

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Milton Keynes Christian Foundation Limited**

10 June 2002



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 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
- **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.

## **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 Jobcentre Plus programmes 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

Milton Keynes Christian Foundation Limited provides training and support for young people and adults on foundation programmes within the Milton Keynes area. The company currently provides training for 32 young people under the Life Skills contract. There are 13 clients on New Deal programmes.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the foundation programme and the leadership and management are both adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. In particular there is a good programme for Life Skills learners. Equal opportunities provision is good. Quality assurance issues are satisfactory.

### GRADES

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

| Foundation programmes                           | 2    |
|---|------|
| Contributory grades:                            |      |
| New Deal 18-24                                  | None |
| Life Skills                                     | 2    |
| New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults | None |

### KEY STRENGTHS

- good pastoral support for learners
- well-resourced learning environment
- good progression of Life Skills learners into work and further training
- good rates of progression into jobs by New Deal 18-24 year olds
- good links with a wide range of organisations in the community
- good representation in training of excluded and under-represented groups

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ineffective target-setting for learners
- insufficient use of management information
- inadequate monitoring of work placements and subcontractors

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more systematic jobsearch for New Deal learners
- more structured gathering of feedback from work placement providers
- better understanding of equal opportunities by learners

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days with Milton Keynes Christian Foundation Limited (MKCF) during June 2002. They interviewed 12 learners, nine members of staff, and eight workplace supervisors, managers and employers. Inspectors also visited and interviewed an internal verifier at one of the subcontracted training companies. Inspectors observed and graded seven training sessions. The inspectors examined a range of paperwork, including nine portfolios of evidence, 25 individual learning plans, policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, staff curriculum vitae, management information, work-placement files, monitoring and review forms, previous self-assessment reports and learners' feedback questionnaires. They also studied the most recent self-assessment report, which was updated in May 2002 in preparation for the inspection.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

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

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. MKCF is a registered charity established in 1972 by an association of local churches. Since 1997, MKCF have been in their current training centre in Wolverton, near Milton Keynes. The company is involved in a number of community and regeneration projects, recycling schemes, a vegetarian restaurant and work to promote local economic development, including training. Many of its learners are having difficulties with, or failing to participate in, mainstream government-funded learning, further education, or cannot find employment because they have no training. At the time of the inspection, there were 32 learners on a Life Skills programme and 13 New Deal learners on the voluntary sector option, environment task force, or intensive activity programme for adults. Five Life Skills learners and all New Deal learners were on work placements with local companies. Training for New Deal learners is provided in computing, retailing, catering and business administration. Most learners are working towards qualifications below NVQ level 2. There are also three subcontractors who provide assessment and internal verification for learners working towards retailing and information technology (IT) national vocational qualifications (NVQs). There are seven full-time staff who have direct responsibility for learners. One of the directors has specific responsibility for the government-funded learning programme.

3. MKCF holds a contract with Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for young people, and with London and South East Region of Jobcentre Plus for New Deal learners. The unemployment rate in Milton Keynes is low, at 1.8 per cent in April 2002, compared with 3.1 per cent for England. According to the 1991 census, 4.6 per cent of the population in Milton Keynes are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 6.2 per cent for England. In 2001, 54 per cent of school leavers in Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the average for England of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of school leavers in Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire entering work-based learning is 7 per cent, which is lower than the average of 8 per cent for England.



## **New Deal 18-24**

4. The New Deal 18-24 programme is of a satisfactory standard. At the time of the inspection, there were eight New Deal learners. Seven clients were on the voluntary sector option and one on the environment task force. There is a particularly good rate of clients aged 18-24 who progress into jobs. Retention rates are good and have been improving over the past three years. They are particularly good on the environment task force option.

5. All clients are on work placements with local voluntary and public sector organisations, which have been matched carefully to the clients' development needs. Supervisors are very supportive and enthusiastic about developing clients' skills. Some learners are assessed before they start their training programmes, but the results of initial assessment are not used when agreeing their individual learning plans. The MKCF co-ordinator gives a good level of pastoral support to learners in the workplace, and visits them frequently for informal visits and more formal progress reviews. However, supervisors in the workplace are not involved formally in learners' progress reviews.

## **Life Skills**

6. Training in Life Skills is good. At the time of the inspection there were 32 Life Skills learners with MKCF. Twenty-two of them were on a programme designed to prepare them for further education or training, five were on work placements with local companies, and five were on a foundation for mums programme. All learners receive a good level of pastoral support, including counselling and help from external organisations. There is good progression into jobs and further training for Life Skills learners. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory and improving.

7. Most Life Skills learners attend the training centre, where they follow an individualised programme that meets their learning and development needs. Learners enjoy a wide range of activities which include art and sport together with computing, literacy and numeracy courses. A good proportion of learners achieve externally accredited literacy and numeracy qualifications and internally devised certificates for computing. There is careful matching of work placements to the development needs of the learners. Although learners who attend the training centre have received a thorough initial assessment, the five learners who are in work placements have not been assessed to identify their basic skills or specific learning needs. Most of the learning sessions observed by inspectors were good or very good. However, there are insufficient trainers with specific qualifications in basic skills training, which is a significant part of the learners' training programme.

### **New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults**

8. Training provision for this programme is satisfactory. There are five adults on an intensive activity programme. All learners are in work placements chosen to provide for their needs and interests. Trainers, co-ordinators and supervisors are supportive of the learners and keen to help them progress. Training and assessment targets are vague. Initial assessments do not give effective targets for literacy and numeracy training. New Deal clients over 25 years of age rarely visit the training centre. All their training takes place at work. Some learners do not have individual learning plans. All learners receive frequent and effective two-weekly visits at work to review their progress. This is a relatively new programme for MKCF, but retention and achievement rates are currently good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 3

9. MKCF is a charitable organisation, managed by a board, with four executive directors. The four executive directors are employed and managed by an association of local churches. The programme for government-funded learners is managed by one of the directors. The executive directors meet each month to discuss strategies for the organisation, including training, staffing, brochures, buildings and resources. Information from the executive directors' meetings is communicated to all staff at monthly team meetings. There are plans to recruit a team leader, but at the time of inspection, a team of trainers and co-ordinators was responsible for managing the learners' training programmes. This team meets each month to review all aspects of the training programmes, including the recruitment of learners, training, work placements, learners' progress reviews, equal opportunities and quality assurance. MKCF employs eight part-time staff and 24 full-time staff, seven of whom are responsible for government-funded learners. There are also three subcontractors who provide assessment and internal verification for the five New Deal clients working towards IT and retailing NVQs. MKCF has an equal opportunities policy and a complaints and appeals procedure. An annual review is published, showing the organisation's achievements, areas for development and financial statement. There is also an annual training team report that summarises the proposed areas for development. MKCF has written procedures for most of its activities, held in a quality assurance manual in the training centre. These procedures have been reviewed recently. MKCF's first self-assessment report was produced in May 1998, using the framework of the Training Standards Council's 'Raising the Standard'. Self-assessment has been carried out annually, and the report was updated in May 2002 in preparation for the inspection. The most recent self-assessment report is written using the 'Common Inspection Framework'.

### STRENGTHS

- good links with a wide range of organisations in the community
- good internal communication
- particularly productive and effective teamwork
- good representation in training of excluded and under-represented groups
- extensive staff involvement in developing programmes
- very effective self-assessment process

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of management information
- no formal monitoring of equality of opportunity
- insufficient emphasis on quality assurance of training process
- inadequate monitoring of work placements and subcontractors

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of staff's reviews and appraisals
- more formal identification of staff's training and development needs
- further staff training in equality of opportunity
- better understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- more structured gathering of feedback from work-placement providers

10. MKCF has established productive links with local community groups and external organisations. At one of the work placements, MKCF funds a supervisor's post, which enables learners who need an immediate work placement to be mentored appropriately in the workplace. Co-ordinators have developed, carefully and sensitively, a range of supportive work placements, through contact with voluntary sector organisations. Many organisations visit the training centre regularly to offer learners support and guidance with careers, and other personal issues. Good use has been made of a local support agency to help those learners seeking jobs for whom English is an additional language, which includes purchasing multilingual dictionaries and using local interpreters.

11. There are good communications within MKCF, through regular team and staff meetings and informal discussions between co-ordinators and trainers. Meetings result in action plans, where there is clear identification of responsibility, priority and timescales for identified actions. Staff are well informed about decision-making and feel involved in the development of the organisation. A weekly social event for staff and directors provides a good opportunity for less formal discussion of issues and concerns.

12. There has been excellent and productive teamwork involving all the staff in the learners' programme, including those who teach, supervise in-house placements and visit learners in work placements. Each week, all staff meet to plan common activities for the following week, including staff and physical resources and individual learner's issues or priorities. Staff have clear responsibility for their own aspects of the training programme and manage these areas consistently. The more experienced team members support new members of staff effectively. Staff have strong motivation for achieving the company's aims, goals and objectives.

13. There are frequent opportunities for staff to discuss and review issues and training needs with the director at six-weekly, three-monthly and yearly intervals. The results of these discussions are not consistently recorded. The annual appraisal is a written self-assessment by the employee and is now being revised to include formal input from the director. MKCF recognise this as an area for development and a member of staff has taken responsibility for reviewing the appraisal process. There has been extensive staff training, including NVQs in guidance, postgraduate qualifications, motivational interviewing techniques, psychometric testing, health and safety, computer courses and drug awareness. However, there is no staff training and development plan for the company. MKCF has introduced a skills gap analysis recently to identify staff development needs at an earlier stage.

14. MKCF has appropriate management information systems and makes some use of data relating to recruitment and achievements of externally accredited qualifications. There is insufficient use of management information relating to achievement and retention rates. These data are not collected, discussed or used routinely in meetings or management decision-making. MKCF have not set targets for improving these performance indicators, either for the company, teams or individual members of staff. The results of learners' questionnaires have been analysed, but there is insufficient evidence of how this procedure has brought about change within training programmes.

## Equality of opportunity

## Contributory grade 2

15. MKCF became involved in training to encourage young people who are excluded from training, education and employment opportunities. Its equal opportunities policy meets current legislation and learners receive a simplified version of the policy in their contract. Staff are committed to encouraging a diverse range of learners to participate in training. There is a completely open recruitment policy, where no learner has been denied a place on a training programme. Many learners are ex-offenders, have drug or alcohol dependency, are young mothers or homeless. Some have several of these barriers to learning and employment. All learners have additional learning or social needs and some have both.

16. The training centre is suitable for use by people with disabilities, with good access and facilities, including a hearing loop. Both men and women are well represented in learning programmes, with 43 per cent women and 57 per cent men. There is good participation by learners from minority ethnic groups, representing 5 per cent of all learners over the past three years. During the same period, 12 per cent of learners have declared a disability.

17. Equality of opportunity is promoted extensively in the training centre, through literature, posters and the learners' artwork. There is good access to advice and guidance on a wide range of social, economic, sexual and medical issues. Homeless learners can apply to stay in the company operated and staffed bed-sitting room scheme, which also has accommodation for people with disabilities. Two learners are currently using this scheme.

18. There is no formal monitoring of equal opportunities. During learners' progress reviews, there is no specific discussion of equality of opportunity with learners or supervisors. There is an over-reliance by co-ordinators on their perception of situations, with insufficient monitoring of the work placement's equal opportunities practices. Co-ordinators collect work-placement provider's policies, but do not always check that these meet legal requirements. While complaints are dealt with appropriately, they are not recorded effectively. There has been some staff training in specific issues like drugs, sexuality, mental health and disability, but not enough ongoing training about equality of opportunity in the general sense, for example legal requirements and monitoring of equality of opportunity.

19. Many learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities, including the complaints procedures, but some do not. Although all learners receive a simplified extract of the policy in their contract, some learners have little recollection of this, their rights and responsibilities, or how equal opportunities applies to them.

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

20. There is good staff involvement in identifying opportunities for development and bringing about changes to learning programmes. In particular, the progress review process and paperwork, and developing the induction process. Staff have good opportunities to share good practice at meetings and there has been sharing of good practice with a similar training organisation in London. Learners complete questionnaires every six months and on leaving their training programme, the results of which are analysed and discussed at team meetings. This analysis reveals a high level of learner satisfaction.

21. The self-assessment process includes all staff who meet to discuss the process, followed by a day where staff give their input. Self-assessment is well established and has evolved over the past four years into a sound process. There is clear identification through self-assessment of how training programmes have developed, including the use of in-house practical work placements for learners and the start of the Life Skills programme for young pregnant women. There is good use of action-planning as a result of meetings and self-assessment to develop training programmes. Data show that the learners' retention rate and the achievement rate of individual learning plans have improved over the past four years.

22. The main processes and paperwork used by staff are included in the quality assurance manual, which has been revised recently. However, there is an over-reliance on team meetings and self-assessment to quality assure training, with insufficient observation of training at the training centre and none in the workplace. Many new members of staff, who do not hold teaching qualifications, are giving training or teaching sessions without any monitoring or observation by trained teachers or the director. A checklist is completed for monitoring contract compliance, but not the quality of learners' individual learning plans, induction or progress reviews.

23. Work-placement supervisors' views are discussed during visits, but there is no routine or systematic collection of their feedback. Health and safety monitoring is carried out for work placements, but this is not always recorded appropriately. There is no ongoing monitoring or follow-up of actions identified through health and safety monitoring. There is insufficient quality assurance of the key processes provided by supervisors in the workplace, such as induction, training and support for learners. However, there are frequent visits to the work-placements by co-ordinators, at least every two weeks, where the learners' progress and role in the workplace is discussed. Co-ordinators respond swiftly to issues in the workplace and solve problems effectively.

24. As identified in the self-assessment report, there is insufficient monitoring of the three subcontractors, who assess and internally verify five of the New Deal clients. Trainers and co-ordinators do not monitor the rate of learners' progress with these subcontractors or the assessment process.

### Good Practice

*A theatre group visited learners and staff at MKCF. The play had been written to contain inappropriate wording, which the audience was asked to correct by interrupting. Once the revised text was agreed the play started again until the next interruption. At the end of the play all incorrect wording and references had been replaced by the suggestions agreed with the audience. This was an imaginative and involving way to challenge learners' views and beliefs.*



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Foundation programmes

Grade 2

| Programmes inspected                            | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| New Deal 18-24                                  | 8                  | None               |
| Life Skills                                     | 32                 | 2                  |
| New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults | 5                  | None               |

25. MKCF have 32 learners on Life Skills programmes and 13 on New Deal programmes. Within the Life Skills programme, there are five young pregnant women aged 15 to 18 years old, who are on a foundation for mums course. The remaining Life Skills learners are 16-18 year olds who are not taking advantage of government-funded training, education or employment. Most learners are referred to MKCF through the Connexions service, others hear about the training programmes through current or former learners. Five of the Life Skills learners are on work placements, which include a hotel, music company, electrical company and building maintenance at MKCF. All other learners attend the training centre in Wolverton, near Milton Keynes.

26. Training programmes are individualised, to meet learners' needs, and include literacy, numeracy, computing, sport, art and photography. All learners receive an appropriate induction and most work towards externally accredited literacy and numeracy qualifications. Learners can also join in-house work-placements with MKCF, working on recycling or regeneration projects. Training programmes generally last for up to 26 weeks, during which there are regular contributions from external agencies, including careers, counselling, and the youth information service. Learners on the foundation for mums programme receive ante-natal, post-natal and childcare training, and support with plans for continuing their education or training after giving birth. A team of four trainers and three co-ordinators trains, supports and develops learners. The co-ordinators have specific responsibility for learners on work placements.

27. On the New Deal programme, seven learners are on the voluntary sector option, one is with the environment task force and five are adults over 25 years of age on an intensive activity programme. New Deal clients are referred by Jobcentre Plus personal advisers, who complete some activities, such as initial assessment and jobsearch, before the clients join MKCF. All learners are in work placements, which include the local Council, an animal sanctuary, restaurant, shops and a design company. An MKCF co-ordinator has regular and frequent contact with clients, at least once every two weeks. Learners' progress reviews take place each month in the workplace. Five learners are working towards NVQ units in IT and retailing, which are assessed and internally verified through three subcontractors. Other clients have chosen to pursue courses like basic food hygiene, chainsaw and horticultural courses. At the time of inspection, most learners were working towards qualifications below level 2 NVQ. New Deal learners

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rarely visit the training centre, since training, support and jobsearch is given by either the co-ordinator or the workplace supervisor in the work placement.

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

| <b>Work-based learning for young people</b> |                |   |                |   |                  |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|--|
| <b>Life Skills</b>                          |                |   |                |   |                  |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
|   | <b>2001-02</b> |   | <b>2000-01</b> |   | <b>1999-2000</b> |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
|   | No.            | % | No.            | % | No.              | %  | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |  |
| Number of starts                            | 48             |   | 56             |   | 38               |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
| Retained*                                   | 29             |   | 0              | 0 | 17               | 45 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
| Successfully completed                      | 22             |   | 0              | 0 | 12               | 32 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
| Still in learning                           | 28             |   | 4              | 7 | 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

| <b>New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults</b> |                |    |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |
|--|----------------|----|----------------|---|------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|--|
| <b>New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults</b> |                |    |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |
|  | <b>2001-02</b> |    | <b>2000-01</b> |   | <b>1999-2000</b> |   | <b>1998-99</b> |   | <b>1997-98</b> |   |  |
|  | No.            | %  | No.            | % | No.              | % | No.            | % | No.            | % |  |
| Number of starts                                       | 13             |    |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |
| Retained*  | 8              | 62 |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |
| Planned learning completed                             | 8              | 62 |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |
| Gained job   | 1              | 8  |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |
| Still in training                                      | 5              | 38 |                |   |                  |   |                |   |                |   |  |

\*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

| <b>New Deal 18-24</b>      |                |    |                |    |                  |    |                |    |                |   |  |
|----------------------------|----------------|----|----------------|----|------------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|---|--|
| <b>New Deal 18-24</b>      |                |    |                |    |                  |    |                |    |                |   |  |
|                            | <b>2001-02</b> |    | <b>2000-01</b> |    | <b>1999-2000</b> |    | <b>1998-99</b> |    | <b>1997-98</b> |   |  |
|                            | No.            | %  | No.            | %  | No.              | %  | No.            | %  | No.            | % |  |
| Number of starts           | 12             |    | 28             |    | 24               |    | 53             |    |                |   |  |
| Retained*                  | 2              | 17 | 17             | 61 | 10               | 42 | 13             | 25 |                |   |  |
| Planned learning completed | 2              | 17 | 11             | 39 | 8                | 33 | 11             | 21 |                |   |  |
| Gained job                 | 0              | 0  | 16             | 57 | 14               | 58 | 19             | 36 |                |   |  |
| Still in training          | 8              | 67 | 0              | 0  | 0                | 0  | 0              | 0  |                |   |  |

\*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

## **STRENGTHS**

- good pastoral support for learners
- good matching of work placements to meet learner's needs
- good rate of progression into jobs for New Deal 18-24 clients
- well-resourced learning environment
- individualised learning programmes
- good achievement rate for internally and externally accredited qualifications
- particularly good progression of Life Skills learners into work and further training

## **WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate initial assessment of learners on work placements
- ineffective target-setting
- insufficient qualified basic skills trainers

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more involvement of workplace supervisors in learners' progress reviews
- more systematic jobsearch for New Deal learners

28. All learners benefit from a broad range of appropriate and effective pastoral support. Trainers, co-ordinators and supervisors are approachable and dedicated to helping learners to achieve and progress. Staff create a relaxed, yet effective atmosphere for learning. Many of the learners make good use of the external specialist agencies and organisations that visit the training centre regularly. Trainers on the Life Skills programme are well qualified in youth work, social work and counselling. The review process is exceptionally learner-centred, with a clear focus on personal development. In addition, informal support from staff helps to create a safe and secure environment.

29. There is careful matching of work placements to individual learners, their needs and interests. These work placements have been developed carefully over time and the team of three co-ordinators ensures that learners are placed appropriately. The co-ordinators accompany learners to interviews and help to find alternatives where the original selection is considered inappropriate to help them settle into the workplace. Some learners have been accompanied by their co-ordinator for several days. Many of the

work placements are selected specifically to develop learners' confidence and interpersonal skills. Learners express a high degree of satisfaction with their work placements. Workplace supervisors are very supportive and enthusiastic about developing learners' skills, but are not involved formally in learners' progress reviews or target-setting.

30. The self-assessment report recognised that a high percentage of the New Deal 18-24 learners find jobs. The rates for these learners progressing into jobs were 57 per cent in 2000-01 and 58 per cent in 1999-2000. Jobcentre Plus publishes a monthly regional comparison table, based on the previous 12 months' cumulative totals. MKCF frequently scores in the top 10 out of 45 training providers in the Southeast, and is sometimes second or third. MKCF has an unstructured approach to developing learners' jobsearch skills and where jobsearch support is provided, it is by the learner's supervisor or the visiting co-ordinator, rather than a planned programme.

31. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's findings that there are good, accessible premises that promote a positive attitude to training. The training centre is attractive and welcoming, furnished and equipped to commercial standards. Learners visit well-equipped external training providers for art, sport and carpentry. Examples of learners' work are displayed in the training centre reception area. Each morning starts with a sociable breakfast session provided by MKCF, where learners can discuss issues informally with trainers and co-ordinators before formal training starts. Learners attend the training centre outside their scheduled sessions and make good use of the facilities.

32. Learners and trainers agree an individual learning plan that reflects learners' abilities, interests, learning styles and needs. This includes a range of options where learners can choose subjects such as art, drawing, sport, or computing, according to their interests and needs. Learners are involved in devising their own learning plans and enjoy their programmes of learning.

33. Although it is not a required part of the training programme, all Life Skills learners are able to take externally accredited literacy and numeracy tests. Almost all learners work towards and achieve these qualifications and are motivated by this achievement. Also, learners receive internally awarded certificates for achievements in other areas, such as desktop publishing and web page design.

34. The number of Life Skills learners progressing to work or further training, is particularly good, as all learners have additional learning or social needs and some have both. Careers advice is available weekly at the training centre. Many Life Skills learners make use of this individual support.

35. All learners who attend the training centre have an initial assessment appropriate to their individual situation. In addition, every learner has an initial assessment completed by Connexions or Jobcentre Plus advisers before being referred to MKCF. The results of initial assessment are not always used to draw up individual learning plans for learners on work placements. There is no initial assessment of basic skills for any of the learners

on placement. Some New Deal clients have literacy or numeracy learning needs, but were not receiving appropriate support at the time of inspection.

36. There are well-defined targets for personal development on learners' individual learning plans and reviews. However, targets relating to training, learning, achievement of qualifications and assessment are weak. The initial targets are not detailed sufficiently to allow effective monitoring during the progress review process. Targets are too vague, with insufficient separation of learning and personal development targets. Initial assessment in basic skills is used to identify the learner's level, but not to produce detailed or effective targets for literacy and numeracy training.

37. At the time of the inspection, none of the four Life Skills trainers had a qualification in teaching basic skills. The basic skills element of the Life Skills programme is substantial. This has been recognised in the self-assessment report as a weakness and action is planned through staff appraisals. One of the basic skills sessions observed by inspectors was unsatisfactory.

#### Good Practice

*Learners on the foundation for mums programme receive weekly sessions on ante- and post-natal care and baby care. These are given by one of the midwives from the ward in which many of them will give birth. The midwife meets with these learners each week to discuss the various stages of pregnancy and any issues and problems that they may be encountering. There is an excellent relationship between the learners and the midwife. Learners become confident about giving birth and coping with the unfamiliar environment of the hospital.*