching qualifications. Learners attend for a minimum of 16 hours each week for 12 weeks, but GFTP can support them for up to 52 weeks. Learners receive a training allowance if their attendance is satisfactory. They are assessed on entry and at fixed intervals during the training programme. Together with their tutors, the learners identify the skills they need to develop to gain employment and put together their individual learning plans. The programme has three stages. During the first four weeks, learners follow an induction process designed to increase motivation and self-awareness. Learners then develop the key skills of communication, numeracy and computing in the following four weeks. In the final four weeks, learners cover areas of learning such as assertiveness, healthy eating, money management and jobsearch techniques. Learners progress from these programmes into further education, full-time training and employment. Learners are expected to make a career choice and identify progression opportunities for themselves. The other achievement milestones for learners are increased confidence, improved attendance and punctuality, and improvements in literacy and numeracy.

31. GFTP also provides learning funded by Jobcentre Plus in the foundation area of learning. It provides learning in Gateway to Work, full-time education and training in basic skills for 18 to 24 year old clients and short intensive basic skills (SIBS) pilots for New Deal 25+ clients, intensive activity period (IAP), longer occupational training (LOT) and full-time education and training in business administration. There are no clients on the Gateway to Work programme. There is one client on SIBS and 33 clients on 18-24 New Deal full-time education and training in basic skills. GFTP does not have a contract to provide English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) training. Of the 33 clients, 22 are men, 11 are women, and 19 belong to a minority ethnic group.

32. A pre-vocational team manages the training programmes. It has a team leader, a deputy and a further four full-time staff who tutor and support the learners. A member of the recruitment team is responsible for recruitment from programme centres and liaison with Jobcentre Plus. Clients are referred from the jobcentres directly onto GFTP's training provision. In some cases, the Jobcentre Plus staff carry out initial assessment of the clients' basic skills. GFTP's staff carry out initial assessment, which includes basic skills on all clients.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Life Skills																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			248		162		99		74							
Retained*			159		117	72	64	65	49	66						
Successfully completed			136		79	49	46	46	33	45						
Still in learning			28		0	0	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

New Deal 18-24											
New Deal 18-24											
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	46		69		23		25		17		
Retained*	1	2	41	59	19	83	16	64	10	59	
Planned learning completed	1	2	38	55	17	74	16	64	9	53	
Gained job	3	7	6	9	2	9	0	0	1	6	
Still in training	31	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- particularly good progression into employment or further education and training
- well-planned, stimulating training sessions
- challenging and inspiring Life Skills training programme
- very effective support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- narrow range of teaching resources
- poor attendance on New Deal 18-24 programme

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more feedback to learners
- better support for learners who speak English as an additional language

33. There is particularly good progression into jobs and further education and training by Life Skills learners. They are able to identify career aims, achieve goals set for punctuality and attendance, and describe how their increased self-esteem has enabled them to make important changes in their lives. For example, one learner who was refused a place on any training programme by three other training providers is being helped by GFTP and is achieving some challenging mutually agreed goals. Learners on the New Deal 18-24 programme achieve a good range of external qualifications. Fifty-five per cent of learners who completed 26 weeks of training in 2001-02 gained Numberpower or Wordpower qualifications, 73 per cent gained a health and safety qualification and 25 per cent gained a basic qualification in communications.

34. Teaching on both foundation programmes is good. Learners identify their preferred learning styles at an early stage in training. Tutors provide well-planned, stimulating training sessions, which meet learners' needs and interests. Learners know that they are making progress by recording their assessment scores and they are aware of their literacy and numeracy levels and targets. Learning is organised into three groups, one of which concentrates on numeracy, another focuses on literacy, and the third group has a mixture of learners with literacy and numeracy needs. Learners attend the training centre for a total of 30 hours for 26 weeks, which includes 23 hours of tuition on five days each week and seven hours of independent study for jobsearch and project work. Learners carry out this work either individually or in small groups. Learners are moved within the groups according to their progress, their request, or according to circumstances. A tutor takes the group for the whole of the 30-hour period. Learners work towards the achievement of literacy and/or numeracy standards appropriate to them, according to the national curriculum for basic skills. Learners' progress is reviewed weekly in the first four weeks, then fortnightly for the next 18 weeks and weekly in the final four weeks.

35. The Life Skills programme is innovative, effective, challenging and inspiring. Most of the learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme aims to reinforce mutual respect and discipline. It puts the learners at the centre of all programme planning and aims to build their characters. They are set challenges and are encouraged to achieve the targets. They are encouraged to think positively and imagine a future for

themselves where they are in control. The learners participate in a very effective induction process, which motivates them to learn. All learners have an individual action plan, which they follow and take ownership of. Learning is not restricted only to the classroom but is related to work. Learners are encouraged to see the relevance of their learning and its application to society. Employment and work experience with reputable employers is a key component of the programme. Learners are set challenging targets to increase skills in their personal lives and develop their employability. They develop a good range of effective interpersonal skills. Learners have good recall of induction and are able to identify elements that they found useful, such as health and safety. At the end of the first week of induction they are required to make a group presentation and, at the end of induction, learners are presented with a certificate of achievement. Learners are inspired by innovative teaching techniques, such as accelerated learning, meditation and story-telling. Many learners claim to have gained greater confidence and skills in their short stay at GFTP than during their school and college years, or their work with other professionals.

36. Support for learners is particularly good and staff and learners develop an exceptional degree of mutual respect. Effective partnerships with other agencies exist to support learners, many of whom experience multiple disadvantages. Learners receive good support from mentors. Staff are well qualified and have relevant counselling skills and experience. A mentor from Connexions visits the training centre to offer additional mentoring. Staff support learners by arranging relevant work experience and promoting a positive attitude. Learners are supported after they have left the programme, if the need arises.

37. The range of teaching resources is narrow. Teaching areas have inadequate audiovisual equipment, computers, Internet access and software to support learning. Staff rely too heavily on paper-based learning materials. GFTP recognises this as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

38. Attendance is poor on the New Deal 18-24 programme. In the past year, 50 per cent of clients attended an average of 13 out of a maximum 20 weeks. Learners' attendance records are kept to record each learner's reasons for absence. GFTP recognises poor attendance as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

39. On the basic skills programme there is a large number of learners who speak English as an additional language. Learners with substantial English language needs are screened and referred to other specialist training provision in Birmingham. Although such learners receive satisfactory support, it is not focused on developing strategies to improve their language development. They progress less well than the rest of the client group. Written comments on learners' progress is insufficient. Some learners are unaware of the contents of their personal files.

Good Practice

Learners on the Life Skills programme scale an 80-feet high climbing wall as part of a challenging induction process designed to increase self-awareness and motivation.