

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Metropole College Ltd

22 April 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
- the University for Industry's **learn**direct 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

Metropole College Limited is a private training company situated in the London Borough of Westminster. The college provides training for unemployed adults through a contract with Jobcentre Plus. There are 22 learners on short job-focused training programmes working towards information technology qualifications, and 108 learners on basic employability training programmes working for qualifications in literacy and English language. Metropole College has 118 learners registered for jobsearch with its programme centre. It also provides training for 43 learners through a contract with the European Social Fund. The college has three training centres.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the leadership and management of Metropole College are unsatisfactory. The training on foundation programmes is unsatisfactory, but the training in information technology is satisfactory.

### GRADES

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

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	4
Programme Centres	4

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- high rate of retention
- good individual support for learners
- very good individual training in information technology
- strong inclusive culture
- good links with a range of other organisations

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient focus placed on learners achieving jobs
- ineffective use of initial assessment
- poor teaching for some learners
- insufficient jobsearch
- poor communications
- weak reviews of staff performance

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- further development of learners' feedback

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Metropole College Ltd (Metropole College), in April 2002. They visited all three training centres and interviewed 77 learners. They conducted 31 interviews with members of Metropole College's staff, and interviewed one Jobcentre Plus employee. Inspectors examined learners' files and 18 portfolios of evidence. They studied the self-assessment report and a wide range of other evidence including minutes of meetings, management information, contracts, policies and written procedures. Inspectors observed 17 learning sessions, three reviews and two initial interviews. They graded the learning sessions.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3
Foundation programmes	0	0	4	4	3	3	0	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. Metropole College was founded in 1994 by the current principal, to teach English to overseas students. It has provided government-funded training for unemployed adults since January 2000. Since April 2001, the college has had two contracts with Jobcentre Plus. These are to provide English and literacy training for adults on basic employability programmes, and information technology (IT) training to adults on short job-focused training programmes. In September 2001, the college was awarded a contract with Westminster Jobcentre Plus to provide jobsearch through a programme centre. In addition to the government-funded programmes, Metropole College offers training to the local community and to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. A large proportion of the learners are asylum seekers and refugees. Some learning is funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). The college runs private courses for overseas learners. The increasing number of learners has resulted in a rise in the number of staff, from eight in January 2000 to 31 in April 2002.

3. Metropole College is situated in the London Borough of Westminster, close to Edgware Road and Paddington. Its training programmes are run from three separate sites, within a short walking distance of each other. The main office is in Praed Street where most of the English, literacy and basic skills training takes place. Some literacy and English training takes place at another site, which is shared with the programme centre. IT training is given on the third site. There are 118 learners registered at the programme centre, 22 at the IT training centre and 108 on basic employability training. There are 43 learners funded by ESF of whom three are on IT training courses, while the remaining 40 are on basic employability training.

4. Westminster had a population of 174,869 at the time of the 1991 census. It contains some of the most expensive homes in the country, but in some wards, over 90 per cent of the population are living in poor-quality housing and claiming housing benefits. In December 2000, a home office report showed that there were over 55,000 asylum seekers and refugees in the area. The 1991 census shows that 21.4 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups, and a recent survey of Paddington schools found that 86 per cent of pupils are from these groups. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 39 per cent in Westminster, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

5. Westminster has a low unemployment rate, compared with the rest of London. In October 2001, the national unemployment rate was 2.9 per cent, the rate in London was 3.3 per cent, and the rate in Westminster was 0.7 per cent. However, there are a few wards in the district where unemployment is significantly higher than the average. Most jobs in the Westminster district are in the financial and business services sectors. There is also employment in public and social services and the retailing, hotel and catering



sectors. A report in February 2001, produced by the City of Westminster showed that 13 per cent of employers identified a lack of general communication skills, computer literacy, personal, customer handling and literacy skills among potential recruits.

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

6. Retention rates on the basic employability programmes and short job-focused training programmes are very high, with most learners completing the programmes. Most learners develop new skills in the subjects they are taught. Not all learners work towards externally accredited qualifications, but in IT most learners achieve units of qualifications.

7. The quality of individual teaching in the IT training centre is very good. However, the group teaching, both in IT and foundation programmes, is sometimes poor. Individual learning needs are not adequately identified at the start of the programmes. The reviews of progress focus on tasks that the learners need to carry out. They do not include action to develop interpersonal and work-related skills. There are few opportunities for learners to gain work experience. Insufficient time is given to structured jobsearch, and the learners do not make effective use of the programme centre.

### **Programme Centres**

8. The programme centre was established in September 2001. It is in well-furnished accommodation, with adequate jobsearch facilities for jobseekers from a wide range of backgrounds. The induction programme and initial training for learners is not satisfactory. Individual learners' development needs are not properly identified. The reviews of progress focus on the number of job applications made, rather than the development of skills to help find and maintain employment. There is good individual support. However, there are often too many learners in the programme centre for the tutors to give enough time to individuals. Staff do not have the skills necessary to give advice and guidance to all learners. The programme centre is well organised and managed. A comprehensive database is used effectively to monitor learners' attendance at the centre and to follow their progress after they leave. There are few links with local employers to enable learners to obtain information on local job vacancies. The rate of achievement of jobs is low.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

9. Metropole College is a company limited by guarantee. The principal and the operations manager are responsible for strategic planning, quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The college is split into three departments and each is managed separately. There is currently a vacancy for a manager in the English department. There is one tutor and one volunteer in the programme centre. Five tutors and one volunteer work in the IT training centre, and 17 tutors work in the English department. There is a project manager for the ESF and SRB programmes, and three administrative staff. The college has a business plan and a delivery plan. The business plan incorporates the promotion of equal opportunities as part of its mission statement. The operations manager has been in post since November 2001, and has developed a range of quality assurance policies and procedures. The equal opportunities policy has been updated and data are collected on the ethnic origin and gender of learners. Fortnightly management meetings were introduced in January 2002 to review management of the programmes and quality assurance. The college produced its second self-assessment report in January 2002. This was written to reflect the requirements of the 'Common Inspection Framework', and all the staff contributed to it.

### STRENGTHS

- clear strategic direction and policies
- strong inclusive culture
- good links with a range of other organisations
- thorough self-assessment process

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient focus placed on learners achieving jobs
- poor communications
- inadequate induction for staff and learners
- weak reviews of staff performance
- lack of resources for some learners
- inadequate use of data

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of learners' feedback
- more structured support for people with disabilities

10. Metropole College has clear strategic direction and policies. The principal and the senior management team have the clear aim of providing training and skills development to socially excluded groups of adults in the local community. The business

plan and objectives have been established. The college has prepared a detailed delivery plan, which is updated every quarter. The delivery plan includes details of staff training and development to meet the needs of the business. In the last three months, all the staff in the English department have completed a three-day course on the new core curriculum. The college's policies and procedures clearly focus on the learners and the training processes. However, many of the teaching staff are not aware of the business plan, or its objectives and policies.

11. The college provides a safe and welcoming environment for learners from disadvantaged groups. The staff at the college come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. The principal is very supportive of learners. All staff provide high levels of support for learners with additional needs, and many are able to discuss and resolve issues in the learners' first language. The college supports cultural diversity, and the learners and staff are representative of the local communities.

12. There is insufficient focus on learners achieving jobs. Targets for the proportion of learners finding full-time employment are set in the delivery plan for the business. No targets have been set for the English and IT departments, or for individual staff. Many staff are unaware that the main aim of the training programmes is to help learners gain full-time employment. The programme centre is not used effectively by learners on other training programmes to carry out jobsearch activities. There is little effective following up of learners after they complete the programmes. Learners are only contacted when the jobcentre tells the college that they are no longer claiming job seeker's allowance. There is no record of learners who achieve jobs after the funded period.

13. There are three departments in Metropole College, which are managed separately. The self-assessment report recognised that communication between the departments is poor. Senior management team meetings were introduced in January 2002 to improve communications. There are few structured meetings for all staff. Staff in different departments have no opportunity to discuss common issues and share information. Internal communications are generally poor. Many staff are unaware of recent changes and developments. Staff are unsure of the requirements of the programmes they are teaching.

14. Induction for learners and staff is poor. Learners are given a briefing on the training and some written information. This does not adequately prepare them for the programmes. Six new teaching staff started in January 2002. There was no structured induction for them, and the handbook they were given is out of date. The operations manager has designed a new staff induction procedure, but no staff have yet received this. Staff are unaware of the college's procedures and their rights and responsibilities. Although they have been given updated job descriptions, these have not been discussed in detail and individual training needs have not been identified. In one department, there are no staff who fulfil the essential person specifications for their job.

15. The college has started to implement a staff performance review and appraisal

system, but so far not all staff have been reviewed. Little training and development has been given to prepare staff for the reviews. The staff review does not include any key performance targets. Managers' comments are very general and there is poor identification of individual development needs. There are few timescales set for achievement of any personal objectives. Individual training and development needs are not incorporated into the college's staff training and development plan.

16. There is a lack of resources for some learners. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Metropole College has grown substantially in the past year and is currently operating from three separate sites. On one site, the training rooms are too small for the number of learners. There are no IT resources for learners on the basic employability training programmes. There is insufficient equipment and training resources for the current number of learners. In the programme centre, there are not enough staff to support the number of learners attending. Metropole College has been advertising for new staff for some time but has been unable to find anyone suitable. The principal is currently looking for premises which will allow all training programmes to be located together.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 3**

17. Metropole College's equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and it is reinforced by a full range of procedures. The policy is well written and reflects the positive attitude the college has towards learners, staff and the wider community. The college principal is responsible for implementing the policy and ensuring that it is reviewed annually. However, the policy is new and it is too early to judge its impact or effectiveness. The college has a spirit of equality of opportunity. Learners and staff, including the college principal, come from a very wide range of countries, cultures and ethnic communities. There are learners from 29 different countries. Staff reflect this diversity of cultures and backgrounds, and between them speak a total of 17 languages. There is a balance of men and women in a variety of roles in the company.

18. The college has many links with organisations working with under-represented groups. This includes national and local community-based organisations. The college uses additional resources from the ESF to provide training for refugees. In addition, there are links with other organisations such as housing organisations and hostels, specialist organisations linked to ethnic communities, and medical organisations associated with victims of torture. Staff can refer learners for specialist support. However, no targets are set to increase participation or improve access for under-represented groups or communities. Metropole College gathers information on the gender, age and ethnicity of learners. This is collated monthly. The college has recently started to analyse the data and identify trends. However, no action has yet been taken to improve training or rectify any imbalances. No data are collected about disability. There is limited access to two of the three sites for people with mobility problems. All the college's training rooms are located on either on the first floor or in a basement area. Only one site has appropriate toilet facilities. There is no specialist equipment to support learners with particular learning needs or different learning styles.

19. Induction training on equality of opportunity for learners and staff is ineffective. Most learners have great difficulty recalling any information they were given on equal opportunities, either at induction or during training. During induction, learners are given a pack which contains information on the company's complaints and disciplinary procedures. There is no copy or summary of the equal opportunities policy in the pack. Learners have to ask staff for a copy of the policy and procedures. Most have little understanding of how equality of opportunity relates to their training. Learners have very little awareness of their rights and responsibilities relating to equality of opportunity.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 4**

20. Metropole College has introduced a range of quality assurance arrangements. In January 2002, the quality assurance policies and procedures were reviewed and updated. They now focus on the key activities in the learning process. Not all the procedures have been implemented effectively. The college recognises the need to improve the quality of initial assessments and progress reviews. Senior staff and administrators audit learners' files to ensure that all information is accurately recorded. The frequency of the audits is not clearly defined, and there is no overall plan in place for the different departments. A continuous improvement group was established in January 2002 to allow tutors from each department to discuss and review the quality assurance procedures and share good practice. However, this group has only met twice. Quality assurance is discussed at monthly management meetings and is part of the delivery plan for the business. The actions identified in the delivery plan are reviewed and updated quarterly.

21. Metropole College has a well-defined self-assessment process, which is managed by the operations manager. All staff are involved. They complete questionnaires that have been designed to reflect the requirements of the 'Common Inspection Framework' and the contracts with Jobcentre Plus. Issues are discussed at focus group meetings and senior management meetings before a draft self-assessment report is prepared for comments and feedback. A detailed development plan is produced to act on the findings in the self-assessment report. The college accurately identified all its strengths and most of its weaknesses. However, the poor teaching in some areas was not identified. There is currently no systematic observation of teaching sessions. Some observations have taken place, but the findings do not clearly identify areas for improvement. Feedback is not always given to tutors or recorded. There is little quality assurance of the training materials used by tutors.

22. Metropole College identified in the self-assessment report that it does not make adequate use of data to plan the continuous improvement of training. Some targets for improvement are included in the development plan, but there is insufficient monitoring of progress towards achieving them. There are no targets relating to learners' achievement of jobs or learning aims, or retention rates. Few data are collected or used to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken. Little information is gathered and recorded on learners when they leave the programmes. Learners are invited to attend an exit interview, but few attend and the information gathered is not collated centrally. There is no analysis of data on leavers to identify trends over time or areas for improvement. Learners are asked to give feedback through monthly questionnaires. The responses are used to evaluate the overall satisfaction levels. The questionnaires are not appropriate for learners who have severe problems reading English. The college is aware of this and plans to improve them.

### Good Practice

*Metropole College offered free English training to the wife of a learner so she would be able to communicate with the teachers at her children's schools and to shop with confidence. The times of the training were adjusted to fit with her domestic commitments.*

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	22	3

23. Metropole College offers short job-focused training in IT for adults. Most of the training takes place in a purpose-designed room in a separate building near the main college offices. Induction and introductory training in the use of the Internet and e-mail takes place at the programme centre. The training centre is managed by a full-time manager and there is a team of five trainers and one volunteer. The trainers are occupationally qualified in a range of computer techniques and software programmes. There are 22 Jobcentre Plus learners and three learners funded by the ESF. All are working towards a basic computer literacy qualification at level 1. The IT centre also provides training for those seeking qualifications or experience in website design and computer software programming. For ESF learners there is also an opportunity to work towards a diploma in IT at level 2. The overall training programme is offered for a period of at least 21 hours each week, for a maximum of six weeks. During this time, all learners receive training in jobsearch techniques.

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

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	226		68							
Retained*	191	85	60	88						
Planned learning completed	121	54	41	60						
Gained job	18	8	7	10						
Still in training	22	10	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

- very good individual training
- good IT resources in training centre
- good achievement of learning aims
- high rate of retention

## WEAKNESSES

- few learners gaining jobs
- insufficient jobsearch
- poor group training at one site
- inadequate use of individual learning plans

24. Individual training is very good. There is a high ratio of trainers to learners, with approximately one staff member to every four learners. Training staff are highly aware of the barriers that many of the learners face, especially those for whom English is not their first language. Close attention is paid to individual needs. Learners receive a detailed and easy to use workbook for each part of their programme. There are workbooks on word processing, spreadsheets and databases. Learners are able to keep these workbooks when they leave the course. Learners attract the trainer's attention when they need help, but in most cases, the trainers are already aware of individuals' needs and react promptly with good advice and guidance.

25. There are good resources available at the IT centre. Staff are knowledgeable and work well with learners from a range of backgrounds. There are 30 good-quality personal computers as well as printers and scanners. The training centre is busy but well organised, and provides a good environment for learners to make progress. Learners are encouraged to take frequent breaks from the computer. There is good attention to safe working practices, with anti-glare screens and appropriate furniture and lighting being provided. Learners are able to gain a range of IT skills. They learn to use e-mail and create web pages, as well as using programmes for photo editing, graphics, presentations and office work. Learner's progress is closely monitored, and appropriate individual targets are set. Some of the training leads to externally validated qualifications, and some is intended to give learners confidence in the use of computers. In all cases, learners' knowledge is carefully checked, and their work is printed. Many learners do not have a computer at home and have not used one before. The college sets demanding targets, and most learners quickly achieve a good level of competence.

26. Achievement rates are good in all areas. The short job-focused training programme does not require learners to achieve a qualification. Commendably, of the 226 Jobcentre Plus learners who began training in 2001-02, almost 60 per cent have achieved the full basic IT qualification at level 1. Of the 14 learners on the programme partly funded by ESF, 80 per cent achieved their training aim and three gained a diploma in IT at Level 2. The learners whose main aim was to gain single units in word processing, databases or spreadsheets also achieved well. Eighty-one per cent successfully completed training in word processing, and 70 per cent gained other units. The achievement rate for learners in graphics and website design was 100 per cent. Retention rates were good in all programme areas. Of the 226 learners who began training in 2001-02, only 15 per cent left their programmes early. All learners working towards website design or associated software programming completed the programme. However, very few learners achieve jobs within 13 weeks of leaving the programme. Only 8 per cent of learners who left the programme notified the college that they had gained paid employment. Jobcentre Plus has set the national target for job achievement on this type of programme at 45 per cent.

27. The main aim of the short job-focused training programme is for the learners to obtain employment. Insufficient attention is paid to this. Trainers receive little direction from managers about the main purpose of the training. They believe they should concentrate on information and communication technology training rather than helping learners to gain work. Learners are taught how to use the Internet and a specially devised jobsearch website, but time spent on this and other jobsearch activities is limited to a few hours each week. Local employers are not involved with the college, and there are no opportunities for work placements or work trials. The college does not check whether learners gain employment after they leave.

28. The organisation of training at one site is poor. There is a weekly session for each group of new learners at which they are taught how to use the Internet, open an e-mail account and send copies of their curriculum vitae to prospective employers. Learners do not have access to computers during the training session. There is little activity or involvement by learners. The training notes do not contain key information about how to attach the curriculum vitae when sending an e-mail to a prospective employer. Learners are not told how to request an electronic receipt from e-mail recipients. The wording of the training notes is complex and full of jargon. There is little checking of learners' understanding. Projector equipment is underpowered and images cannot be seen on the screen in bright sunlight. Window blinds are inadequate and the room is poorly ventilated.

29. Individual learning plans are not comprehensive or useful documents. There is no space to record learners' previous qualifications and experience. Some forms have not been properly reproduced and have sections missing. Information gathered during the initial interview is not fully recorded. Some learners are given tests for literacy and numeracy but the results are not always passed to the college by the testing organisation, and learners are not aware of the results. Some learners are

inappropriately referred for short job-focused training in IT when their main aim for employment does not involve the use of IT. There is no record of any additional support required or given.

## Foundation programmes

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	108	4
Programme Centres	118	4

30. Metropole College offers two kinds of training for learners on foundation programmes. Basic employability training lasts for up to 26 weeks and is aimed at learners who experience serious barriers to employment, including poor basic skills and poor written and spoken English. The learners carry out 21 hours' activity each week. Programme centre training lasts an average of 10 weeks, and is focused on developing individual jobsearch skills and helping learners gain employment. Learners attend the programme centre for an average of six hours each week. Learners are referred to both programmes by advisers at jobcentres, or by organisations involved with refugees or the local community. There are 118 learners registered with the programme centre, and 108 learners on basic employability training of whom 17 are New Deal 25+ clients. There are also 40 learners on basic employability training who are partly funded by the ESF. Most learners do not speak English as their first language, and many come from local refugee communities. Some learners have professional qualifications from their country of origin, while others have missed out on much of their education. The basic employability training is carried out at two different sites. The courses offered include basic skills, pre-entry literacy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) at entry levels 1, 2 and 3. Staff from the college interview all applicants before they begin their training, and an individual learning plan is prepared. Training starts with an induction course at which each learner is given information about health and safety, the complaints procedure and other college policies. Individual learning plans are reviewed every six weeks with the learners to ensure that progress is being made.

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

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	279		234							
Retained*	116	42	214	91						
Planned learning completed	44	16	128	55						
Gained job	25	9	14	6						
Still in training	108	39	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

Programme Centres										
Programme Centres										
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	421									
Retained*	166	39								
Planned learning completed	134	32								
Gained job	32	8								
Still in training	118	28								

\*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

- high rate of retention on basic employability training programmes
- good individual support for learners
- well-organised programme centre

## **WEAKNESSES**

- poor teaching for some learners
- ineffective use of initial assessment
- inadequate action-planning and target-setting in reviews
- insufficient focus on jobsearch
- inadequate links with employers

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more specialised publications in the programme centre

31. Retention rates for learners on the basic employability training programme are high. In 2000-01, 91 per cent of learners stayed on the course until the end of the planned learning programme. Fifty five per cent of learners starting on the programme achieved an accredited qualification.

32. Learners receive good individual support from staff at the college, which they value very highly. Staff are positive and helpful, and spend extra time with learners who have particular personal problems and additional learning needs. Learners are treated with respect and any problems are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. In some teaching sessions, volunteers are used effectively to support individual learners. In one lesson, a learner who had a broken arm was helped by a note taker. Volunteer interpreters are used to help learners whose English is poor.

33. The programme centre manager has set up a comprehensive database to record learners' activities. The data are produced in a readily accessible format. The manager is able to produce daily lists of learners, and attendance registers for morning or afternoon sessions. Learners' review dates are clearly highlighted on daily printouts. Data are readily available on learners who have left the programme centre early, as well as those who have completed their programme or gained employment. The manager is able to provide accurate and up-to-date information on all learners.

34. Some teachers have a very good rapport with learners and are very skilled at managing the groups to make learning sessions varied, lively and interesting. However, most teaching sessions lack variety in the teaching methods used, and learners have little involvement in the activities. In some sessions, learners are not encouraged to take notes or to take an active part in the session. The pace of training sessions is often inappropriate to meet the needs of individual learners. Trainers often move from topic to topic without checking learners' understanding. One trainer showed learners a video

clip about an employer processing job applications, but this was not used to reinforce learning about how to write application letters. Some methods used to teach literacy skills are inappropriate. Most of the materials used are not specific enough, and some handouts and worksheets are very poorly presented. Some are poorly photocopied and others contain spelling and grammatical errors. No use is made of IT to assist and promote learning in ESOL. There are no clear aims and objectives to most of the teaching sessions.

35. Learners in the programme centre are not given an initial assessment to identify their individual learning needs. The Jobcentre Plus advisers do not always pass on information to Metropole College about individual learners' needs, or the barriers they may face. On the basic employability training programme, college staff interview all learners and begin to identify learning needs, previous work experience, qualifications and personal development needs. This information is recorded on individual learning plans. However, there is no detailed analysis or diagnostic assessment. Learners are not set specific short-term targets, and individual learning plans do not contain clear objectives.

36. At the programme centre, learners' progress is reviewed at the end of the first week, at six weeks and before they leave the programme. Reviews are used to record information on jobsearch activities carried out, the number of job applications made and further action to be taken by the learner. The action-planning frequently focuses on curriculum vitae writing and jobsearch activities. The reviews do not always emphasise interpersonal skills, motivation and work ethics. These skills are frequently discussed informally, but are not recorded as areas for development on the review documents. Some learners are identified as needing help in communication, writing and reading. There is no clear action to meet these needs, and no short-term targets are agreed or recorded. College staff review the progress of learners on the basic employability training programme every six weeks. On both foundation programmes, the focus of the review is on completing tasks rather than on specific individual needs. The review forms do not provide any space to record agreed actions or set target dates for completion.

37. Jobsearch is not promoted as an integral part of the basic employability training programmes, and most learners are unaware that it is a key component. Staff are beginning to incorporate job-seeking activities into their teaching, but these are underdeveloped and there is still too little emphasis on this area. Teaching staff are unaware of what happens during the timetabled jobsearch sessions and do not know whether the learners attend. There are no structured links between jobsearch and language teaching. The small number of learners who do attend the jobsearch sessions find the activities dull and uninteresting. The programme centre has an adequate range of free facilities for learners to use for jobsearch, including office equipment, computers, and national and local newspapers. There is only a small selection of specialist publications available to people seeking jobs in specific industries.

38. There are few links with employers who might offer appropriate work experience or work placements to learners. A few learners in the programme centre work as

classroom assistants in ESOL classes to help those with language difficulties. Although the programme centre has links with some employers, there is no local network to give learners access to local job vacancies. The college does not liaise with any business groups or employers' forums to help it understand the needs of local businesses. The programmes offered are not reviewed to take account of any local skill shortages. Few learners from the basic employability training programme or the programme centre gain jobs. Since September 2001, 421 learners have registered with the programme centre, of whom 118 are still registered and 32 have gained employment.

#### Good Practice

*Through the support and encouragement of Metropole College, a learner became a volunteer in one of the English literacy classes. He was successful and enjoyed the role so much that he went on to gain teacher training qualifications and is now a tutor himself.*

#### Poor Practice

*Learners were copying words from the whiteboard so they could then go on and learn how to spell them correctly. The letters in the words were unclear and poorly formed. The letter 'a' looked like a 'u'. As a result, some learners copied the words incorrectly.*