

INSPECTION REPORT

Nottinghamshire County Council Culture and Community Department

24 October 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

Nottinghamshire County Council Culture and Community Department

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Nottinghamshire County Council Culture and Community Department (NCC) delivers contracted post-16 learning through the Acorn Initiative (NCCAI) and the Training Partnership (NCCTP). As part of its culture and community department, NCC provides a range of Entry to Employment (E2E) prevocational and vocational level 1 programmes and advanced modern apprenticeships. NCC aims to deliver coherent and flexible programmes that support young people's re-engagement into learning and widen participation and achievement. Currently 161 learners are following E2E programmes and 41 are working towards advanced modern apprenticeships in health, social care and public services. NCC also offers foundation modern apprenticeships in business administration and information and communications technology (ICT), but there were too few learners on these programmes for these areas to be inspected separately.

2. NCC operates from 16 sites across Nottinghamshire and has 233 work placement employers around the county. The programmes are managed and delivered by a team of 56 full-time and 40 part-time members of staff. NCC funds its work-based learning and E2E training directly through Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Additional funding is secured from the East Midlands Development Agency, Single Regeneration Budget, European Social Fund, Health Authority Drug and Alcohol Action Team and the Local Intervention and Development fund. NCC's core funds support both NCCAI and NCCTP.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

3. Forty-one learners are working towards advanced modern apprenticeships in early years care and education. All learners have trainee status and are placed in a variety of settings including NCC's schools, nurseries, and family centres. Off-the-job training is provided by NCC's staff at the Mansfield training centre in weekly blocks alternating with placement blocks. Learners work towards technical certificates in their first year, and key skills training and assessment are integral to all learners' programmes. Learners are able to take a variety of additional courses including first aid at work, child protection, drug awareness and diversity training. Assessment is carried out in the workplace by the training officer. Technical certificates are delivered and assessed by assignment work. Progress reviews are held every 12 weeks and workplace supervisors are usually involved in these.

Foundation programmes

4. NCC's E2E programme has 161 learners and covers prevocational learning that centres on personal and social development. Its vocational courses include construction, retailing, painting and decorating, motor vehicle studies and amenity horticulture. Learners can also gain a range of additional qualifications in information technology (IT), and literacy and numeracy at basic and intermediate levels. Learners receive off-the-job training from NCC's staff at one of 16 training centres, and also have the opportunity to sample work placements. Six local further education colleges provide some subcontracted provision. The training programme has no fixed start or end dates. Learners can attend from 16 to 40 hours weekly. Most learners are referred to NCC by Connexions, but some are recruited by outreach workers and some refer themselves to the programme.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	10
Number of inspection days	40
Number of learner interviews	118
Number of staff interviews	64
Number of employer interviews	9
Number of subcontractor interviews	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	41

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, NCC's leadership and management are good. Its approach to equality of opportunity is outstanding and its quality assurance is satisfactory. The quality of work-based learning is satisfactory in health, social care and public services, and outstanding in foundation programmes.

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	1
Quality assurance	3

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Foundation programmes	1
Contributory grades:	
Entry to Employment	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Learners in early years care and education produce a good standard of work.** They display a good level of knowledge and understanding, and their practical work is of a good quality. A very good proportion of learners remain in learning, although for some learners **progress towards their qualifications is slow.**

7. **Progression is good and improving for E2E learners.** For the past three years almost fifty per cent of learners have progressed into employment or further education or training. A very good proportion of learners gain accredited achievements in literacy and numeracy skills, personal and social development, and work experience and vocational skills at level 1 and 2. Learners develop sound knowledge, skills, understanding and personal qualities essential to employability and citizenship.

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
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	8	9	2	0	0	0	19
Total	0	8	9	3	0	0	0	20

8. **Key skills training and assessment are an integral part of the early years care and education programme.** Key skills work is related well to learners' vocational units and a specialist tutor provides learners with support.

9. **Resources for early years care learners are good.** Training rooms are spacious and adequately equipped. Computers with internet access are available and learners are provided with free textbooks for the duration of their programme.

10. **Support for early years care learners is good.** Staff members are very committed to helping learners achieve their skills successfully, and provide good pastoral and learning support.

11. **Training and learning on the E2E programmes are good.** A wide range of training and learning methods is used to raise the expectations of learners and to increase their motivation and confidence.

12. **E2E learners receive excellent support.** Skilled and committed staff show an excellent understanding of learners' problems and effectively help them overcome difficulties. **Most resources at E2E centres are good.** Practical training areas provide a realistic working environment and good equipment and materials are available.

13. **Equality of opportunity is positively promoted on E2E programmes.** Learners show a good understanding of equality issues and programmes are designed to take learners' diversity into account.

14. **Target-setting is weak for early years care and education learners.** Targets set during progress reviews are not sufficiently specific or set to deadlines, and are not co-ordinated with targets set during tutorials.

15. Some E2E centres do not provide sufficient IT facilities. Some learners are not able to benefit from IT use in their literacy and numeracy skills development or qualifications achievement.

16. Early years learners receive a thorough initial assessment, but additional literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs are not always accurately identified. The support provided for identified needs is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

17. **The organisation is effectively structured,** with lines of communication and responsibility clear to all and organisational change managed well. **Management information is effectively used in development planning.** A wide range of information is collected and analysed to monitor individual and team performance against targets. Staff are very committed to helping learners to achieve their skills. **Internal and external communication are good.** Staff are kept well informed by management, and formal and informal meetings are regularly held. NCC has formed very effective partnerships with a range of external organisations.

18. **Equality of opportunity data are monitored very well** and information on different groups is effectively analysed to support target-setting, decision-making and action-planning. **Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity issues,** and are encouraged to respect and understand other cultures, disability and diversity issues.

19. **The overall strategic direction of the organisation is not sufficiently clear.** Progress has been slow towards setting a clear strategic direction for the organisation following the partnership established between NCCAI and NCCTP, and in communicating this to all staff.

20. NCC's self-assessment process is satisfactory in some areas and good in others. The organisation's self-assessment report accurately identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors in one programme area, but is less accurate in the other.

21. Internal verification is satisfactory. The verifiers are suitably qualified and follow clear procedures which include an annual sampling strategy. However, feedback provided to assessors is not always consistent and a written record of feedback is not always provided.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear and effective organisational structure
- good use of management information in development planning
- good internal and external communication
- very good monitoring of equal opportunities data
- good understanding of equality of opportunity issues by learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently clear strategic direction

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- good key skills training and assessment
- good training resources at the centre
- good pastoral and academic support for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress for some learners
- weak target-setting

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good progression and achievement rates
- good training and learning
- very good resources in most centres
- very good range of learning activities
- excellent training and pastoral support for learners
- good promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- insufficient IT facilities at some centres

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT:

- practical work in placements
- trips out – “they help build our confidence”
- the good support from staff – “they treat us with respect...and like adults”
- that staff are very patient
- the training – “it helps us get a job”

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of written work on early years programmes - there's too much
- the cleanliness of the girls' toilets in one centre
- the range of lunchtime activities
- the financial help available for car parking costs
- the punctuality of most learners – “it's not fair on the rest of us”

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT:**

- set a clear strategic direction and communicate this to all staff
- broaden the range of provision in early years care and education
- quality assure the learning experience in subcontracted provision

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- clear and effective organisational structure
- good use of management information in development planning
- good internal and external communication
- very good monitoring of equal opportunities data
- good understanding of equality of opportunity issues by learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently clear strategic direction

22. The structure of NCC is clear and effective, and is understood well by staff. Staff are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and how they relate to others. Lines of communication and responsibility are clear to all. Organisational change has been managed well and the current operational management is very effective. Staff are effectively deployed and staffing resources are managed well. Learners benefit from the specialists in their programme areas but also from the interchange of staff across the organisation. A well-established county-wide procedure is used for recruitment, selection and induction. Staff are supported well and provided with good development opportunities. There is stability among the staff, many of whom have worked for the organisation for a long time, and a strong team ethos.

23. Management information is effectively used in development planning. A wide range of information is collected and analysed. It is disseminated to relevant management staff and used effectively to plan and to set short- and long-term targets. Team leaders receive appropriate quarterly management information reports which are used well to analyse team performance against targets. Staff feel well informed. Performance in specific areas is continuously reviewed and monitored by a range of dedicated groups, and the results contribute to the development planning process. The current management information system does not effectively collect and analyse data on the results of the initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills. The NCCAI and NCCTP systems have been merged and insufficient historical data is available for long-term trend analysis.

24. Internal and external communication are good. Staff work very effectively in geographical and programme area teams. Formal and informal communication in teams are good. Learners benefit from the good commitment shown by staff. The informal end-of-day staff meetings at the Eastbourne training centre are particularly effective in ensuring all staff are kept fully informed. The schedule of team meetings is carefully

planned and well established. Team and management meetings with agendas and formal minutes are regularly held. All meetings contain standing agenda items to ensure consistent discussion across the organisation, but they also allow for local flexibility. Each meeting is effectively recorded using standardised documents. Monitoring of actions agreed at meetings is good, with a well-planned schedule of continuous improvement reviews ensuring that important issues are followed up and acted on. Staff across the organisation are involved in the continuous improvement review process. Meeting minutes are circulated to relevant staff and their receipt is monitored. Staff awaydays are effectively used to brief staff and to share good practice. Staff are kept well informed by management and feel effectively consulted. Very effective partnerships have been formed with external agencies including Connexions and the Nottinghamshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team to enhance the good support currently provided for learners.

25. NCC's self-assessment process is satisfactory in some areas and good in others. After the development of the partnership between NCCAI and NCCTP in November 2002, two separate self-assessment reports were produced which fed into one organisational development plan. A consultative process has been used to produce the most recent self-assessment report, the first one produced jointly by the partnership. The report accurately identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses in one programme area that were identified by inspectors. In the other programme area, it does not recognise some weaknesses identified by inspectors and considers as strengths some areas that inspectors identified as satisfactory. Internal verification is satisfactory. Support for identified literacy and numeracy needs is good. However, the current management information system does not produce detailed and accurate reports on initial assessments of literacy and numeracy skills.

26. Careful attention is paid to the health and safety of learners on the organisation's sites, in work placements and subcontracted provision. The continuing health and safety of learners is effectively monitored throughout their programmes.

27. The overall strategic direction of the organisation is not sufficiently clear. Staff are well informed about the operational management as it relates to learners, but are unclear about the organisation's future direction. Slow progress has been made in setting a clear strategic direction for the new organisation and communicating it to all staff. The good operational management has ensured a stable learning environment through this period of transition. However, some staff have experienced anxiety as well as some minor practical difficulties when co-ordinating procedures across the organisation. Since the partnership was established almost a year ago much collaborative work has been done to review and co-ordinate operational systems. However, the senior strategy group has been set up only very recently and just two meetings have taken place so far.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

28. NCC's monitoring of equal opportunities data is very good. It uses its management information system effectively to analyse data on progression, recruitment, selection, and achievement and retention rates in relation to the age, gender, disability and ethnicity of different learner groups. The results are used to support decision-making, action-

planning and target-setting.

29. Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity issues. Policies are adapted to be more learner friendly, and an equal opportunities charter is given to all students. Equality issues are promoted through induction, the use of videos and effective integration and reinforcement during training and assessment activities. Learners are able to discuss their rights and responsibilities and how to deal with issues such as bullying, harassment and discrimination as they relate to the working environment.

30. Specific posts have been established to support the recruitment, retention and achievement of young people with mental health or substance misuse problems. An ethnic achievement support worker has also been recently appointed to work with young people from minority ethnic groups and the travelling community. These staff members provide role models for learners and continue to contact them after they have left the programme to make sure they have appropriate support in their transition to further education or in applying for jobs. The ethnic achievement support worker carries out significant outreach work to widen participation and increase recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups.

31. Comprehensive equal opportunities policies and procedures are in place that recognise all learners are individuals. The policies make reference to recent legislation and are regularly reviewed and updated. All staff have a commitment to equal opportunities practice, continual monitoring, review and evaluation. This is supported by equality and diversity training from NCC, the LSC and other providers, attendance at which is recorded and linked to staff appraisal and development. Equality of opportunity is a regular agenda item for some minuted meetings, including management team meetings, and an equal opportunities working group meets quarterly to discuss issues and implement the equality action plan.

32. Equality of opportunity is promoted with appropriate recruitment literature and advertising designed to break down stereotypical views and attract applicants from under-represented groups. Stereotypical work roles are being challenged with a man following a care programme and women taking work placements in the construction industry. The CD used to market E2E nationally features a woman learner from NCC who obtained a placement and later permanent employment as a motorcycle mechanic. Collaboration with external agencies is good, for example with the Traveller Service to develop good equal opportunities practice, and with a national qualifications awarding body to gain accreditation for an equality and diversity module that will be delivered to all learners across all programmes. The purpose of this module is to develop learners' respect for and understanding of other cultures, disability and diversity issues. NCC also works with local minority ethnic groups and community leaders to promote training and employment opportunities.

33. Work-placement providers are supplied with an appropriate employers' information pack to promote equality of opportunity. The pack includes information about equality and diversity and requires employers to sign an agreement to implement appropriate

equal opportunities practices. Employers' compliance to this agreement is monitored by work-placement officers who observe, on a regular basis, the learners' experiences in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to produce their own policies and procedures, sometimes using NCC's as a model. Quality assurance and review processes are in place to ensure that equality of opportunity awareness and understanding by learners, staff and employers is consistent across the sites.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

34. Comprehensive and well-structured quality assurance arrangements are clearly communicated to all staff. NCC's well-established quality assurance procedures have been reviewed and updated in consultation with staff, who have very recently been issued with the new quality assurance manual. The newly developed quality assurance procedures include a regular schedule of staff observations of training, progress reviews and assessment. Each member of staff is scheduled to be observed three times each year by senior training staff. Staff are given written feedback against set criteria, which is used to guide discussion in the annual appraisals. A thorough programme of internal inspections has been introduced, but not yet implemented across the whole organisation. Where internal inspection has taken place, detailed and constructive comments are made, strengths and weaknesses are effectively identified and actions are planned. Good practice is informally shared by programme and area teams and at cross-organisational awaydays. Detailed and comprehensive service level agreements with subcontractors are effectively monitored on a quarterly basis and provide some quality assurance of the learning experience. The work-placement agreements include careful monitoring of learners' health and safety, but the quarterly work-placement reviews include no formal quality assurance checks on the learning experience.

35. All staff receive a structured annual appraisal using standardised documents. NCC has recently introduced the new employee performance development review document. This is a detailed and comprehensive document which allows for employee self-assessment against line manager assessment. Some staff have been appraised using this new format and appraisals have effectively identified performance and development needs, as well as being received well. This approach has not yet been used throughout the whole of the organisation. Some staff receive, and appreciate, supervision sessions every six weeks with their line managers. Other parts of the organisation have not yet introduced this system. Feedback from learners, staff and employers is regularly collected, analysed and acted on. Staff feel they are consulted well, although not all consider the questionnaires to be particularly effective in accurately capturing collective views. Learners have been consulted about the design of the recently piloted viewpoint survey and participate in regular learner forum meetings. Methods used to collect feedback are still being reviewed and merged, and it is too early to judge their effect on the organisation.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	41	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- good key skills training and assessment
- good training resources at the centre
- good pastoral and academic support for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress for some learners
- weak target-setting

Achievement and standards

36. Learners' practical work is of a good standard and portfolios contain extensive, thoughtful written work. Tasks and assignments are linked to learners' job roles and show the progress they are making. Learners develop personal skills and confidence, which they display in their interaction with other employees. They also develop effective work skills which are appreciated by employers and workplace supervisors. Learners are enthusiastic and show a good grasp of their subject at all levels, in classroom activities, in the workplace and in their key skills work. Learners who have been on programmes for six weeks are knowledgeable about aspects of child nutrition and show good key skills in their use of IT in researching the topic. Learners have a clear awareness of their NVQ progress. Most learners progress into employment with NCC or into higher education.

37. Ninety-one per cent of all learners starting programmes since 2001-02 are still in learning, with the proportion for 2002-03 starters standing at 74 per cent. Some learners make slow progress towards their qualifications. Some problems with staffing have existed in the past, and some problems with assessment have been experienced. Several staffing changes have now been made, and some work has had to be reassessed. Units are not accredited as they are achieved. Some learners have not achieved any units after several months on programme and some have achieved only one or two units after a year on programme. Portfolio evidence shows few completed units, although some holistic assessment is done.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	15		23		11											
Retained*	0		0		0	0											
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0											
Still in learning	14		17		10	91											

*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

Quality of education and training

38. Key skills training and assessment are good. A range of resources at the appropriate levels are available to support learners’ development of key skills. Learners are provided with an outline plan of the key skills work related to their vocational units, and opportunities for integrating key skills assessment into vocational work are thought out well. A specialist tutor with key skills training and assessor qualifications provides support to learners and other staff. IT is routinely used in the classroom for research and for the analysis and production of work. Key skills training is further integrated into learners’ programmes through a team teaching approach. All learners make good progress with key skills work, most of them having completed all the portfolio requirements and passed the key skills tests. However, no opportunities exist for key skills assessment in the workplace.

39. Training resources for early years care learners at the centre are good. Training rooms are spacious and adequately equipped with whiteboards, video equipment and flipcharts. Computer equipment with internet access is available, and is used with confidence by learners. Each learner is given appropriate textbooks free of charge for the duration of their course. Handouts are of good quality and are free from stereotypes and discriminatory materials. Learners are able to attend additional training on a variety of topics such as drugs awareness, disability awareness for sports and first aid at work. Staff are appropriately qualified and have a range of professional experience. Staff development opportunities are satisfactory, although professional updating has not taken place in the past two years. Appraisals are carried out but some staff have not yet been able to benefit from the new scheme and have not had an appraisal for over a year.

40. Learners are supported well both on and off the job. Learners express their satisfaction with the level of support they receive, both pastoral and academic in nature. Staff are very committed to helping learners to achieve. They have detailed knowledge of all learners’ strengths and weaknesses and use this informally to ensure that support is

available for learners who need it. Staff offer extra sessions for learners with particular needs such as support with spelling or punctuation, and learners with disabilities are offered help with equipment. However, learners are still required to complete an extensive amount of written work. Individual tutorials take place frequently in addition to the more formal progress reviews in the workplace required for contract compliance. Tutorial records, progress reviews and portfolios record the extent of support which has been given, including that given to learners with personal, family or other social and medical problems. Learners are given additional time or individual support when required. However, support from work placements is inconsistent, and some workplace supervisors have insufficient knowledge of NVQ requirements.

41. Training on early years care and education programmes is satisfactory. Learners attend training sessions at NCC's training centre in blocks of two or three weeks depending on holidays and other commitments. These sessions are structured well and closely aligned to the requirements of specific NVQ units. However, sessions are not planned with clear aims and objectives. A good range of training activities is used, including videos, group discussions, role-play, display work and assignments. Attendance is good.

42. Induction is satisfactory for new learners. Following an initial interview, learners attend an extended induction programme. This includes a day of water-based team-building activities, an explanation of NCC's policies and procedures, programme content and structure, and an introduction to the NVQ and portfolio-building. Equality of opportunity, and health and safety issues are comprehensively covered. Learners appreciate getting to know staff and other learners on the programme, and recall afterwards the issues covered. Learners receive copies of all relevant procedures and documents.

43. All learners receive a specialist initial assessment using a system recently introduced by NCC. Initial assessment is thorough but is not effectively followed through to plan assessment methods appropriate to each learner's needs. Additional literacy and numeracy skills support is provided but needs are not always accurately identified. A member of staff with literacy and numeracy skills support experience gained on a national project is available to offer individual support to learners if needed.

44. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessment practices are holistic and assignments are linked to the work experience of the learners. Assessments are carried out by NCC assessors. Work-based assessors are not used. The learners' portfolios are extensive and thoughtfully compiled but contain no evidence in the form of witness testimonies or professional discussions, and are too reliant on written work. Some learners are waiting to go into employment or higher education and are anxious to progress but cannot until they have completed their framework. They have passed their planned completion date and have been given work to complete at home. Clear monitoring keeps learners fully aware of their progress. Learners understand the requirements of the NVQ and are knowledgeable about their own portfolio referencing.

45. Internal verification is satisfactory. The two tutors act as internal verifiers and are

suitably qualified. They follow a clear procedure for verification which includes the use of an annual sampling strategy. However, the provision of feedback to assessors is not always consistent. A written record of feedback is not always provided.

46. Target-setting for learners is weak. Targets set during progress reviews are general and unfocused, refer to whole unit completion and are not time constrained. Targets set in the more frequently held tutorials relate to learners' current academic work, are more specific and are broken down into manageable parts. However, the two target-setting systems are overseen by different members of staff and are not co-ordinated. Staff have recognised this duplication and are working to integrate the two systems.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management of the early years care and education programmes are satisfactory. Regular meetings are held and NCC has begun the sharing of good practice between staff across the organisation. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of NCC's policies and procedures. Staff targets are based on contract compliance but data are not effectively used in monitoring these targets. Equality of opportunity is promoted through the appropriate use of literature. Learners are not always satisfied that their feedback is acted on in a responsive manner.

Foundation programmes**Grade 1**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Entry to Employment	161	1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good progression and achievement rates
- good training and learning
- very good resources in most centres
- very good range of learning activities
- excellent training and pastoral support for learners
- good promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- insufficient IT facilities at some centres

Achievement and standards

48. Progression on E2E programmes is good and improving. Of 190 learners starting programmes in 2000-01, 43 per cent progressed into employment with training, further education or work-based learning. This proportion increased to 46 per cent of the 266 learners starting in 2001-02 and 49 per cent of the 350 learners starting in 2002-03, 127 of whom are still in learning. Learners have opportunities to achieve additional externally and internally accredited achievements. A total of 356 externally accredited units were achieved by 149 learners in 2002-03. These units included literacy and numeracy skills, personal and social development, work experience and vocational preparation. All 65 learners at one centre participated in a basic first aid course and 52 in a diversity course. All students following construction units at entry level or level 1, participate in scaffolding courses and take part in the youth services personal and social development course. Learners are identified as potential achievers of the local LSC's max awards, which are open to all LSC-funded learners. Three learners were outright winners in 2002-03, and four learners were runners up. Another learner was named Painter and Decorator of the Year in 2002. Learners receive internal recognition for their participation in a wide range of personal development activities such as attendance at residential courses, sports leadership courses, working in the allotment, attempting climbing, off-road driving and mountain biking sessions. Attendance rates at off-the-job training sessions are good, as is punctuality.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Entry to Employment	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	66		350		266		190									
Progression ¹	19		173	49	123	46	81	43									
Achieved objectives ²	0		149	43	0	0	0	0									
Still in learning	34		127	36	0	0	0	0									

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

Quality of education and training

49. Training is of a good standard. Eighty-nine per cent of sessions observed were good or better. Lessons are planned very well with detailed schemes of work, and the training closely relates background knowledge to practical activities. Social and life skills are effectively taught by raising learners' expectations and meeting individual needs and aspirations. Many of the more formal training sessions take account of young people's views, give the learners autonomy and increase their motivation. A wide range of training methods and learning approaches is used. Training includes formal classroom sessions, individual support, facilitation to complete a task, role-play and self-learning activities. Activities, both in and out of the classroom, are differentiated to accommodate all levels of ability. Tutors encourage effective thinking and problem-solving, and give particular emphasis to interpersonal relationships and team working. The tutors have a high expectation of learners achieving their goals, which they couple with realism and honesty and a healthy respect for all learners.

50. All learners demonstrate a good understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it. What the learners' own experiences tell them is clearly linked to what they need to know to be successful in life and at work. Learners leave the programme well equipped to take advantage of opportunities to progress in employment, education and further training. They develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and personal qualities needed to become a good employee and citizen. Learners' interest and motivation are improved by a broad range of experiences, including trips, sports and other recreational activities. All learners progress at a good rate from the core learning components of literacy and numeracy skills, personal development and vocational skills at level 1, to more specialised work-related learning qualifications at level 2. The learners can manage their own learning and make progress across the whole learning programme. They are prepared very well to progress and are confident and capable of leading a successful adult working life.

51. Resources in most E2E centres are very good. Staff have appropriate teaching, training and assessor qualifications. Occupational specialists have very good experience and qualifications. Practical training areas are good and provide a realistic training environment for learners. A good range of modern tools and equipment is available and there is a plentiful supply of materials. The horticultural facilities are particularly good, providing an environment that matches those found in the commercial sector. Learning resources are also particularly good. Books and texts are readily available and used well. Staff have developed personalised learning materials which are of a very good quality and suited well to the needs of learners and their qualifications. Training rooms are also resourced well and provide a good learning environment.

52. The range of learning activities is very good on E2E programmes. In addition to literacy and numeracy skills work, learners follow a wide range of externally accredited qualifications in areas including sexual health, healthy eating, diversity, jobsearch and interview techniques. Many outdoor qualification-related activities are available, including fell-walking, white water rafting, raft building and abseiling. These activities introduce learners to a different environment, and greatly increase their confidence and teamwork skills. Activities are planned safely and well, and the learners clearly enjoy and are exhilarated by them. They achieve challenging goals that enhance their self-esteem. In addition, learners have the option during their vocational training to gain work experience in construction, horticulture, engineering, business administration and retailing. Learners speak with enthusiasm about residential trips to London and visits to local restaurants to test out healthy eating. Some learners plan and cook lunchtime meals at the centres. They also visit local amenities like bowling alleys and take part in other local activities. This wide and imaginative programme enables learners to go forward into suitable career paths they previously thought were unattainable.

53. Excellent support and guidance helps learners to overcome difficulties. Very skilled and committed staff show an excellent understanding of learners' problems, which have included substance misuse, homelessness and parental abuse. These issues are dealt with through an effective referral and review system. The ratio of staff to learners is good. Two tutors work with three or four learners in a typical training session and individual support is often available. Additional support is given by two specialist workers in the areas of minority ethnic achievement and substance misuse, and very good use is made of other specialist agencies. Learners are also often provided with medical assistance, clothing and meals, and are accompanied to interview. Staff are often available to learners outside of their contracted hours.

54. The promotion of equality of opportunity on E2E programmes is good, and learners show a sound understanding of equality issues. All training is fully inclusive and designed to take particular account of the diversity of the group of learners. Many learners take an additional externally accredited module to raise their awareness of prejudice and discrimination, which is a strong theme throughout all learning activities. NCC's innovative approach to teaching in this area includes visits to institutions such as the Holocaust Museum, the Galleries of Justice and the Liverpool Museum of Slavery. The visits are effectively used to support discussion and project work. Groups of learners, with the help of specialist performing arts workers, have produced musical compositions

which they will produce as compact discs using commercial recording studio equipment. Learners understand the procedures for making complaints and what they should do if they feel they are being bullied or harassed. The ratio of staff members to learners and the standard of pastoral support received are very good, and issues can be discussed openly and problems dealt with at an early stage.

55. Some E2E centres have insufficient IT facilities. NCC has invested substantially in upgrading learners' IT facilities since October 2001, and some centres are now well resourced. However, the upgrading programme is still ongoing and some centres only have two laptops and one desktop computer for learners to use. Learners in some centres have to visit the main centre to use its IT facilities. Learners at some centres can only use the IT facilities for specific IT sessions, and not to produce work for other externally accredited qualifications or as a resource for literacy and numeracy skills development. NCC is aware of this and is working towards updating the IT facilities in all centres. Some centres have insufficient internet access facilities for learners' research activities.

Leadership and management

56. The teamwork of E2E programme staff members is effective and beneficial to learners. All staff are committed to the aims and values of the programme, and staff at all levels work alongside learners in a range of activities additional to the main programme. These activities include cooking, gardening and participation in sports. A formal meetings structure is supported by much good informal communication, such as at end-of-day meetings where learners' progress and individual needs are considered. These meetings also reflect on the activities of the day and their effectiveness. Staff receive regular appraisals and their development needs are identified and met. Staff members are fully informed, understand their targets and are committed to the ethos of the organisation. Staff turnover is low.