

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Careers Partnership

06 August 2001



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 in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

## Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

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

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

## SUMMARY

### The provider

Careers Partnership is a company based in Greater Manchester which provides Life Skills training through its five careerlines centres to young people who are referred to it through the Learning Gateway. It is also a provider of careers advice and guidance to young people in Manchester, Salford, Tameside and Trafford.

### Overall judgement

The overall quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of learners. Life Skills training is good. Leadership and management of training are satisfactory.

### Life Skills

Life Skills training is good. The company trains 55 young people. Last year, the proportion of learners who went on to further training or employment was high, at 74 per cent. Retention rates are high. Learners respond positively to their training programme. They work in a safe environment where they receive help and support and grow in confidence and self-esteem. The needs of each learner are identified carefully and learning programmes are tailored to meet these. Individual learning plans are not updated to take account of revised targets for learners, and learners' progress and achievements. Learners take part in a wide range of learning activities involving the good use of community resources and external speakers. Learners receive particularly good personal support. Their needs for help with literacy and numeracy are not addressed systematically enough.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management of training are satisfactory. Staff meet regularly to plan and exchange good practice and they are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Communications within the company and with external agencies are good. Managers make good use of data to identify trends. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. A clear policy on equal opportunities is applied effectively by staff and is understood by learners. Quality assurance arrangements are not yet properly developed. They do not cover many key training activities. Targets for improvement are not set. Feedback from learners is not analysed sufficiently. Staff are provided with a wide range of training activities to help them in their training and management roles.

**GRADES**

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	2

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

**KEY STRENGTHS**

- success of learners in progressing to jobs and further training
- effective development of learners' confidence and personal skills
- good variety of learning activities to meet individual needs
- good promotion of equal opportunities through training
- close involvement of all staff in development of provision

**KEY WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient help for learners with basic skills
- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- no quality assurance procedures for some key aspects of training

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- greater availability of work experience for learners in some centres
- greater emphasis on measuring learners' progress and target-setting during progress reviews
- focus staff development interviews more sharply on clear performance criteria

## THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Careers Partnership is a company based in Greater Manchester which provides Life Skills training through its five careerlines centres in Stretford, Openshaw, Wythenshawe, Ancoats and Stockport. It has been providing prevocational training since 1997. It is also the provider of careers advice and guidance to young people within the four local authority areas of Manchester, Salford, Tameside and Trafford. Fourteen full-time and four part-time staff carry out training. At the time of the inspection, 55 young people were undertaking Life Skills training with Careers Partnership.

2. Life Skills training is funded through a contract with the Greater Manchester office of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The unemployment rate in Manchester in June 2001 was 3.4 per cent compared with 3.7 per cent in the Northwest and 3 per cent in the country as a whole. The proportion of the population in Greater Manchester from minority ethnic communities is 5.9 per cent, compared with 12.6 per cent in Manchester and 2.4 per cent in Stockport. In September 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Manchester achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 30.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

## THE INSPECTION

3. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 11 days at Careers Partnership during August 2001. They interviewed 22 learners, conducted 12 interviews with Careers Partnership's staff. Inspectors observed nine training and assessment sessions. They examined a range of documents including learners' files of work, learners' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures and promotional literature. Inspectors studied Careers Partnership's self-assessment report which had been produced in February 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Foundation programmes	0	2	6	0	1	0	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Foundation programmes

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	55	2

4. Fifty-five learners are attending Life Skills training at Careers Partnership. Young people who join Life Skills are those who need additional support or guidance to help them to develop confidence and motivation and identify a career aim. Many of the learners have not attended school, or have not achieved qualifications at school. Some have attempted other training without success. Most have social and personal difficulties and need a great deal of help and support. At the time of inspection, training was provided at five locations across Greater Manchester. Training lasts for up to 12 weeks, but can be extended with the agreement of the local LSC. Learners must attend for a minimum of 16 hours a week. The training timetable lasts for 30 hours a week. Learners are encouraged to attend for the full 30 hours. The company aims to enable learners to progress to further training, further education or employment, preferably with training. The training includes activities to help learners become more confident, develop personal and interpersonal skills, learn about the world of employment and choose an occupation. It also aims to improve their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. The training is not designed to lead to qualifications. Their achievements are recognised through a skills profile accredited by an awarding body. Learners also receive certificates for attending short training events on, for example, resuscitation and basic food hygiene.

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

Foundation Programmes										
Foundation Programmes										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	41		156		232		229		0	0
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gained job with training/progressed to further training and/or planned learning completed	30	73	110	71	145	62	170	74	0	0
Left without either	11	27	46	29	87	38	59	26	0	0
Gained job with training	17	41	53	34	60	26	64	28	0	0
Progressed to further training	13	32	57	37	85	37	106	46	0	0



## **STRENGTHS**

- welcoming and stimulating learning environment
- good variety of learning activities to meet individual needs
- effective development of learners' confidence and personal skills
- good support for individual learners
- success of learners in progressing to jobs and further training

## **WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- some inadequate teaching of basic skills

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- greater emphasis on measuring learners' progress and target-setting during progress reviews
- greater availability of work experience for learners in some centres

5. The learning environment is welcoming and safe. The premises are located in accessible community buildings. Training rooms are attractive and well laid out. There is good use of wall displays to celebrate learners' achievements and reinforce key messages. For example, an atmosphere agreement reflecting the code of conduct agreed by each group is prominently displayed. Staff are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced. Training rooms are equipped with a good range of teaching equipment, including computers.

6. Inadequate use is made of learners' individual learning plans. Learners have their needs for additional learning support identified when they start their programme. Learners agree the content of the training programme and it is tailored to meet their needs. Individual training plans, however, lack detail and describe tasks to be undertaken rather than learning goals to be achieved. Without goals, the learners find it difficult to keep track of what they have achieved. Learners receive an initial assessment of their basic skills in order to identify those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy. In some centres, however, this assessment is insufficiently diagnostic. Staff carry out reviews of learners progress sensitively and they give learners support and encouragement. The progress reviews, however, do not focus sufficiently on learners' attainment of specific learning goals. During the reviews, learners are not set clear targets to be achieved by the time of the next review. The findings from, and decisions taken at, reviews are not recorded with sufficient thoroughness.

7. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the training programme involves learners in a good variety of appropriate learning activities to meet their individual

## CAREERS PARTNERSHIP

needs. These activities stimulate and capture the interest of learners. They include group activities, individual coaching, supervised individual tasks, games and discussions. Staff make good use of a broad network of contacts with external organisations to provide a programme of speakers and external visits. These help to break down barriers between young people and some agencies. The timetable is arranged flexibly to meet the changing needs of individuals. Learners learn a variety of skills in areas such as information technology, literacy, numeracy, first aid, essential food hygiene, health and safety and independent living. They also carry out jobsearch training and practise interview skills to help them obtain a job. An increasing number of learners have 'work tasters' with employers or occupational training providers. Procedures for arranging work experience are effective. Some learners at some centres, however, are not provided with any work experience.

8. The training is good. Learners are motivated and become more self-confident. Teaching and coaching are good. Of nine training and review sessions observed by inspectors, eight were judged to be good. Learners have high respect for the staff. Staff hold their attention and challenge them to attempt new tasks. During group training sessions, staff use a variety of appropriate teaching methods. They make the learners willing to take part in activities, such as discussions. Learners receive individual coaching. This helps them to become more self-confident and, in some instances, overcome their fear of failure. Staff encourage learners to use their initiative and work effectively on their own.

9. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, some teaching of basic skills is unsatisfactory. Activities to help learners improve their literacy and numeracy are included in the timetable. Learners work on assignments and staff give them help when they need it. There is, however, little variety in the learning activities and learners spend a disproportionate amount of time on worksheets. Few links are made between the learners' work in basic skills and other components of the training programme. Learners' progress in basic skills is not monitored systematically. The company has recently acquired some new learning materials for basic skills. Some staff are receiving training in the teaching of basic skills.

10. Individual learners receive good support. Staff identify learners' needs for support and respond to them promptly. Attendance is closely monitored. The boundaries of acceptable behaviour are clearly defined. Staff are highly skilled in dealing with learners who have behavioural problems. There are extensive links with support agencies including those involved in housing, criminal justice, drug abuse and alcohol abuse. Learners know where to go for help. Links between staff and outreach workers are used well to maintain contact with learners once they have left their programme.

11. Learners are successful in progressing to jobs and further training. During 2000-01 229 young people started training with the company. Of these, 170, or 74 per cent, progressed to employment, further education or training. Learners also complete modules in information technology, communications and personal skills and these lead to certification by an awarding body.

**Good Practice**

*At one centre, staff involve all learners in a group activity each week. During this activity, each learner's work during the previous week is reviewed and the learner is set targets to be achieved during the next week. Details of the work learners have to carry out are then displayed on the wall. This group activity is a means of enabling learners to support and help one another and it motivates them to achieve their learning goals.*

**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT****Grade 3**

12. Careers Partnership operates careerlines centres in Stretford, Ancoats, Openshaw, Wythenshawe and Stockport. Each centre has a team of three tutors except Stockport, which currently has two. Each of the tutors is assigned to work in one specific centre. Tutors, however, work with colleagues in other centres to cover for staff who are absent, and to share good practice. Tutors are responsible for the core elements of the programme. In addition, each tutor also takes responsibility for certain key aspects of provision such as basic skills or work experience. At the Ancoats centre, a part-time member of staff is responsible for arranging work placements for learners. Three development managers are responsible for the overall management of all five centres and the Life Skills programme. The development managers report directly to the director of policy and strategy for post-16 learning. Staff at the centres are able to use the company's financial accounting services and take part in training events for all of the company's employees. They also have access to information about local job opportunities for learners. The first self-assessment report with a supporting action plan was written in February 2001. The action plan was subsequently updated.

**STRENGTHS**

- close involvement of staff in planning and developing training
- effective communications
- good use of data
- extensive staff development programme
- effective promotion of equal opportunities programme through training

**WEAKNESSES**

- no quality assurance procedures for some key aspects of training
- insufficient analysis of feedback from learners

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- appraisal of staff against agreed targets and objectives

13. The three development managers work closely together on a number of projects which aim to improve provision. Each centre also has a designated member of staff responsible for key aspects of the programme, such as work experience, initial assessment and recruitment. Staff from the centres work together in small groups. The results of their work are then discussed at monthly joint meetings of all staff. There are a number of examples of improvements resulting from this team approach. A new 'work taster' pack has been developed and staff have been piloting the use of this since April 2001. Staff have a good understanding of work procedures and take pride in them. Staff were also closely involved in the production of the self-assessment report and in identifying strengths and weaknesses in provision.

14. Management data are used well. Every month, each centre produces performance data, including information on retention rates and learners' progression. Data are analysed by each centre and by the company as a whole. Action is taken on the data to improve provision. For example, following the monthly analysis of data, it was identified that the number of young people coming to the Ancoats centre fell during April and May, 2001. Discussions were held with staff, learners and representatives from careers offices to find out the reason for this. Further discussion at joint meetings of staff from the centres, highlighted the need for wide marketing of training and a review of the location of the Ancoats centre. Short-term action involved much wider marketing activity. There has been an increase in the recruitment of learners. Premises have been identified which the company believes will be more accessible for young people in the Ancoats area. The company collects recruitment data on the gender and ethnicity of learners and compares these with data for the area provided by the local LSC, and for the Northwest.

15. There are good communications within the company. Meetings take place regularly and these include joint centre meetings, management team meetings and senior management meetings. All meetings are minuted. A record is kept of action required. This gives the names of staff responsible for the action and the dates by which it must be carried out. All centres are linked by an e-mail system. The company has worked hard to establish and maintain strong links with external organisations. All centres have made contacts with a range of support agencies, and local community groups. Development managers attend meetings of these groups regularly to check that the company is providing services which meet the needs of the local community.

16. There is an extensive staff development programme. Staff engage in a wide range of training activities to help them in their job roles. These have included training in management skills, neuro-linguistic programming, support for learners with dyslexia, and quality assurance. The staff appraisal system has been changed recently. Most staff have yet to be appraised under the new system. Under this, staff have to appraise themselves against their own criteria and standards. The extent to which staff meet the objectives of their job role or agreed targets is not measured.

**Equality of opportunity**

**Contributory grade 2**

17. Careers Partnership has a thorough equal opportunities policy covering all aspects of the company's work. The Careerlines Centres work to this policy. Staff have produced an adapted version of it to make its key messages clear to learners. Learners are introduced to the policy during their induction and their understanding of it is tested. The policy is prominently displayed in training areas. Learners undertake activities designed to help them understand the policy better. For example, they explore why some jobs or work roles are often associated exclusively with men and others with women. Each group of learners devises an 'atmosphere agreement' setting out the rules of acceptable behaviour. This aims to help learners feel secure and develop respect for each other's needs. Tutors make good use of the agreement as a means of helping learners build up their confidence and self-esteem. There are clear policies and procedures for fair practice in the recruitment of staff. All staff are expected to undertake training on race and cultural awareness when they join the company. This is supplemented by a range of further training related to aspects of equal opportunities.

18. Outside speakers are made aware of the equal opportunities policy and have to undertake to comply with it while they are working with learners. Some steps are taken to ensure that workplace providers acknowledge equal opportunities issues. However adequate steps are not taken to ensure that they comply with the Careerlines policy. Data on gender, ethnicity and disability are collated and monitored carefully by managers. There is a clear grievance procedure which is well understood by learners. The very close relationships between tutors and learners mean that most issues are resolved informally without the need to use this procedure.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 3**

19. The organisation has a clear policy on quality assurance which managers have drawn up in consultation with staff. Work has begun on devising quality assurance procedures to cover all aspects of training in each of the centres. Currently, each centre has its own quality assurance arrangements. Staff have worked together to identify existing quality assurance procedures and are building on these. A timetable sets out the dates by which procedures should be developed and agreed. Some deadlines have not been met. To date, quality assurance procedures covering all centres have been established for recruitment and the initial assessment of learners. Staff are currently drawing up new quality assurance procedures to cover induction, reviews of learners' progress, work experience and individual learning plans. Targets for improvement are not set. Development teams working on a range of issues, have been successful in identifying and implementing necessary improvements. A scheme has been introduced whereby managers observe and evaluate training sessions. This has not been systematically planned, to ensure that tutors know when and by whom they will be observed.

20. All staff contributed to the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report was extremely thorough and inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in it. All staff are involved in monitoring the implementation of the action plan which accompanied the self-assessment report. In many instances, the weaknesses identified through self-assessment had been rectified by the time of the inspection.

21. The organisation has good arrangements for gathering feedback. Learners, external tutors and employers are asked to answer questionnaires about the quality of provision. Their responses are collated and summarised to identify improvements needed. Specific problems the responses raise, are resolved successfully. Managers, however, do not analyse the responses sufficiently to derive management information from them which can be used in future planning.

22. As a quality assurance initiative, managers encourage tutors from different centres to exchange roles in order to identify and share good practice and provide one another with help and support.