

REINSPECTION REPORT

Stockton Training and Employment Services Reinspection

10 September 2004



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. 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
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

Stockton Training and Employment Services Reinspection

Contents

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the reinspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	2
Land-based provision	4

REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Stockton Training and Employment Services (TES) is part of Stockton Borough Council's (the council) Central Services. It was established in 1996 in order to provide training for adults and young people in the Stockton area. TES has expanded in recent years and now operates seven training centres in the Stockton area, employing a total of 72 staff. It provides work-based learning in eight areas: land-based industries, design and print, construction, business administration, management and professional, retailing, warehousing and transportation, hospitality, sport and recreation, health care and public services, and foundation programmes.
2. TES's general manager reports to the council's head of human resources. He leads a team of three principal officers, comprising the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) operations manager, the Jobcentre Plus operations manager, and the quality assurance and support systems manager. There are four senior contract managers, seven training officers, and a range of training and support staff.
3. Training is funded through Tees Valley LSC and Jobcentre Plus. In July 2004, the unemployment rate in the Stockton Area was 3.3 per cent, compared with the national average for England of 2.2 per cent. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Stockton is 2.8 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Land-based provision

4. Sixteen learners are on horticulture programmes. Of these, 14 are learners working within a framework which includes the level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in amenity horticulture. One is a New Deal client working towards units of the NVQ at level 2, and one is an NVQ learner working towards a level 2 qualification. Seven of the 16 learners attend work placements away from the TES training centre for four days each week. The others work at the council's training centre, where there is a plant nursery, a glasshouse unit and training room. Assessments are carried out in the workplace by TES's assessor. Off-the-job training sessions are delivered one day each week. Learners attend the nursery for horticultural training; key skills classes take place at another centre in the afternoon. Learners are recruited through Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions service, and through TES's attendance at careers events at local schools.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learner interviews	17
Number of staff interviews	12
Number of employer interviews	5
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	10
Number of visits	3

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. At the previous inspection the provision was good in foundation programmes, and satisfactory in construction, business administration, retailing, hospitality, and health and social care. Land-based provision was unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity were good and quality assurance was satisfactory. The reinspection therefore covered only land-based provision. At the end of the reinspection process it was judged that this provision is still unsatisfactory. Stockton Training and Employment Services has been referred to Tees Valley LSC for emergency action.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Land-based provision	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Construction	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	3

STOCKTON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REINSPECTION

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2
Life Skills	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Land-based provision	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4
New Deal 18-24	None

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	4
New Deal 18-24	1	None

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good work placements
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak integration of elements of apprenticeship framework
- poor planning of learning
- weak assessment of background knowledge

Achievement and standards

6. At the previous inspection, retention and achievement rates for learners, full-time education and training and level 2 NVQ learners were poor. During 2003-04 a number of disruptive learners were dismissed without achieving any formal qualifications, but since then retention has stabilised and is now satisfactory. Effective support is given to learners who are identified as being in danger of leaving the programme at an early stage and attendance is closely monitored. At the previous inspection, learners made slow progress in achieving their NVQs or completing their apprenticeship frameworks. This situation has improved. Of the 16 current learners, six have now completed their key skills training, gained the required technical certificate and are close to completing their NVQ units and full apprenticeship framework. Most of the other learners started their training only two months before inspection.

7. The standard of learners' work is adequate. Learners in work placements are developing their skills to meet the standards required in industry, but the physical resources and operational methods at the training centre do not always promote the development of good occupational practices. Learners' portfolios are generally satisfactory, but are not of a high standard. Evidence of background knowledge is often weak.

Quality of education and training

8. TES carefully selects and matches work placements to learners' needs and interests. This strength was recognised at the previous inspection, and since then the number and range of work placements has increased. Placements now include public parks and gardens, cemeteries, golf courses and landscaping enterprises. Work placements for those learners interested in nursery work are still limited. Seven of the 16 learners on horticulture programmes were in work placements at the time of the reinspection. The placements are of good quality. Learners' confidence and motivation benefits from the good working relationships and close supervision, and they quickly feel part of the teams.

9. Support for learners is good. Initial assessments are used effectively to identify their individual literacy and numeracy needs and, where necessary, more detailed diagnostic assessment is carried out. Learners who need help with literacy and numeracy skills attend regular, weekly sessions. An established key skills team provides well-planned training. However, there is not enough integration of key skills training into the horticulture programmes.

10. Learners with additional needs receive very good support. TES employs two support workers who cover both Jobcentre Plus and LSC-funded learners. Individuals are generally referred to the support workers by training staff, or may request help themselves. The support workers help learners to identify the problems which are preventing them learning effectively, and to resolve them where possible. In some cases they offer encouragement and personal support for those lacking confidence in their ability to succeed on the programme; in others they help learners to access funding or other assistance. Learners who do not attend are telephoned or visited at home to encourage them to continue. These measures are effective in improving retention. Data collected by the provider shows that the number of learners leaving at an early stage of their programme fell by 25 per cent overall, following the introduction of the support workers.

11. Resources are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, an additional trainer has been appointed, and is currently being trained as an assessor. More reference sources and workbooks are available at the training centre. Tools for off-the-job training sessions are appropriate and generally sufficient, but physical and learning resources for the small number of learners working towards sports turf units of the NVQ are limited. Learners in work placements have access to good facilities to enable them to meet the requirements of the NVQ, but for those based at the training centre, facilities are more restricted. The nursery provides a good resource, but the management and routine maintenance of the site is weak. Examples exist of poor practices in weed and disease control, as well as in general tidiness. The range of plants is too small, and not enough use is made of nearby horticultural facilities to broaden the range of horticultural experience for learners. Information technology facilities at the nursery centre are poor, but learners have access to satisfactory facilities at the training centre.

STOCKTON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REINSPECTION

12. Communications between training and assessment staff and work-placement supervisors are regular and have recently helped to identify more opportunities for assessment in the workplace. Employers and supervisors show enthusiasm for the training programmes and participate fully in progress reviews. However, there are no work-based assessors. TES invites work-placement providers to training sessions on topics such as key skills, equal opportunities, and health and safety. Providers have a satisfactory understanding of the requirements of the NVQ.

13. Clients on full-time education and training programmes attend jobsearch activities for one day each week. These are well conducted and include modular training programmes on interview techniques, presentation skills and local labour market information. TES has recently introduced sessions on interview and jobsearch skills to the apprenticeship programmes.

14. Progress reviews have improved since the previous inspection. Targets are more detailed. They include learners' NVQ progress, attendance, behaviour, and health and safety practices. The learning stages towards assessment goals are not planned sufficiently and although many learners are identified as needing to develop their personal effectiveness skills, this is not included in individual learning plans. Progress towards key skills and literacy and numeracy not discussed sufficiently in progress reviews. Learners do not have schedules for their practical work, so rely on training staff to tell them what to do each day; they are not encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

15. The planning and frequency of assessment have improved since the previous inspection. A wider range of evidence is used in the portfolios of learners who have been on the programme since 2002-03. Most aspects of assessment are now satisfactory. However, the assessment of background knowledge is not clear, or thorough enough. For example, a written description of seed propagation did not define important factors which affect the success of the operation, such as depth and spacing of seeds, or the type of compost used. Captions supporting some photographic evidence are too brief and often give no indication of the setting or environmental conditions in which the assessment was conducted. Oral questioning during assessment is limited. Background knowledge workbooks are kept in separate folders and are not cross-referenced to enable them to be used as evidence of understanding. Some learners' portfolios contain detailed written answers to set questions, but this method is not applied consistently. It is unclear to learners what the minimum requirements or standards are for background knowledge evidence.

16. The different elements of the apprenticeship framework are poorly integrated and the staff delivering them do not communicate sufficiently. Key skills training is delivered at a separate centre, and there are no arrangements for staff from the two centres to meet. Although key skills projects have a horticultural theme, learners are not encouraged to apply their key skills learning to their horticultural work. Delivery of off-the-job horticultural training is not linked to practical work at the training centre, or to key skills. Learners' key skills files are produced and maintained in isolation from those for NVQs and background knowledge. Some staff also have a poor understanding of the

requirements for achieving the apprenticeship framework and show a limited understanding of key skills, and literacy and numeracy provision. The programme is not sufficiently coherent and appears disjointed to most learners, who do not understand the relevance of key skills, or literacy and numeracy support sessions, to their occupational skills development.

17. Training is poorly planned to meet individual learners' needs and abilities. Teachers delivering key skills, and literacy and numeracy support use the results of initial assessment activities well; the results are not used so effectively for the horticulture programme. Individual learning plans focus on the identification of appropriate units of the NVQ and their expected date of achievement, but do not reduce these to short-term targets. Some off-the-job teaching sessions are poorly planned. Generic plans for the delivery of background knowledge sessions do not take account of learners' different ability levels, nor do they show how learning and achievement will be assessed during sessions. Evidence of background knowledge gained during these sessions is not used in practical assessments.

18. Learners' induction to TES is unsatisfactory. They are adequately prepared for work on the site and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, but their introduction to the learning programme is inadequate. Learners who joined the programme recently have a poor understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework, and some are not aware that they are apprentices. There is no formal preparation for learners who are about to start work placements.

Leadership and management

19. TES has well-established and effective systems for monitoring the delivery of training programmes. Monthly contract review meetings between the senior contract manager and lead training officer are held to review progress of individual learners and set targets for their progress. Thorough procedures exist for receiving feedback from learners and employers and for monitoring retention and achievement. These processes have led to improvements since the previous inspection. For example, facilities for the learners at Ropner Park have been improved, the range of placements has been increased, and additional support has been provided for learners in order to reduce withdrawals from the programme at an early stage. Links between assessors and work placements have improved.

20. Equality of opportunity is well promoted. Learners are introduced to the topic during their induction and most have a good recall of this. Their understanding of equality and diversity is reinforced by a further classroom session, and because trainers raise the subject at each progress review. Learners are well aware of complaints procedures and are encouraged to complete 'compliments and complaints' forms and post them in the box provided at the training centre. All complaints are dealt with promptly by the council's quality assurance manager. Staff receive regular training in equality and diversity, and work-placement providers and employers are invited to attend.

STOCKTON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REINSPECTION

21. Arrangements for the internal verification of assessment are satisfactory. TES has employed a subcontractor to provide an internal verification service. The planning of verification is satisfactory. Advice from internal verifiers has led to some improvements in the quality of assessment recording and the range of evidence used. However, there have been no formal standard-setting meetings, and weaknesses in background knowledge evidence have not been remedied.

22. TES has a commitment to widening participation. It has identified four wards in the area which suffer particularly high levels of deprivation and tries to recruit learners from these areas. Targets for recruitment to horticulture programmes from these wards have been exceeded. TES also collects data about ethnicity and gender and analyses this in order to monitor its recruitment practices. It does not, however, set targets to rectify the under-recruitment of female learners; only two female learners have joined the programme in the past two years. A full review of all training centres has been carried out to monitor compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and where access problems have been identified, action plans are being prepared to resolve them.

23. Significant weaknesses remain in the management of horticultural resources, and in the integration, planning, and delivery of training programmes. Some of these have been recognised by managers, but not enough action has been taken to resolve them.