

INSPECTION REPORT

Tendring District Council Reinspection

17 September 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. 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 **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

SUMMARY

The provider

Tendring District Council is based at Clacton-on-Sea in northeast Essex. Its training department, Career Track, provides workplace learning for young people in business administration which is funded through Essex Learning and Skills Council. There are 31 learners working towards business administration national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 or 3. Eighteen learners are in work placements in various departments of the district council and 13 placed with local employers in the Tendring area.

A full-time programme manager manages Career Track and reports to the training and development manager of the council. Three members of staff, two of whom are full time and one part time, provide the off-the-job training. Of these three members of staff, two are qualified assessors and internal verifiers and the other is working to become a qualified assessor.

Overall judgement

The ALI's inspection in April 2001 found that the work-based learning and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. However, leadership and management and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, work-based learning was found to be good, as were leadership and management and equality of opportunity. Quality assurance was satisfactory.

Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
Leadership and management	4	2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	3	2
Quality assurance	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
Business administration, management & professional	3	2
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	2

TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL REINSPECTION

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective leadership and management of training
- well-structured training programmes
- thorough and effective progress reviews

KEY WEAKNESSES

- learners' slow progress on foundation modern apprenticeships

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of available data for management decisions
- clearer plans for assessment

THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of Tendring District Council (the council) was conducted in five stages. A total of 9.5 inspection days were used. The first visit was on 7 September 2002, followed by visits on 7 November, 5 December, 8 and 9 January 2003 and the final stage on 26 and 27 March 2003. One observation of training took place which was good. Career Track had prepared a self-assessment report with a development plan which was updated for inspectors to examine at each visit.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- effective leadership and management of training
- good use of development plans
- particularly effective range of policies and strategies
- good equality of opportunity policy and practice

WEAKNESSES

- poor access and facilities for those with limited mobility

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of available data for management decisions

2. Since the original inspection, Career Track no longer uses subcontractors for training. The chief executive of the council takes a positive interest in all of Career Track's training activities and this has raised the company's profile. Career Track has clearly stated objectives in the council's performance plan. There is an excellent focus on retention and achievement rates. A detailed analysis of all learners who have left early during the past three years has been conducted and the reasons why learners have left. Particular trends have been identified and further analysis is being carried out. The underlying causes and problems are being dealt with efficiently and effectively to improve the quality of the training provision. Career Track has been asked to present details of regeneration projects and partnerships to widen participation to the council's senior management. Career Track manages its training with particular emphasis on what is happening with the learner. Training is well planned with detailed timetables for the forthcoming nine months.

3. The use of management information systems has now reached a satisfactory level. All staff have access to information about learners. Some information is kept on word documents and managers are not always able to access it.

4. Career Track has set up strong links with a local adult community college and with an organisation which provides numeracy and literacy training in a deprived area of the district. This ensures that any learner who is identified as needing additional numeracy or literacy support has immediate help. This strategy was devised as there are few training staff within the organisation and they do not have the specific skills required.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

5. Career Track has produced an excellent equal opportunities policy which is now being used in other departments of the council. It is effectively linked to the council's development plan of widening participation to increase the number of learners in rural areas. The policy clearly identifies the need to change attitudes and culture. Career Track makes use of the council's excellent links with other local organisations to offer help and guidance to learners. The policy is appropriate to the area where there is a particular emphasis on regeneration and social inclusion.

6. Career Track positively markets its training provision to rural areas, in line with the council's performance plan. There is a target of 19 learners from rural areas to reach by the end of 2003. At the time of reinspection, 13 learners are from rural areas. Equal opportunities data are collected and analysed for all learners on ethnicity, gender and disabilities. The self-assessment report noted a gender imbalance, which was identified during analysis of equal opportunities data. There is a target of 15 per cent male learners by the end of 2003; at the time of reinspection, 13 per cent of learners are men. Less than 1 per cent of Tendring's population are from minority ethnic groups. All promotional literature contains positive statements to encourage applicants from diverse groups within the community. To encourage more men into training, Career Track has targeted the local leisure centres. Equality of opportunity is a standard agenda item at all learners' reviews, weekly staff meetings and employers' forums. Equality of opportunity awareness and understanding by all involved with training has considerably improved since the previous inspection. Staff training has taken place to enable staff to clearly differentiate between equality and diversity and giving support to learners. Consequently, if there are any misunderstandings with learners staff are able to ensure that they are able to give clear explanations.

7. There is no access to the training rooms for those with limited mobility. All training rooms are on the first floor with only a staircase. There are poor facilities, for example, no evacuation chair is available and in some cases doors are kept open by bricks. All initial interviews take place in the town hall where, again, there is limited access for those with mobility difficulties. These weaknesses were clearly identified in the self-assessment report.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

8. Career Track has produced a particularly effective and well-written range of policies and strategies to improve the quality of learning and learners' experience. Employers are involved in the development of the policies and use them at work. There are policies on marketing and recruitment supported by an excellent retention strategy and strategies to monitor the management information systems, a quality assurance, and an equality of opportunity policy. The policies and strategies are used effectively by all staff from the chief executive downwards. Some of Career Track's policies are being used by the council. Internal verification is now carried out entirely by Career Track. The systems in place and the manner in which they are carried out are satisfactory.

9. Development plans have been put to good use in monitoring the activities identified for improvement. The plans are updated monthly with actions broken down into meaningful steps and measurable targets. A detailed monthly record of activities is included which indicates clearly what has been achieved and what remains to be done. All targets have been reached and the process is now to be reviewed through self-assessment. The self-assessment report of May 2002 clearly identified the weaknesses identified during inspection. All targets set in the development plan have been met. The organisation is in the process of producing a new self-assessment report for which all employers', learners' and staffs' views will be sought. Career Track no longer relies on subcontractors for training and internal verification and the quality of the training has improved. Every training session is evaluated and learners' views are sought.

10. Of the 21 learners who commenced training in 2002-03, 18 are still in learning. Learners' achievements of units are monitored each month and learning targets are set for each learner. Achievement rates have improved greatly since Career Track introduced its strategy for retention. Staff are set monthly targets for NVQ and key skills units for all learners and these are monitored effectively. Learners are now well motivated and are keen to make progress.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	31	2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- thorough and effective progress reviews
- good guidance and support for workplace supervisors
- well-structured training programmes

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate use of individual learning plans
- learners' slow progress on foundation modern apprenticeships

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer plans for assessment
- better information for employers and learners on progression routes

11. All learners receive clear and well-organised information on the range of Career Track's training programmes. Career Track has produced a well-structured timetable for each nine-month period with a programme of training activities that relate directly to the NVQ competencies. There is also a choice of dates for each subject to enable all learners to attend. Training staff are well qualified and have appropriate experience. Career Track staff provide the off-the-job training for learners. Attendance is monitored effectively. Training staff have a good understanding of the learners' individual work requirements and learners find the sessions useful. Lesson plans are detailed and include reinforcement of learning and take into account the learners' different learning styles. Learners have well-planned off-the-job programmes for key skills that include practise sessions for the tests. Learners have a good understanding of the NVQ and apply and practise the skills they acquire at work and make good progress with their modern apprenticeships. There is also a good range of resources to support learners in their off-the-job training and in the workplace. Learning packs are clearly written and

give good guidance to learners on how to collect evidence.

12. Career Track has produced comprehensive guides for employers and workplace supervisors to help them understand work-based learning and modern apprenticeship programmes. The guide for workplace supervisors is particularly informative and clearly highlights the employers' and supervisors' roles and responsibilities at each stage of the learning process. For example, information on the recruitment and selection of learners gives advice on interviewing applicants and ensures they receive accurate details about the work they will be doing. The guides are well written and include all aspects of equal opportunities, quality assurance, self-assessment and trades unions. Career Track also gives employers useful information on modern apprenticeships and key skills. A series of forums for employers have been introduced that focus on key issues such as quality assurance strategies, self-assessment, and equality, diversity and social inclusion. These forums are well attended and focus on the learners' experience. Specific action plans with timescales are set up to deal with any matters of concern raised by employers or learners. These are acted on effectively and quickly. For example, learners requested a longer induction, more time to gather evidence in the workplace and an annual plan of learning. Supervisors also requested additional half-day sessions in the workplace to update them on all aspects of NVQ training. These actions were followed up within one month. Detailed records are kept of each meeting with resulting actions. Employers value the forums and have found the updates on the modern apprenticeships and their day-to-day roles in monitoring learners' work particularly useful.

13. The progress review process is comprehensive. Career Track sends the relevant paperwork to the employer before the review takes place. The document is divided into three parts. The employer and learner complete the first two parts together. The first part covers the learner's performance at work. The second part of the progress review focuses on personal effectiveness in the workplace to help improve learners' performance. The third part of the review document focuses on learning and development for the NVQ and key skills. All learners are positive about the process as it helps them to understand the improvements they make in the workplace. Clear links are made in progress reviews between on- and off-the-job training. Additional qualifications and courses, such as those relating to the Internet, spreadsheets and personal development, ensure that off-the-job progress is fully linked with the learners' work. There is a good focus on personal development and action-planning with short-term targets. Learners understand and appreciate how staff and workplace supervisors have contributed to their personal development.

14. Career Track has had problems with staff in the past, and as a result some poor-quality assessments for administration were carried out in the workplace. Several learners have been on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme for up to seven months and have completed only two or three units. Career Track is aware of the issues and has taken action to improve the situation. Other staff are currently working hard to assess learners in the workplace and to update all learners' portfolios.

15. Career Track records a wide range of information about the learners in personal

files. This includes information on progress reviews, work carried out on the job and initial assessments. However, this information is not always transferred to the learners' individual learning plans. Information on initial assessments is frequently recorded as percentages for literacy and numeracy with no clear recommendations for additional support. Learning plans are not always used effectively at progress reviews to update learners' progress. Workplace activities and additional training are not always recorded effectively on learning plans. Some learners do not have a copy of their individual learning plan in their portfolios so they can monitor their own progress.

16. Some employers are unsure about the completion dates for their learners. Other employers do not always give learners time to complete their portfolio work. Some learners who gain full-time employment with the council are not always clear about whether they will be able to continue with their training programme. Action plans are currently used to record information relating to assessments and observations of learners in the workplace. It is not always clear whether these observations have taken place or whether the learners understand what evidence they need to prepare for their assessment.

17. Learners have a thorough initial assessment to identify their literacy and numeracy needs. This includes basic skills and key skills. Learners are given detailed action plans with individual learning needs. They are given additional support through assignments, workbooks, fact sheets and work activities to ensure that their learning needs are met. Learners who need specialist support for literacy and numeracy are referred to a local adult community college. They are able to attend lessons in the day or in the evening. One learner has attended evening classes for basic skills literacy. He has improved his communication skills and will now progress from a foundation to an advanced modern apprenticeship. Staff are currently attending local courses to improve their knowledge of basic skills.