INSPECTION REPORT

Royal Borough Of Kingston upon Thames Training for Work

16 June 2003

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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

*   work-based learning for all people over 16
*   provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
*   **learndirect** 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

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.

INSPECTION REPORT

Royal Borough Of Kingston upon Thames Training for Work

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Training for Work is based in Surbiton, Surrey. It employs 17 full- and part-time members of staff and operates from two sites, one in Surbiton and one in north Kingston upon Thames. It operates as a not-for-profit, self-funding organisation within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames' Adult Education Department and was set up in 1975 initially as a basic skills unit, moving to skills training for employment. It has contracts with Jobcentre Plus to offer work-based learning for adults (WBLA) in administration, accounts and information and communications technology (ICT), and with London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to offer work-based learning for young people leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in accounts and administration. It also has European Social Fund (ESF) contracts with London South LSC to provide training programmes in ICT for young people and adults. At the time of the inspection, there were no modern apprentices. The organisation also offers work preparation courses for people with disabilities, which fall outside the scope of this inspection. At the time of the inspection, there were 57 learners on the programme. Four of these were following programmes in both the areas of learning inspected.

2. The unemployment rate in the area is low, at 1.8 per cent, compared with 2.6 per cent for England as a whole. The proportion of 16 year olds achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above is high, at 60.1 per cent, compared with the national rate of 51.6 per cent. Fifteen and a half per cent of the local population belong to a minority ethnic group, according to the 2001 census.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

3. Business administration and accounts training is good. There are 26 adults and seven young people following courses in this area of learning. At the time of the inspection, all the adults were on WBLA, 26-week longer occupational training (LOT) programmes. Two of the young people were working towards NVQs at level 2 in accounts, and the other five were following a programme leading to the NVQ in administration at level 2. The adults work towards qualifications in information technology (IT) or accounts, and their work placements are in administrative or accounts roles. All learners have training in general office skills. Four of the young people are also registered on the ICT programme leading to an alternative level 2 qualification. Two other NVQ learners have already completed that programme and achieved their qualification. All learners have at least one part-time work placement during the course of their programme. Adults follow a jobsearch programme, part of which is currently offered at a different site. Learners can start at any time.

Information & communications technology

4. Training in ICT is good. There are 28 learners on ICT courses leading to full or part qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Of these, four are from minority ethnic groups. One learner is working towards a level 1 qualification on a WBLA short job-focused training (SJFT) programme, attending for 21 hours each week. The aim of this programme is for learners to gain employment. Four learners are working towards level 2 ICT qualifications, attending training for between five and 10 hours each week over a 26-week period. This programme funded by the ESF and the LSC, is aimed at those learners with fewer than five GCSEs at grade C or above. Learners have to be unemployed 16-21 year olds, part-time workers, carers, lone parents or at risk of not achieving level 2 qualifications through histories of under-achievement at school. Four of these learners are also on an NVQ programme.

5. Nineteen learners attend another ESF- and LSC-funded course aimed at those aged between 19 and 64 years of age who are unemployed and disadvantaged. The objective of this training is for learners to gain basic ICT skills and either to gain employment or progress into further training initiatives. Learners work towards three modules from a level 2 ICT qualification. Attendance is over 10 hours each week for a period of 12 weeks. Six members of staff provide ICT training. Most training takes place at the main training centre with open learning facilities available between 15.30 and 17.00. Learners with computer equipment at home can take advantage of distance learning material available. All learners follow a programme of personal development covering basic jobsearch skills and health and safety training.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	40
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of employer interviews	10
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of visits	14

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Specifically, work-based learning and other programmes in administration, accounts and ICT are good. Leadership and management are good, as is the organisation's approach to equality of opportunity. The arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for adults	2
Work-based learning for young people	2

Information & communications technology	2
Contributory grades:	
Other government-funded provision	2
Work-based learning for adults	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. Almost 50 per cent of the adults who start the business administration and accounts programmes get jobs. Around 70 per cent of them achieve their qualifications. They learn new skills in office work, or update those they had before. They gain confidence through the programme. The young people also do well, and most complete their qualifications.

8. Most of the adults on the part-time ICT course achieve at least part of a qualification. About a third achieved more than they set out to do. They also valued the boost the course gave to their confidence.

9. **Most of the young people on the ICT course achieved their full level 2 qualification,** and over half of them also found a job.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	6
Information & communications technology	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	5
Total	**0**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**11**

10. All learners have plenty of individual coaching, group tuition and computerised training. **Administration and accounts learners have a wide variety of courses to choose from.** All learners have further courses they can follow as they finish each one. Learners can arrange their own timetables. Most of the teaching is good or better. On the administration and accounts courses, learners work at their own pace with support from the course tutors. There is more group work in the computer courses.

11. Adults and young people on the administration and accounts courses have a period of work placement. Most of the employers providing the work placements are used to having learners on placement and **many learners are offered employment as a direct result of their work placement.**

12. There is some good jobsearch training, with excellent resources, such as computerised training and a library. Jobsearch sessions currently take place at a different centre, two bus journeys away from the main centre. However, these activities are due to move to the main centre very soon. The young people and part-time learners do not have jobsearch sessions timetabled.

13. **The textbooks, videos, CDs and worksheets for the jobsearch, accounts and computer courses are good.** Some of the books and worksheets used for administration training are in poor condition and out of date. The computers and software are up to date, but the computer classrooms are sometimes crowded. There is insufficient space between the workstations.

14. Learners find the assessments useful to check on their progress. But they do not write anything on their formal review forms. Some of the ICT assessment is carried out online. Learners who are doing NVQs are observed at work by an assessor, as part of their assessment.

15. Most learners are given a basic skills initial assessment test, to see if they need extra help with literacy, numeracy and language. If they do need extra help, it is arranged for them, and most learners find it useful and interesting. Part-time learners, however, do not have to do a basic skills test, but are offered help with literacy and numeracy unless they ask for it or show that they need it during the course.

Leadership and management

16. Learners follow individual timetables, with different tutors teaching them on different courses. Information about learners is not shared reliably. Learners sometimes have to repeat information they have already given, or are not given feedback from all of their tutors in their progress reviews. **However, the tutors and managers discuss learners' progress regularly, and learners find them friendly and approachable.**

17. Learners are asked to give feedback on their courses when they leave, and most say they found the programme useful and interesting. Managers and tutors know their learners well, and if learners leave the programme early, their tutors know why they have left. **They make good use of their management information systems** and know which

learners are near to completing their work. They also know if a group of learners is doing less well, or better, than expected. Staff provide extra help for learners who need it.

18. **Learners are well informed about equality of opportunity issues,** and understand their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. **The organisation has good resources for people with disabilities,** but does not monitor employers' equal opportunities policies to ensure they have been updated.

19. Tutors carry out observations of one another's teaching, and give feedback, so they can learn from each other and improve their teaching styles. They look at ways of improving each course, but not the programme as a whole. Some courses use particularly good computer-based training packages but **there is no system for sharing good practice.**

20. Internal verification is satisfactory, but only a very small number of learners are following programmes which lead to NVQs.

21. The self-assessment process is satisfactory, and the most recent report, produced in January 2003, is very detailed. However, the staff contributed very little to the report, and it was not sufficiently critical. Learners' and employers' views were taken into account.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths
- open and consultative management style
- good use of management information
- good systems for the review and improvement of individual learning programmes
- good implementation of equal opportunities policy and practices
- good resources and access for disadvantaged learners

Weaknesses
- little formal staff review of whole programmes and courses
- insufficiently systematic system for recording support needs
- incomplete monitoring of employers' equal opportunities practices

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- good overall achievement
- wide range of training programmes
- flexible provision, to suit learners' needs
- well-planned work placements
- well-designed jobsearch programme

Weaknesses

- poor access to some jobsearch resources
- some worn and outdated learning materials

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good teaching
- particularly flexible courses
- wide range of strategies to support open learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of some aspects of programmes
- incomplete initial assessment for some learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES TRAINING FOR WORK:

- learning all the time and being praised for learning
- 'they treat everyone the same, not like at school where they treat you like you're 12'
- the English teaching - learning how to spell
- being able to make choices
- 'finding out the barriers are only in my head'
- the teachers are understanding and give you confidence
- friendly, work-like environment
- the routine - useful for returning to work
- the supportive staff - 'they're always there for you'
- the café bar

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES TRAINING FOR WORK COULD IMPROVE:

- move all the jobsearch activity and resources to the main centre
- make the mathematics less boring
- make the computer room less crowded
- provide computers for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) work
- have smaller groups
- have more time for individual training

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES TRAINING FOR WORK:

- establish a system of whole programme review
- ensure learning materials are updated regularly
- make sure more learners can use the jobsearch resources
- establish ways of sharing good practice across the provision

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths
- open and consultative management style
- good use of management information
- good systems for the review and improvement of individual learning programmes
- good implementation of equal opportunities policy and practices
- good resources and access for disadvantaged learners

Weaknesses
- little formal staff review of whole programmes and courses
- insufficiently systematic system for recording support needs
- incomplete monitoring of employers' equal opportunities practices

22. Internal communication is good. Most members of staff have been employed in the organisation for several years and staff turnover is low. Tutors know one another well and are comfortable about contributing to discussions. The senior manager is approachable and accessible to staff and learners. She is open to suggestions for improvement and discusses them with appropriate staff. These suggestions have resulted in a number of changes to the management of the provision, such as the preparation of a policies and procedures manual and the adoption of a standardised system for recording and reviewing action points arising from meetings. Managerial, administrative and teaching staff maintain good contact with clients, learners and one another.

23. Managers make good use of a wide range of management information to monitor performance. They use data on the local and regional labour market, the performance of other providers and provision locally and nationally, and other external sources to make managerial decisions. They collect information on learner starts, completions, job outcomes and qualifications. The database used to store and report this information is not yet able to monitor learners' progress, but there are plans to develop it. Regular reports measure performance against organisational targets such as achievement of milestones, work placements secured, retention and achievement rates, and the implementation of the equal opportunities policy. For example, poor results last year in terms of male clients on WBLA programmes getting jobs (highlighted as a weakness in the self-assessment report) resulted in an action plan. As many men as women now get jobs after this programme. Statistical breakdowns are frequently used as a basis for management decisions.

24. The operational management of programmes and provision is satisfactory.

Personnel practices, including performance appraisal, are effective, although work objectives are not always specific, measurable or time-bound. They do not make reference to numerical measures of performance within the business plan or ways in which these objectives might contribute to organisational targets.

25. Learners' individual needs are met with caring and appropriate support from staff within the organisation. There are some records of learners' additional support needs and specific support arrangements, but not all these records are sufficiently detailed. Some staff involved in the training on the ESF-funded ICT programmes do not fully understand the entry requirements and potential issues associated with clients on these programmes or the additional support they might need. There are no formal written procedures for staff on when and how to refer learners for additional support. There is little promotion or involvement of external agencies in the programmes aimed at disadvantaged learners.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 2

26. Equal opportunities policies and practices are used effectively. The organisation keeps staff informed of changes to relevant legislation and of their impact on policy. A special needs officer advises staff on equality of opportunity and works closely with learners in need of additional support.

27. Learners' inductions include thorough coverage of equal opportunities issues. The organisation monitors new employers' equal opportunities policies and practices as carefully as it does their health and safety arrangements. Clear policy statements are included as part of the formal agreement. Equality of opportunity features in work placement induction sessions, which both the learner and the employer attend.

28. The staff work hard to promote equal opportunities and widen participation. They value diversity and take action to ensure that all learners are treated fairly. The provider recognises and meets learners' individual needs and does what it can to enable each learner to make the most of their opportunities.

29. Resources and access are good for people with disabilities. Ramps have been installed, and the canteen is now on the ground floor. A range of equipment is available, including chairs for people with back problems, one-handed keyboards and magnification equipment. Staff, and learners where appropriate, are trained in how to configure software settings to meet individual needs.

30. There is a set of materials and accompanying procedures for the induction and training of new staff in equality of opportunity issues. All staff have this training and work with these materials. Some staff have attended training sessions on equality of opportunity organised by the local authority.

31. Equal opportunities is not included in the organisation's procedures for the routine monitoring of work-placement providers. Other policies, such as the employers' health and safety arrangements and liability insurance, are checked annually, but not the equal

opportunities policy and its implementation.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 3

32. Staff ask learners about their views of their training formally during reviews. There is also some informal feedback from training sessions. Staff use this information to develop learners' individual programmes, and to contribute to discussions of learners' progress at the fortnightly staff meetings. The detailed attention to learners' programmes based on their progress, helps maintain learners' commitment.

33. Learners and their work-placement supervisors fill in questionnaires at the end of their programmes. The response rate is good. Each quarter, managers analyse the responses and review the provision based on the results. Learners and employers are very satisfied with their programmes. Any individual concerns are picked up and dealt with effectively. However, the questionnaires are not designed to enable learners or employers to comment in detail on the quality of service they receive. The questions are often closed, requiring just a yes/no answer. On some questionnaires, learners are identified (their name is written on the form). This is helpful in enabling staff to respond to concerns, but may make it difficult for learners to be more candid about their provision. Learners are only surveyed in this way at the end of their programmes. There is no similar system for gathering feedback from learners who leave the programme early, although their reasons for leaving are recorded. Exit interviews are not used with learners on one of the ESF-funded ICT programmes.

34. Tutors review learning and assessment materials on a regular basis and suggest ways of improving them. Peer reviews of teaching are carried out regularly, and the reports of these observations are detailed and helpful, with strengths and weaknesses identified. They are used in staff appraisals but there is no analysis of these reports to identify trends. The arrangements for developing and reviewing quality assurance and other organisational procedures are effective. There are some gaps in procedures and some reviews are overdue, but the documents are helpful sources of information. Implementation of procedures is checked and instances of non-compliance dealt with, although these are not always recorded or analysed. Learners' files are similarly monitored.

35. There are few opportunities for staff to formally review whole programmes or share good practice, beyond the exchange of information in fortnightly staff meetings. Some good examples of resources, course materials and recording systems for progress are not shared between tutors. Processes to manage learning are not always carried out consistently well by staff across all programmes. For example, some tutors maintain detailed recording systems of learners' progress; others do not maintain any such records until learners are ready to take mock tests. Induction programmes do not always convey the same essential information on health and safety in the same way, and progress reviews are not always similarly, or sufficiently detailed. The fortnightly staff meetings focus on information exchange and on review of individual learners' progress rather than a review of courses and programmes. Not all staff attend these meetings, although they do have access to the minutes. Occasional, smaller team meetings are held to enable

staff to exchange information on particular programme areas, but these are reactive and not used by staff to review and assess delivery of the programme as a whole.

36. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. The internal verifier samples according to a pre-determined plan, and provides appropriate feedback to the assessors.

37. Staff are insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. They were consulted on the most recent self-assessment report, produced in January 2003, but were not involved in developing the judgements it contains. The self-assessment report contains detailed and helpful descriptions of the provision. The report identifies the strengths found by inspectors, but is not critical enough. It does not include some of the weaknesses inspectors found, even though the provider was aware of them. The report slightly overgraded most of the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional — Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for adults	26	2
Work-based learning for young people	7	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good overall achievement
- wide range of training programmes
- flexible provision, to suit learners' needs
- well-planned work placements
- well-designed jobsearch programme

Weaknesses

- poor access to some jobsearch resources
- some worn and outdated learning materials

Achievement and standards

38. Nearly half the adults who have left the WBLA programmes have gone in to jobs. The proportion who have gained employment has increased over the past two years. Retention is good and also improving. The achievement rate for qualifications is also good at around 70 per cent. Learners complete many short courses, although only externally certificated courses are counted as achievements in these tables. They talk about how much their confidence has developed, as well as their competence. Many have had little or no computer experience before starting the programme, and have learnt to use the software needed in a modern office, and to write correctly spelt and punctuated business correspondence and reports. Others are proud of their new proficiency in bookkeeping.

39. There have been very few modern apprentices but their achievement rate is excellent. NVQ learners have shown a slight decline in achievement, but retention in the current year is good.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																		
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																		
		2002-03		2001-02		1999-2000		1998-99										
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts				2		10		9										
Retained*				2	100	4	40	4	44									
Successfully completed				2	100	4	40	1	11									
Still in learning				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

LSC funded work-based learning																		
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																		
		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts				1		1												
Retained*				1	100	1	100											
Successfully completed				1	100	1	100											
Still in learning				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

LSC funded work-based learning																		
NVQ Training																		
		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts		10		13		3												
Retained*		0		7	54	2	67											
Successfully completed		0		7	54	2	67											
Still in learning		7		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

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																
Work-based learning for adults																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	68		80		16											
Retained*	30		67	84	12	75										
Planned learning completed	21		58	73	11	69										
Gained job	19		37	46	6	38										
Still in training	27		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

Quality of education and training

40. The provider offers a wide range of training programmes. Adults who start the programme are offered training in a large number of software programmes, as well as keyboard skills, office English, personal development, bookkeeping and accounts. Young people are offered a similar choice. If they do not already have a level 2 qualification, they are offered the chance to do an ICT qualification alongside their administration or accounts NVQ. Learners are encouraged to do as many courses as they can fit into their timetable, and as they complete each one, to progress to another. Those who complete the manual bookkeeping course and the computerised accounts course, can go on to learn payroll, which adds to their employability. Learners can also follow courses in literacy, numeracy, and ESOL, if their initial assessment suggests this is a need. All learners follow a course in office English. One learner with GCSEs in English at grade C found the extra help with spelling, punctuation and letter writing particularly useful.

41. Adults on LOT, and young people following NVQ programmes, have a period of work placement. Most employers have provided work placements for several years, and understand the programme requirements. Communication between the employers and the training centre is generally good. Supervisors usually work closely with the provider to offer opportunities for learners to practise their skills and collect evidence for their qualification. Occasionally, supervisors have not had enough understanding of the programme to offer the support they would like to their learners.

42. Adults also have jobsearch provision. This is well designed, with a graduated series of activities to help learners write curriculum vitaes (CVs) and application letters, and develop their interviewing skills. Resources for jobsearch are particularly good. As well as a small dedicated library, there are well-produced and appropriate interactive CD-ROMs on interviewing techniques and general office skills. The programme content complements the personal development sessions at the main site. Tutors are on hand to provide support and advice as required. Young people do not routinely have access to the materials to help them apply for jobs and develop their office skills. Jobsearch

activity is carried out at another centre, three miles from the main site. Learners travelling between the sites have to take two different buses. The provider has had to devise enough activity at the jobsearch site to keep learners occupied for a whole day, to save them from having to travel backwards and forwards. Attendance is poor. There are plans to move the jobsearch sessions to the main site in the near future.

43. Most tutors offer individual support to learners who work at their own pace, through ready-prepared material. There is little variety of activity for learners, who spend most lessons working through worksheets and assignments or with online tuition. Tutors are well qualified and experienced, and ensure learners have enough work to be getting on with, while they give individual support to other class members. Lessons rarely include group work.

44. Learners who have identified needs for help with ESOL, literacy or numeracy are given appropriate support. The literacy and numeracy tutors are qualified and experienced teachers, but do not have a specific basic skills teaching qualification, although the ESOL tutor is qualified. Literacy and ESOL are taught alongside each other. Learners negotiate their own objectives, and work diligently towards them, with individual support from their tutor.

45. Learners have access to training materials while they are at the centre, but if they want their own copies of any of the materials, they have to buy them. Materials which have been produced in-house can be purchased for a nominal sum. Accounts learners use standard textbooks, supplemented by other well-written materials which have been produced in-house. Administration learners use a standard textbook, some older commercial materials produced for earlier versions of the NVQ, and some in-house material. Some of the in-house materials which have been taken from older textbooks are very old-fashioned. The language used is complicated and not appropriate for modern office work. There are errors which have not been corrected. Some of the commercial workbooks are falling apart from over-use. Teaching takes place in pleasant, airy classrooms, although the rooms are sometimes overcrowded. Computer equipment is of a commercial standard and up to date, but there is not much room between the computers for learners to work with files or portfolios.

46. Assessment for the NVQs is based on evidence from the workplace, and incorporates observation of learners' performance in the workplace. Learners understand the principles of cross-referencing their work. Tutors on each course mark learners' work thoroughly and accurately, and give the learners appropriate feedback. Learners find this feedback really useful and encouraging, particularly in the early stages of their programmes. Formal reviews of learners' progress also take place, to meet contractual requirements, although they do not include written comments from learners. Progress reviews for learners on work placements take account of input from the supervisor, but do not take place in the workplace.

47. Many of the learners chose to do the course because of recommendations from friends or family. The programmes fit people for local employment opportunities in administration and accounts. Many learners are offered permanent employment in their

work placements. Few of the young people on the programme had been in touch with the local Connexions partnership, but had found the programme on the Internet, if not by personal recommendation. Some had been looking for a modern apprenticeship programme, but had then chosen to follow the NVQ route as it would be less demanding. The provider offered information and advice about progression to modern apprenticeships, but did not offer help with finding suitable employment.

48. Learners receive appropriate support to enable them to complete their programme. There are examples of learners being offered advice and referral to external agencies, and the organisation has a specialist adviser with experience in dealing with learners with additional learning and social needs.

Leadership and management

49. The experienced tutors run their own sessions and courses, with learners starting and finishing at different times. Learners all have individual timetables, which change every four weeks. Tutors meet to report on learners' progress, and problems are picked up and discussed at fortnightly staff meetings. The system is informal and not fully documented, but appropriate for the size of the organisation.

50. Retention and achievement rates are monitored closely, and managers are aware of the reasons behind any failure to achieve. The organisation promotes equality of opportunity in its induction and personal development sessions, and its approach is clearly described in the learners' and employers' handbooks. Internal verification is satisfactory.

51. Learners on these training programmes take up many additional learning opportunities. The ESF-funded ICT programme provides extra learning opportunities for young learners without a level 2 qualification and adds extra value for most of the NVQ learners.

Information & communications technology   Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other government-funded provision	26	2
Work-based learning for adults	1	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good teaching
- particularly flexible courses
- wide range of strategies to support open learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of some aspects of programmes
- incomplete initial assessment for some learners

Achievement and standards

52. The standards achieved and learners' progression are satisfactory.

53. Between Sept 2002 to March 2003, 50 learners attended training on part-time adult Positive about IT Learning (PAIL) courses leading to three modules of a level 2 qualification. Of those, nine achieved the three modules expected of them, a further nine went on to achieve the full qualification and seven more achieved four or more units. Twelve left without achieving any modules and another 12 achieved one or two modules. There are improving trends from March 2003 to May 2003. Of the 16 learners who started in this period, five have achieved one module, one has achieved two modules and four have achieved three or more modules. This is a pilot programme and retention rates are not yet available. Learners are aware of the rapid progress they are making and are confident in applying their new skills. Learners value the benefits of the skills they have learnt.

54. During 2001-2002, 27 learners started training on courses aimed at those aged between 16-21 years. Of these, 17 achieved the full level 2 qualification. Fourteen learners found jobs. Retention is satisfactory at 63 per cent.

55. The SJFT programme has had retention rates of at least 90 per cent over the past three years. More than half the learners have achieved their qualification, and the proportion who get jobs after their course is increasing. It is slightly lower than for the other WBLA programme.

Other government-funded provision																
		2002-03		2001-02												
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts		81		27												
Retained*		50		17	63											
Planned learning completed		30		8	30											
Gained job		21		14	52											
Still in training		26		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

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																
Work-based learning for adults																
		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01										
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts		16		21		6										
Retained*		14		19	90	6	100									
Planned learning completed		13		11	52	5	83									
Gained job		6		9	43	1	17									
Still in training		1		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

Quality of education and training

56. Most teaching is good or better. Learners follow directed learning in word processing, database, windows, file management, Internet, spreadsheets and personal development. These are provided on a four-week rolling programme and as part of a wider programme of learning. These lessons are well planned with detailed schemes of work and lesson plans containing a variety of activities. Teachers are well qualified and have a range of experience. Teachers use a range of teaching methods and resources, such as presentations, which provide variety and interest. Lesson plans take account of differing levels of experience and this is reflected in lesson contents. Group sizes in these lessons rarely exceed 12 learners, some with a classroom helper. Teachers make good use of group teaching, prior experience and questioning techniques. Marked work contains detailed feedback from teachers and clearly shows learners how to progress further. Workshops and open learning sessions were satisfactory but did not have the range of learning activities available to learners observed in group teaching sessions. Many teachers have been recruited directly from training courses themselves and relate well to learners. Learners appreciate the support they receive from teachers.

57. Courses are particularly flexible to learners' individual needs. Care is taken to arrange hours and attendance patterns to meet differing domestic and personal responsibilities. Learners appreciate the fact that courses are tailored to their individual needs and circumstances. Learners are able to choose elements of courses appropriate to their goals and previous experience and do not have to complete unnecessary elements of the course. Learners who are eligible to follow the NVQ programme in accounts or business administration are offered this opportunity. At the time of inspection, half of the learners on the programme for young people were also working towards the NVQ.

58. A range of strategies are in place to promote open learning activities. Two of the programmes in this area of learning have either started as pilot initiatives that have been further extended or are currently still in a pilot phase. A range of open learning workshops, both within and outside prescribed attendance patterns, allows learners to develop the skills necessary for independent study. They are able to extend and develop their ICT skills with guidance from a tutor if they require it. Where learners attend outside their timetabled hours, attendance is voluntary. For those learners with access to computers at home, CD-ROMs are available for skills development in their own time. Text-based learning resources and assignments are available either on a loan or permanent basis if learners wish to purchase them. There are three laptops available for loan to learners who do not have access to computers in their own homes. Some learners are able to copy exercises to floppy disks for use on community library computers where they do not have them at home. As a result of learner feedback, the provider has extended learning opportunities to beyond the end of the course where learners have not completed all elements.

59. There are satisfactory resources for ICT. Software and equipment used are adequate and relevant to commercial work settings. Learners use a range of resources to learn computer packages. These include bought-in open learning materials, some produced by the centre, and CD-ROM interactive learning software. Learners are able to access online examinations for external testing. There is insufficient space in the training rooms for learners to do written work. Arrangements for the marking and assessment of learners' work are satisfactory. Some training staff maintain very detailed records of all learners' achievements where others maintain records of only final assessments of progress. Individual learning plans are regularly updated to show achievements towards qualifications. This takes place for both the ESF programmes. Progress reviews take place regularly but comments made by staff are brief. Learners do not make written comments. Learners' final assessments are made online and assessment is conducted externally. Invigilation of this process meets awarding body requirements.

60. There is a requirement for entry to full level 2 courses that learners should have achieved fewer than five GCSE passes at grades C and above. There is no formal testing of learners' literacy and numeracy skills for those entering training with low grades or with no achievement, although ESOL testing is carried out where appropriate, and learners who need it receive well-planned and taught ESOL support. There are procedures for other courses to carry out systematic initial assessment but this is not applied to part-time courses. This prevents full planning of appropriate programmes of

learning for some learners who may encounter difficulties with the course contents and who may have specific barriers to learning. Basic skills learning is not fully integrated with the ICT training. There are two designated staff members responsible for providing basic skills and ESOL support. They are experienced qualified teachers, but do not hold specific literacy and numeracy qualifications.

Leadership and management

61. There is insufficient co-ordination of all aspects of learners' programme to accurately reflect all learners' activities. Not all staff members involved in the learning process fully contribute to written progress reviews. There are frequent opportunities for learners to discuss progress, but formal reviews of progress do not take account of additional support training such as ESOL development activities. These take place separately from the main qualification progress review. Information from learners' initial assessment is not routinely passed to ICT teachers to help them plan the most appropriate programmes of learning. Instead, teaching staff carry out another interview with learners as a basis for agreeing learning plans. In some cases, there is an over-reliance on informal communication on learners' progress in different modules of the qualification provided by a number of different teaching staff.

62. Course evaluations are completed by learners at the end of their programmes and most learners are very satisfied with their courses. Very few evaluation forms are returned by learners who leave early, so there is little feedback on the reasons why learners leave soon after starting programmes. Exit reviews are carried out with adult part-time learners but not with 16-21 year olds. The provider meets all the requirements set by the awarding body.

63. A shortened induction is carried out for ICT learners and they are given supporting material about health and safety and equality of opportunity policies. Further reinforcement of these topics is covered through personal development activities. However, not all learners attend these lessons as they are given the opportunity to opt out if they are already in part-time work.