

INSPECTION REPORT

County Training (Gloucestershire)

08 August 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

COUNTY TRAINING (GLOUCESTERSHIRE)

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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Overall judgement

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

County Training (Gloucestershire)

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. County Training (Gloucestershire), (County Training) was established by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in 1984 to manage and deliver work-based learning for 16-19 year olds. The organisation's training centre is situated in Gloucester. County Training offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in business administration. It also provides foundation training in Life Skills and an introduction to work programme which includes a level 1 national vocational qualification (NVQ). This foundation programme will be replaced by Entry to Employment (E2E) training from August 2003.
2. County Training's senior management team consists of two job-share centre managers and a deputy centre manager. The centre managers report to the GCC's human resource manager responsible for organisational development. One centre manager is responsible for Life Skills and the level 1 NVQ programmes and the other oversees the modern apprenticeship programmes. There is a programme co-ordinator who is responsible for the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Eight full-time staff are employed in the organisation, six in teaching and training roles and two staff in administrative and support roles.
3. County Training funds its provision through Gloucester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and GCC. The Gloucester area, from where County Training recruits its learners, has a minority ethnic representation of 5.2 per cent according to the 2001 census. This is in comparison with 1.8 per cent in Gloucestershire and 6.2 per cent in England as a whole. The proportion of school leavers in Gloucester achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2001 was 58 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent for England as a whole.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

4. There are 28 learners following programmes in business administration at County Training, 21 of whom are foundation modern apprentices and seven of whom are advanced modern apprentices. All of the advanced modern apprentices are employed within GCC or local government. Nine of the foundation modern apprentices are employed and 12 are in work placements. Foundation modern apprentices receive off-the-job training sessions for the first three months of their programme. Three subcontracted work-based assessors carry out assessment of the NVQ in the workplace and a member of County Training's staff completes internal verification.

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Foundation programmes

5. Nine learners attend County Training's Life Skills programme and six learners attend the introduction to work programme. The Life Skills programme covers a range of areas including development of literacy, numeracy, social skills and the provision of work experience. Learners on the introduction to work programme also work towards an NVQ at level 1 in either business administration or customer service. All these learners are provided with a work placement. Learners on the Life Skills programme attend for a minimum of 16 hours a week for up to 19 weeks. Learners on the introduction to work programme attend on a full-time basis for up to 12 months. Learners' time on both programmes can be extended if required.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	19
Number of staff interviews	34
Number of employer interviews	9
Number of subcontractor interviews	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partner/external agency interviews	2

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, County Training's leadership and management and its quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. Its equality of opportunity provision is satisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in business administration and foundation programmes is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. **Retention rates for advanced modern apprentices in business administration are good.** Of the eight learners who started in 2002-03, seven are still in learning. **However, retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme are poor,** declining from 87 per cent in 2000-01 to a current rate of 52 per cent of 2002-03 starters still in learning. In 2001-02, 66 per cent of learners completed their foundation modern apprenticeship framework and gained employment. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners attend regularly and are punctual.

8. **Progression rates for learners attending the Life Skills programme are low.** During 2002-03, only four of the 17 learners leaving the programme have progressed into further education or training. Retention rates on the introduction to work programme have improved from 9 per cent in 2000-01 to 33 per cent in 2001-02. Six of the nine learners who started the programme in 2002-03 are still in learning. **Learners are making slow progress towards their level 1 NVQs in business administration and customer service.** However, the standard of work on these programmes is good.

Quality of education and training

9. All three of the foundation programme learning sessions observed by inspectors were satisfactory or better. The style and pace of the better sessions were appropriate for the needs of the learners. Good use was made of video and information and communications technology (ICT) to maintain the interest of the learners.

10. **All learners on business administration and foundation programmes are provided with good work placements.** Learners are offered a wide range of work activities and plenty of opportunities to develop and practise the skills they need for their NVQ. All learners value their jobs, gain in confidence and develop good skills for employment.

11. Business administration learners benefit from good relationships with their supervisors. **The effective interaction between employers and learners promotes learning and development.**

12. County Training has not planned sufficiently for the day-to-day operation of the new modern apprenticeship framework in business administration. Its long-term programme planning is inadequate. Learners do not know what they have to do to complete the framework, or when their training programme will end. There is no formal plan for training in the workplace. Learners' work roles are not matched with the NVQ units. **Learners do not have sufficient off-the-job training.**

13. Foundation programmes have good resources. A wide range of multimedia and ICT resources, including those for literacy and numeracy, are available. Training resources for business administration programmes are satisfactory.

14. The Life Skills programme provides a good range of learning activities. Learners develop personal skills, such as team-building, through outdoor adventure activities and team games. Interesting guest speakers regularly take part in sessions. Learners improve their communication skills and gain confidence.

15. Planning for individual social skills development on the Life Skills programme is inadequate. The aims of the social skills programme are not broken down into clear measurable targets against which to record each learner's progress.

16. Progress reviews on the foundation programmes are ineffective. Regular reviews are brief, repetitive and do not set or review targets effectively. The separate reviews of progress in literacy, numeracy and language skills are satisfactory. However, reviews are not sufficiently co-ordinated to provide an overall assessment of the learner's progress. Some reviews in business administration are weak, they are generalised and do not identify actions to gain knowledge, skills and experience. Assessment practice in business administration is satisfactory.

17. All learners have their basic skills assessed as part of a comprehensive initial assessment. Learners on foundation programmes have good individual plans with realistic targets relating to literacy and numeracy. Literacy and numeracy teaching is good and valued by the learners. The literacy or numeracy needs of foundation modern apprentices are met, but this support is not extended to advanced modern apprentices.

Leadership and management

18. County Training's programme management is inadequate. The division of responsibilities between County Training's managers is unclear. Operational management of programmes is inconsistent. Learners' experiences vary across the provision. For example, not all learners receive personal tutorials. There is insufficient planning of training in the areas of learning.

19. County Training's commitment to improving training through staff development is good. Key members of staff are sent on training courses which match organisational requirements. All staff attend local and national events relevant to their work. Learners benefit from being taught by staff who are familiar with recent developments in work-

based learning.

20. County Training collaborates closely with other departments in GCC to support and improve learning. **Learners benefit from good work-placements within council departments** and from opportunities to attend special Life Skills development activities run by GCC's Youth Service.

21. **County Training has a good literacy and numeracy programme.** It has developed an effective strategy to meet the literacy and numeracy needs of the learners. A comprehensive action plan has been produced and is being implemented effectively.

22. Equality of opportunity is promoted well at County Training. **Initiatives to widen participation are particularly effective.** Staff receive good training in equality of opportunity and diversity, and use their knowledge of disability, different cultures and social issues for the benefit of the learners. However, learners do not receive sufficient guidance on equality of opportunity and diversity after induction. **County Training's equal opportunities policy and implementation plan are inadequate.**

23. **Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate.** There are few clearly written policies and procedures to cover County Training's activities. Systems to monitor the quality of training are not yet in place. Insufficient use is made of data to improve the provision.

24. **County Training's management has inadequate systems and procedures for internal verification.** Registration and certification procedures are ineffective. Systems are inconsistent and do not ensure compliance with new standards. Not all staff are appropriately qualified. Assessors are not observed sufficiently. Performance is not monitored and evaluated enough.

25. County Training's self-assessment process is particularly good. Staff and stakeholders including learners are extensively involved in producing the self-assessment report and grading the provision.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- well-planned staff development to improve training
- well-developed literacy and numeracy strategy
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- very effective initiatives to widen participation
- particularly effective and inclusive self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to improve quality

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- inadequate programme management
- inadequate equal opportunities policy and procedures
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate management of internal verification

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- good in-training rate for advanced modern apprentices
- good promotion of learning through very effective workplace relationships
- good work placements

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates for foundation modern apprentices
- insufficient operational planning for modern apprenticeship programmes
- poor internal verification arrangements
- inadequate planning for on- and off-the-job training

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- particularly good use of learning resources
- good work placements
- good range of programme activities for Life Skills learners
- particularly effective basic skills development programme

Weaknesses

- low progression rates on Life Skills programme
- slow progress towards NVQs
- inadequate planning of individual social skills development
- ineffective progress reviews
- poor internal verification arrangements

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT COUNTY TRAINING (GLOUCESTERSHIRE):

- the supportive and helpful staff who are always available
- the opportunity to develop skills and to take responsibility for learning
- the way literacy and numeracy is taught
- being treated with respect and as an adult by staff
- learning about themselves and being prepared for the future
- the use of computers
- the range of activities on the Life Skills programme
- learning how to behave in different circumstances and becoming more confident

WHAT LEARNERS THINK COUNTY TRAINING (GLOUCESTERSHIRE) COULD IMPROVE:

- the training allowance
- continuity by reducing staff turnover
- their involvement in the choice of Life Skills programme activities
- the amount of information about the foundation modern apprenticeship
- the amount of information about key skills
- the frequency of assessment
- adherence to the weekly training schedule outlined in the programme information
- the frequency of classes at the training centre
- the amount of information they receive if a training session is cancelled

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR COUNTY TRAINING
(GLOUCESTERSHIRE):**

- improve the planning of training
- develop effective quality assurance arrangements
- implement coherent and effective management
- implement effective internal verification processes
- develop a strategy to improve retention and achievement rates

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- well-planned staff development to improve training
- well-developed literacy and numeracy strategy
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- very effective initiatives to widen participation
- particularly effective and inclusive self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to improve quality
- inadequate programme management
- inadequate equal opportunities policy and procedures
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate management of internal verification

26. County Training's staff development programme is well planned. The organisation recognised this as a strength in its self-assessment report. A high priority is given to staff training. Twice-yearly personal assessment reviews are used effectively to prioritise staff development. For example, managers and key members of staff are currently completing long-term qualifications relevant to their work. Short courses and workshops are organised about issues involved with the organisation's development plan, such as literacy and numeracy assessments. All staff evaluate how their training will be incorporated within their work.

27. County Training has developed an effective basic skills strategy to meet learners' needs. A comprehensive action plan has been produced and is being implemented well. County Training has introduced a thorough initial assessment, compiled up-to-date learning resources and recruited specialist staff. Good planning has enabled the comprehensive training of all staff involved in the delivery of basic skills. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

28. The organisation has satisfactory links with departments in GCC. County Training is part of GCC's plan to meet its strategic objective of supporting disadvantaged young people and increasing the number of young people in its workforce. Learners benefit from the availability of good work placements and from opportunities to attend life skills development activities run by the council. County Training and the GCC's planning cycles are effectively combined to implement long-term planning and the allocation of resources. The involvement of senior council managers in County Training's steering

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group supports the organisation's future development.

29. County Training's management of resources is satisfactory. Finances are very carefully monitored through GCC's departmental budget framework. Staffing levels are appropriate for the number of learners. The learning accommodation at County Training is satisfactory, including areas where learners can relax and rooms for individual tutorials where privacy is assured. Resources such as course materials and computer software are sufficient for each programme. A good range of ICT equipment is available.

30. Internal communication at County Training is satisfactory. Well-attended regular meetings provide a forum for the sharing of information and problem-solving. Senior managers' attendance at meetings promotes discussion with staff about future developments. Actions are effectively monitored and their results evaluated. Issues discussed in staff meetings, such as the possibility of losing travel subsidies for learners, are dealt with effectively in subsequent management meetings. However, as identified in the self-assessment report, some crucial management initiatives, including the setting of team targets, have not been effectively communicated to staff.

31. Data are not used sufficiently to improve the quality of training. A range of information is collected and analysed effectively, including data on achievement, retention and attendance. However, the information is used inconsistently. For example, programme teams are not always given all the results from the analysis of learners' feedback questionnaires. There are no standard agenda items at meetings to consider the use of data and it is seldom discussed at team meetings. County Training's analysis did not identify poor retention rates on one of the programmes. The self-assessment report identified the use of data as a key weakness.

32. The overall management of County Training's programmes is inadequate. Staff are not clearly directed in providing good-quality training. The roles and responsibilities of the job-share manager are not sufficiently defined. Managers do not have the authority to ensure that their decisions are acted on. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Operational management is inconsistent across the organisation. Learners' experiences vary throughout the provision. Not all learners are receiving personal tutorials. Demanding targets for retention, achievement and progression are set, but there is insufficient monitoring or evaluation of performance against them.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

33. County Training's promotion of equality of opportunity is good. An extensive range of eye-catching, age-appropriate displays directs learners to support on a wide range of issues such as sexual orientation or mental health. Extracts from the media are used effectively to counteract the stereotyping of male and female roles. Racism is challenged. A welcome notice is produced in a number of languages, with images from cultures around the world. County Training's flexible arrangements for the working day allow learners to fully participate in prayer and religious festivals. Suitable work placements in an all-female environment are organised if needed.

34. County Training's initiatives to widen participation are very effective. Recruitment trends have been carefully analysed and specific marketing has been successfully implemented. County Training ensures that its learner profile intake reflects the ethnic and gender representation in the city. Recruitment extends into deprived wards with areas of high unemployment, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. A recent project has successfully widened participation by minority ethnic groups, which now provide 13.9 per cent of County Training's learners. This is a 50 per cent increase since 2001 and compares with a minority ethnic representation within County Training's recruitment area of 5.2 per cent.

35. Staff receive extensive training and development in equality and diversity matters. A thorough induction is followed by regular updates. Training delivery is planned and successfully monitored for effectiveness every six months at personal assessment reviews. Staff use their knowledge of disability, different cultures and social backgrounds to benefit the learners. For example, a learner with a visual impairment has materials produced in the required print size. Appropriate accessible work placements are found for learners who use a wheelchair.

36. Policies and procedures to deal with bullying and harassment are satisfactory. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the workplace and what measures to take should they experience bullying or harassment. Induction information for foundation programme learners is clear and uses language that the learners can read and understand.

37. Learners receive satisfactory guidance at induction about equality and diversity and their understanding of the issues is checked. They do not receive an equal opportunities policy which states their entitlement, although information leaflets are distributed. Further training in equality of opportunity after induction is limited, as is any monitoring of the learners' understanding of equality throughout their programme.

38. County Training's equal opportunities policy and implementation plans are inadequate. Essential items, such as the aims and outcomes of the policy, to whom the policy refers and what it covers, are not included. There is no indication of who is responsible for its implementation or how the policy should be reviewed and updated. No reference is made to County Training's mission statement or business plan. Links to GCC's comprehensive fairness and diversity policy are not highlighted. The policy does not refer to the legal requirements arising from government legislation, or the monitoring of subsequent actions. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. However, County Training is implementing the 'Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001', and the 'Disability and Discrimination Act 1995.'

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

39. The self-assessment process developed by County Training is very effective and includes views from learners, representatives from the LSC, GCC, employers and a local charity. The learners' perspectives on the provision are particularly valued. The completed report represents all stakeholders' views effectively. The process has given

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County Training clear direction to further develop aspects of its provision, such as its basic skills provision and the observation of training. However, the significance of some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report was underestimated.

40. County Training does not have an established quality assurance system. Existing quality assurance arrangements are incomplete and there is no system for the review and evaluation of all aspects of training. There are not enough formal procedures in place to inform staff of how to perform key tasks. The clear procedures that do exist, such as the process for gaining learners' views about the provision, are not implemented consistently. The organisation does not ensure that key tasks are being carried out correctly. County Training does not review the effectiveness of a range of working practices intended to improve learning. However, the organisation does respond to quality assurance issues as they arise. These are discussed at meetings and recorded satisfactorily. Actions identified are assigned to a named person. Progress is monitored effectively until the action has been completed.

41. Internal verification is poor and does not meet awarding body requirements. Not all staff are appropriately qualified. Assessors are not observed sufficiently, or given sufficient feedback on their performance. There are no arrangements for the standardisation of assessment. Internal verification is not carried out systematically throughout the training programme. County Training identified this weakness in the self-assessment report.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	28	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good in-training rate for advanced modern apprentices
- good promotion of learning through very effective workplace relationships
- good work placements

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates for foundation modern apprentices
- insufficient operational planning for modern apprenticeship programmes
- poor internal verification arrangements
- inadequate planning for on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

42. In-training figures for the advanced modern apprenticeship programme are good. All learners are initially employed and apply for a place on the training programme. Of the eight learners who started in 2002-03, one has left training. Retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme are declining. They have steadily declined from 87 per cent in 2000-01 to 72 per cent in 2001-02. Currently 52 per cent of 2002-03 starters are still in learning. Of the 21 learners who completed in 2001-02, 19 successfully completed the full modern apprenticeship framework and entered employment. Most learners attend the workplace regularly and are punctual.

43. The standard of work in NVQ learners' portfolios of evidence is satisfactory. Learners produce a satisfactory range of relevant evidence which includes personal statements, work products and written questions. Work is marked satisfactorily and any errors in spelling or grammar are pointed out to the learners. However, targets set by staff are not sufficiently challenging for all learners.

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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		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	7															

*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		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	40		29		15											
Retained*	0		21	72	13	87										
Successfully completed	0		19	66	11	73										
Still in learning	21		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

Quality of education and training

44. Learners benefit from good relationships with their workplace supervisors. The very good relationships between employers and learners promote learning and development. Supervisors are strongly committed to helping learners achieve their potential. Learners are very positive about the support they receive. County Training's staff and assessors give good support. Additional visits to the workplace or the training centre are arranged at the most convenient time for the learners involved.

45. Modern apprentices are provided with good work placements. County Training identified this strength in its self-assessment report. Learners are placed or are employed in a wide range of jobs directly relevant to their modern apprenticeship. Work placements support the completion of NVQs at the level appropriate for the learner's training programme. The good range of placements ensures that learners have access to a wide range of work activities. Most learners value their jobs and recognise their improved confidence and the development of their work skills.

46. County Training uses a satisfactory range of assessment methods. Most of the evidence in portfolios originates from the workplace. Good use is made of witness testimonies and personal statements. Assessors make regular visits to the workplace and

agree action plans with learners. Not all action plans are adequate. Some progress reviews are weak, recording general aspects of progress and welfare, rather than what training is carried out and what progress is made. They do not identify the actions learners should take to gain the required knowledge, skills or experience.

47. Key skills training is not an integral part of the NVQ programmes and no key skills assessment takes place. All learners' basic skills are assessed. Foundation modern apprentices who require basic skills development have their needs met, but advanced modern apprentices' learning needs are not followed up.

48. Training resources at the centre are satisfactory. Learners have good access to ICT facilities. County Training has recently purchased appropriate up-to-date teaching and learning materials for basic and key skills development and assessment.

49. County Training is not planning sufficiently for the new modern apprenticeship frameworks. It has not prepared adequately for the implementation of the programmes. The training and development that learners will need to complete the frameworks within the timescales has not been arranged. Long-term planning for the completion of modern apprenticeships is inadequate. The schedule of assessment visits is not prepared in advance. Learners are unsure of what they need to do to complete the framework, and many are unaware of when their training programme will end. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

50. Learners' and workplace supervisors' understanding of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor and does not allow effective planning to take place. The information given at induction to learners is not re-emphasised sufficiently. Most employers do not have sufficient information about the programme frameworks to make a meaningful contribution to NVQ or key skills training and assessment. County Training is aware of this and has prepared a programme of training for workplace supervisors, to be provided at the training centre.

51. Internal verification procedures are poor. Arrangements for internal verification by appropriately qualified staff are unsatisfactory. There is no sampling plan. There is no ongoing internal verification and learners' portfolios are not checked until just before the external verifier's visit. Feedback forms for portfolios completed by the internal verifier are poor and some forms are not signed by the assessor. There are no arrangements to confirm the completion of action points. There is no standardisation of assessment. Assessors are not observed enough and there are no arrangements for discussion with learners. There are no records of key skills standards moderation.

52. On-the-job training is inadequately planned. Learners are given satisfactory training in the workplace when it is needed, to enable them to carry out work tasks. However, there is no formal training plan. Most learners do not have job descriptions for their work roles which set out the skills and training they will need to enable them to carry out the tasks. Learners' work roles are not matched to the NVQ units. There is not enough off-the-job training for learners. Foundation modern apprentices attend the centre for training at the start of their programmes. These sessions are well planned and there is a

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satisfactory range of activities to develop learners' knowledge and skills. However, some learners have training needs which are not being met.

Leadership and management

53. County Training meets staff development needs to the benefit of learners, such as the basic skills core curriculum and equality and diversity. Contracted assessors are occupationally competent and appropriately qualified.

54. County Training's basic skills development strategy has not been fully implemented with the modern apprenticeship programmes. Communication is satisfactory. Staff communicate on an informal basis through telephone, e-mail and meetings, which are not recorded. The monthly business administration team meetings do not include effective long-term planning.

55. As identified in the self-assessment report, training is not systematically evaluated. Learners and workplace supervisors are not asked for their views about the training provision. Occasional feedback recorded during learners' progress reviews is not analysed or evaluated.

56. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. However, insufficient information is given to learners in induction and their understanding is not checked. Equality of opportunity is not systematically monitored during assessments or progress reviews. Health and safety in the workplace is monitored and followed up at reviews.

Foundation programmes**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	16	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- particularly good use of learning resources
- good work placements
- good range of programme activities for Life Skills learners
- particularly effective basic skills development programme

Weaknesses

- low progression rates on Life Skills programme
- slow progress towards NVQs
- inadequate planning of individual social skills development
- ineffective progress reviews
- poor internal verification arrangements

Achievement and standards

57. Progression rates are poor for Life Skills learners. In 2001-02, 60 per cent of learners progressed into further education and/or training. However, in 2002-03, of the 17 learners who left the programme, only four progressed into further education and/or training. Retention rates on the Life Skills programme are satisfactory. Retention rates on the introduction to work programme were unsatisfactory in 2001-02, but are improving. Seven of the nine learners who started the programme in 2002-03 are still in learning. In 2001-02, NVQ at level 1 achievement rates were unsatisfactory. Current learners following NVQs at level 1 in business administration or customer service are making slow progress, but the standard of their work is good. Many NVQ learners are competent in a range of workplace activities, but have only been observed by assessors once or twice in the workplace.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		9		23											
Retained*	0		3	33	2	9										
Successfully completed	0		3	33	2	9										
Still in learning	6		1	11	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																
Life Skills																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	26		10													
Retained*	8		6	60												
Successfully completed	4		6	60												
Still in learning	9		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

Quality of education and training

58. Resources to support foundation programmes are particularly good and effectively promote learning. A wide range of computer-based resources support literacy and numeracy teaching. Good use is made of textbooks and videos to enhance training sessions and interest learners. All teaching observed was graded satisfactory or better. The better sessions were very stimulating and used a wide range of resources effectively. The style and pace of these sessions are appropriate to the needs of learners, who successfully gain knowledge and skills. For example, during a numeracy session, learners were successful at a card game where they matched questions about percentages against the answers on their fellow learners' cards. Learners have developed a website describing their training programme while further developing their knowledge of ICT.

59. Workplaces are good and staff work hard to find placements suited to learners' individual needs. Learners following an NVQ are given time at work to complete qualification requirements. Employers and County Training's staff work closely together to support learners effectively. All learners are provided with comprehensive inductions at the training centre and in the workplace. They have a satisfactory understanding of key induction topics.

60. The Life Skills programme includes a good range of learning activities. Learners develop effective social and personal skills, including team-building, through activities such as a helmsmanship course, well-structured team games and sports. Interesting guest speakers regularly visit the training centre to talk about topics such as drugs and alcohol misuse, the dangers of smoking, personal hygiene and safety. Learners benefit from the mix of practical and formal training, and develop effective communication skills as well as raised levels of confidence and self-esteem.

61. The planning for learners' social skills development is inadequate. All learners receive a comprehensive initial evaluation that includes a diagnostic assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and a learning style questionnaire. The results are used effectively to develop a comprehensive individual learning plan for basic skills. This is not the case for social and Life Skills development. Learners complete a self-evaluation of their social skills, but this alone is not adequate. The aims of the social skills programme are not expressed as clear, measurable targets for each learner, against which their progress can be recorded. Some learners are not aware of their achievements or their next goal. The relevance of an activity, to the learner's personal skills development such as painting a wall, is not made sufficiently clear. Some learners are not sufficiently challenged during their programme to gain social skills in preparation for moving on.

62. Progress reviews are ineffective. The generic reviews are often brief, repetitive and do not set or review targets effectively. Some targets are not sufficiently challenging for learners. Reviews in the workplace are more detailed, but do not sufficiently evaluate learners' progress. The separate reviews of basic skills progress are satisfactory. However, reviews are not effectively co-ordinated to provide an overall assessment of learners' progress. In preparation for the E2E programme staff now complete a two-week action plan that is more learner-focused, but target-setting is still not sufficiently clear. Learners appreciate the general feedback on progress which they receive at their reviews.

Leadership and management

63. Managers and staff have worked well together to develop a very effective literacy and numeracy skills development programme. They have sought advice from a range of specialist organisations and have developed a comprehensive timetable of learning activities. However, learners' progress reviews are not effectively co-ordinated.

64. The arrangements for internal verification are poor. The level 1 NVQ programme in business administration has no internal verification. There has been some internal verification of the assessment of portfolios on the level 1 NVQ in customer service. Before May 2003, customer service learners were not following a specific qualification framework, which is a requirement of the introduction to work programme. Awarding body approval for the customer service NVQ is now in place.

65. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and some learners and employers also contribute to the self-assessment report. The report identified some of the same strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors, but underestimated the significance of some of the weaknesses.

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66. Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is an integral part of the learners' regular progress reviews, but there is not enough subsequent checking of learners' understanding. Equality of opportunity is not included in the procedures for learners' workplace reviews.