

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd**

**03 March 2003**



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

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

## Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd was established over 20 years ago as Nuneaton Training Workshop by the Nuneaton Council for Voluntary Service to provide training for young people in Nuneaton, Bedworth and North Warwickshire. In 1994, the organisation changed to provide workplace training and assessment. The workshops were closed and the name was changed to Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd. Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd moved to new premises, close to Nuneaton town centre, in January 2003.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the foundation programmes are good and work-based learning in engineering and business administration is satisfactory. However, the provision in care is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, equality of opportunity is also satisfactory but arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory.

### GRADES

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	2

### KEY STRENGTHS

- well-planned training
- good support for learners
- frequent and regular reviews and assessment
- good, creative teaching
- effective literacy and numeracy support

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards achievement
- initial assessment not focused on individual learners' needs
- insufficient use of data for decision-making
- ineffective internal verification practices

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better target-setting and recording of achievements

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Nuneaton Training Centre (NTC) Ltd in March 2003. They interviewed 54 learners and carried out 17 interviews with employers and workplace supervisors and 38 interviews with staff. They also visited 16 work placements, two subcontracted colleges and carried out telephone interviews with two community partners. They examined learners' portfolios of evidence, policies and procedures, awarding body reports, learners' files and internal verifiers' reports. They also observed and graded 8 training sessions, all of which were satisfactory or better. Inspectors studied NTC's self-assessment report which was produced in July 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. NTC was established 20 years ago by the Nuneaton Council for Voluntary Service. It contracts with Coventry and Warwickshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide Life Skills training and work-based learning for young people. NTC states that its main business aim is to support disengaged and disadvantaged young people back into learning and employment. Consequently, it works closely with a range of local community partners and employers. NTC offers training in engineering, care, business administration, retailing, hairdressing, information and communications technology (ICT), construction and warehousing. There were too few learners to inspect in any areas other than engineering, business administration, care and Life Skills. Training takes place at the employers' premises, at subcontracted local further education colleges and at NTC's training centre in Nuneaton. NTC has 14 members of staff and 105 learners. Some of these learners are in occupational areas not inspected during this inspection.

3. NTC recruits its learners from the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth which covers a wide area and includes a number of outlying villages from which inhabitants travel to Nuneaton to seek employment. Manufacturing is the major employment sector in the area, at 29 per cent, but this has steadily fallen with the closure of many major industries. In May 2002, the unemployment rate was 3.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent and 1.8 per cent for Warwickshire. The 1991 census found that 3.9 per cent of the population of Nuneaton and Bedworth were from minority ethnic groups, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 42 per cent, compared with 51 per cent in Warwickshire and the national average of 47.9 per cent.

### Work-based learning for young people

4. Many learners move from the Life Skills programme at NTC into work-based learning, often working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 1 with some progressing to level 2. Retention and achievement rates vary across the occupational areas but generally learners make slow progress towards the completion of their individual learning plans. Learners in all occupational areas receive effective support from staff at NTC. This includes pastoral support and support for learners with additional learning needs. In engineering, the off-the-job training is provided either by tutors from NTC or from the subcontracted college. In other occupational areas, the off-the-job training is provided by specialist staff at the training centre in Nuneaton. Training in all occupational areas inspected, with the exception of care, is well planned and receives good support from the employers. In engineering, there is good monitoring of the subcontracted colleges. Learners in all occupational areas are given frequent progress reviews and assessments.



## **Life Skills**

5. Life Skills learners make good progress in improving their basic skills, self-esteem, confidence and their employability options. Most learners gain employment and progress to other work-based programmes with NTC or go on to further education. Learners find the teaching interesting and motivating. The tutors use a range of innovative methods in their teaching to stimulate learners' interest. Learners are well supported and the tutors are aware of the challenges faced by the learners. Learners' progress is monitored effectively, although there is ineffective use of short-term targets in the individual learning plans.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

6. NTC is a company limited by guarantee providing training for the disadvantaged and disengaged local community in Warwickshire. The board of directors includes a chairman and six directors who set the strategic vision and direction. In addition to the board of directors there is a chief executive and a peripatetic internal verifier. There are a further 14 members of staff, including an assistant manager, internal verifier co-ordinator, nine staff responsible for training and marketing, and three administrators. The organisation subcontracts some of the teaching and learning activities to other local training providers and further education colleges. There are policies for equality of opportunity and quality assurance. These policies are reviewed annually. Both policies were revised in the six months before inspection. The organisation produced its latest self-assessment report in July 2002.

### STRENGTHS

- good internal communications
- effective literacy and numeracy support
- good investment in resources
- effective strategies to minimise anti-social behaviour

### WEAKNESSES

- lack of measurable business targets
- little use of data for decision-making
- no strategy to widen participation
- ineffective quality assurance practices

7. The organisation's internal communications are good. Staff appreciate the level and frequency of information they receive, which includes information sharing from the chairman. Weekly meetings are held with all staff for a full review of all the learners' progress. These meetings also give the staff a chance to share experiences and discuss difficulties. There is a comprehensive staff appraisal system. All staff have the opportunity to review their progress and development with the chief executive.

8. In the year before inspection, the organisation realised that it needed to improve its capacity to offer basic skills learning. With good support from the board, a strategy was discussed and additional financial resources were made available. Managers and staff agreed a development and action plan detailing how and when the strategy was to be put in place. The plan has now been achieved and has provided for a basic skills specialist who is available to support all programme areas. Most of the training staff have since achieved the first level of the basic skills award. These staff are now able to provide good guidance and support to learners in the workplace. The learning

programmes provided by the specialist tutor are valued by the learners. They provide innovative learning experiences relevant to life. The provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) was not included in the plan. The organisation does not encounter many learners whose first language is not English. If a learner needs language support then this is given individually by the tutors.

9. The organisation has made a good investment in learning resources. It recently re-located to its current premises. The new premises have provided better classroom facilities and one classroom is fitted with industry-standard ICT equipment. Imaginative learning aids have been purchased for the Life Skills programme. There is a good ratio of staff to learners and learners are visited frequently either in the workplace or while attending learning sessions at other providers' premises. An individual budget has been allocated to each tutor so that they can buy additional learning aids for their programme. A budget is also allocated to each learner. This can be used to buy any additional individual learning resources to help them complete their programme.

10. There are few measurable business targets. The board sets the four main aims of the organisation for the annual business plan. Most of the targets in the business plan and staff review processes are qualitative. Numerical targets are not routinely set and it is difficult for the organisation to measure the improvement it has made. The organisation monitors its performance against its contractual obligations. Planning activities are difficult to determine, as no clear, measurable targets are set.

11. The organisation collects learner data each month on recruitment, early leavers and completions. The analysis of this data is not presented in a form that could aid the identification of patterns and trends but represents a snapshot of activity at any one time. At the time of inspection, the organisation could not supply reliable data for the performance of two programme areas and it was decided not to include data tables. Tutors are aware of individual learners' progress and achievement and discuss these at regular weekly meetings. However, the tutors and managers are not fully aware of overall performance indicators for the programme areas and cannot make decisions to bring about continuous improvement.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 3**

12. NTC has an equal opportunities policy and procedure, which are reviewed and updated annually. There are further specific policies regarding disability awareness and harassment. The equal opportunities procedure includes statements regarding compliance with legislative requirements. Neither the policy nor the procedure includes details of whom in the organisation a complaint could be referred to.

13. NTC monitors the participation rates of its learners each month. This information includes data on ethnicity, gender and disability. The all-programme average of learners with disabilities was 34 per cent and additional learning and social needs was 63 per cent. A formal review of participation rates is conducted each year and the results are shared with all staff. The latest review was conducted in October 2002. The review is used to produce an action plan. However, the data collected and reviewed are not used as the basis for the recruitment policy or for decisions or targets for recruiting from under-represented groups.

14. NTC promotes equal opportunities to its employers by updating them on the latest legislative requirements and monitoring equality of opportunity in the workplace. Employers' policies are checked each year by NTC. Every 12 weeks a check is made with the employers and learners to ensure that the learners are being treated fairly. When a learner leaves the programme, a questionnaire is completed and NTC checks again that the learner has been treated fairly throughout the programme. Any issues identified through this process are followed up by the organisation.

15. NTC produces marketing materials that contain positive images. It also produces specific marketing materials for the Asian community. There is a policy and procedure for dealing with complaints and harassment but there are few complaints. If a complaint is received, records are kept of the actions taken in order to bring about resolution. Tutors frequently encounter challenging behaviour from learners, in the classroom and in the workplace. The tutors have high expectations for behaviour and discipline. They use effective strategies for anger management, bullying and harassment, and unruly behaviour.

16. Equality of opportunity training is included in the induction for all learners. This learning is further reinforced on the Life Skills programme where part of the modular programme is dedicated to equal opportunities. All staff at NTC receive annual training in equal opportunities. The premises at NTC are accessible to wheelchair users. There are two toilets and a ramp for learners with disabilities. The organisation has recently moved to its new premises and there is still some building work to be completed. Once it is completed, there will be a lift so that wheelchair users can access the top floor of the building.

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

17. The arrangements for quality assurance at NTC are ineffective. Policies and procedures have recently been rewritten and updated and are in place for the key processes of training. All staff are involved in monitoring these procedures. There are regular classroom and learner assessment observations and feedback is given to staff, information is also collected from learners and employers with questionnaires. However, there is little quantifiable evidence that this has helped to make improvements in learning or how improvements are monitored and evaluated.

18. The self-assessment process includes all staff and involves group activities to identify NTC's strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors felt that some of the strengths in the self-assessment report were overstated and they identified further weaknesses. The development plan is monitored monthly by the deputy manager and the staff responsible for the actions. However, progress is not monitored thoroughly and no interim targets are set to ensure achievement.

19. Internal verification is well documented and well planned, for all occupational areas except care. There are regular monthly standardisation meetings of assessors and verifiers. There are fixed agendas for these meetings, but the minutes do not identify actions, timescales, or the person responsible and it is difficult to judge the progress of identified actions. The key focus of the internal verification process is compliance with awarding body regulations, rather than ensuring the quality of the assessment process. Assessors are not given feedback regarding the quality of the assessments, or of the feedback they give to the learner.

20. The arrangements for quality assurance do not ensure that the managers and staff are aware of inconsistencies across the occupational areas. Although there are several examples of innovative and creative teaching being used in some areas to actively engage learners, good practice is not shared effectively within the organisation.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	29	3

21. There are 29 work-based learners, of whom 27 are on NVQ programmes and two are foundation modern apprentices. Eighteen learners are working towards performing manufacturing operations, and receive all their training in the workplace with the support of NTC assessors. The remaining nine learners are on subcontracted programmes at a local college and are either working towards performing engineering operations or motor vehicle programmes. Work-based learners are all employed by local companies. The performing manufacturing operations programme provides a progression route for some learners from the Life Skills provision at NTC. Traditionally, these learners have few existing achievements and many have additional learning needs. All learners receive an induction and initial assessment at the training centre in Nuneaton. Learners can start the programme at any time and all complete an initial basic skills assessment with the training provider. In addition to their NVQ programme learners can also complete a range of additional certificated courses. There are two specialist tutors employed by NTC to cover the engineering programmes. They visit the learners, employers and colleges and provide training and assessment either in the workplace or at the training centre.

### STRENGTHS

- good involvement of employers in training
- well-managed subcontractors
- regular and frequent progress reviews and assessment in the workplace

### WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards achievement of learning plans for some learners
- initial assessment not focused on individual learners' needs

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better planning of assessments in the workplace

22. There is good involvement of employers in the training. Employers are very well informed about the NVQ structure and requirements for assessment. NTC provides them with copies of the NVQ specification, involves them in the learners' monthly reviews and assessments as well as the quarterly progress reviews. They also receive copies of the progress reviews and learner targets. Consequently, they are able to change learners' tasks so that they can be assessed in the workplace.

23. NTC works closely with the subcontracted colleges to provide a consistent learning programme. There is a comprehensive service level agreement in place. NTC's tutors frequently visit the college, discuss learners' progress with college tutors, observe teaching sessions and provide feedback to the tutors. NTC's tutors are given the schemes of work for the college programmes and are able to give information to employers about learners' assessment requirements.

24. There are regular and frequent progress reviews and assessments in the workplace. Assessment visits are planned and are normally once a fortnight, although they may be more frequent if necessary. One learner quoted occasions when they had been visited three times a week so that a particular piece of portfolio evidence could be completed promptly. Many learners have basic skills needs and are given the support they need from the tutors, during these sessions. Learners are given support in putting together their portfolios. The tutors take laptop computers and printers to the progress reviews so that the learners' can type up their portfolio evidence. Portfolios are well constructed and good use is made of photographic evidence. Learners take pride in the quality of their portfolios.

25. Support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Learners' needs are not normally identified during initial assessment. However, the frequent visits of the tutors and the development of the portfolios does provide a mechanism to identify learners' basic skills needs. The tutors provide support on an individual basis during the portfolio-building sessions. This can involve specific guidance with collecting evidence for the NVQ but frequently the tutors provide the learners with worksheets to practise and develop literacy and numeracy skills. For many learners, this informal approach has led to a late identification of their individual needs. NTC has a basic skills strategy and has appointed a specialist basic skills tutor. However, engineering learners do not attend the training centre on a regular basis and therefore do not receive this support. The engineering tutors have attended training sessions for the assessment of basic skills.

26. Many learners take longer than planned to complete their individual learning plan. In 2000-01, 27 learners started a one-year NVQ programme. Fourteen of these have completed and five are still in learning. In 2001-02, unverified data suggest that of the 36 learners who started an NVQ programme, the retention rate is 69 per cent and the achievement rate is 56 per cent. Eleven are still in learning.

27. Initial assessment is not focused on individual learners' needs. The initial assessment is used to assess the learners' suitability for a particular NVQ level and

individual learners' needs are not identified or recorded on the individual learning plan. The plan does not record the learners' preferences for learning style identified during induction nor does the individual learning plan identify targets or short term milestones by which learners' performance can be monitored and the plan adjusted.

28. One of the subcontracted colleges also carries out the assessments in the workplace. These are often unstructured and unplanned. During the week of the inspection, a college-based assessor visited an employer to assess a learner. However, that learner was attending the college on his regular day-release programme and was therefore not available for assessment. On other occasions the college assessor has turned up at an employer's premises unannounced, when no appropriate activity for assessment was being carried out. College-based off-the-job training is not sufficiently well managed or linked to the on-the-job training. Workplace assessments are not sufficiently well planned.



**Business administration, management & professional****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	13	3

29. NTC offers modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in business administration and accounting. There are 13 learners on these programmes at present. Of these, one learner is working towards a level 4 NVQ in accountancy. In business administration, one learner is a foundation modern apprentice, one is an advanced modern apprentice and 11 learners are working towards NVQs at level 1 or 2. Recruitment is carried out through referrals from Connexions or self-referrals. Learners may also progress from the Life Skills and other NVQ programmes. Learners may join the programme at any time. Learners are placed with a variety of employers, ranging from accountancy practices, local authorities, retail outlets, newspaper publishers, voluntary organisations and courier call centres. Off-the-job training takes place in-house one day each week. NTC's tutor carries out regular assessments in the training centre and at the workplace. Progress reviews are conducted in the workplace every three months. A qualified member of staff carries out internal verification.

**STRENGTHS**

- well-planned training
- good individual support for learners
- good work placements

**WEAKNESSES**

- low retention and achievement rates

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better target-setting and recording of achievements
- better management of the teaching and learning experience
- more involvement of employers in work-based assessment

30. On- and off-the-job training is well planned. Clear links are made with the tasks that learners carry out in the workplace and in the off-the-job sessions. Learners gave examples of where off-the-job training sessions in using information technology (IT) skills

and manual handling skills, were used in the workplace to create, for example, databases and prepare newspapers for collection by newsagents. The trainer has created imaginative activities and handouts to stimulate the learners' interest and takes their individual learning styles into account. All learners are given opportunities for additional accredited training in a wide range of areas, such as fire safety, first aid, food hygiene and basic computer literacy. All learners are given feedback on the basic skills element of their initial assessment and are offered support. For those who decline to take up basic skills support, the basic skills tutor and the trainer discuss and agree alternative ways of meeting the learners' needs. For most learners, this is done by providing individual support for portfolio-building and by encouraging them to have training in communicating and teamworking, time and stress management, essential writing skills, telephone skills and equal opportunities.

31. NTC's staff are well qualified, occupationally experienced and regularly carry out personal development activities. They have good links with appropriate employers that positively support work-based learning. Staff ensure that learners are placed with suitable employers for the maximum training and development opportunities. Employers link the work experiences to the learners' off-the-job training and adapt the work to suit individual learners' needs. For example, one learner was given the opportunity to cover reception duties in order to practise the telephone skills training provided by NTC. Employers set aside time for learners to collect evidence and put together their portfolios. Work placements meet the needs of individual learners. One learner who has problems with communicating in a formal environment, has been placed with a voluntary organisation where the workplace supervisor can support the learner in building her self-esteem and improving her communication skills.

32. In one session observed by inspectors, the teaching and learning environment was not well managed. The pace was slow and there were interruptions from NTC staff and also from learners arriving late. The room temperature was uncomfortably high.

33. NTC's tutors make frequent visits to the work placements to monitor progress and carry out assessments. Workplace supervisors are effectively involved in the quarterly progress reviews and are aware of learners' needs. However, there is some poor recording of learners' progress. Short-term targets are set during progress reviews, but these targets are not sufficiently detailed and completion dates are not clear. Learners and employers are not given copies of the progress reviews. Some documents in learners' files have signatures and dates missing. There is insufficient work-based assessment, and employers are not actively encouraged to become work-based assessors. Some employers assess learners' progress as part of the company's review and appraisal process, thus duplicating assessment in the workplace. All learners have an initial assessment, which looks at their existing vocational skills and knowledge, learning styles as well as literacy and numeracy skills. Learners' additional needs are also identified. Many of NTC's learners require specific support. Tutors and assessors work as a team to support learners. Many learners appreciate NTC's pastoral support which enables learners with any problems to continue their training. For example, it provides learners with suitable clothing to attend interviews, and alarm clocks to aid timekeeping.

34. Learners have good access to IT and other resources, such as textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks, videos and software to help with assignments. The training room is well equipped but the seating arrangement does not allow all learners to interact with each other.

35. Retention and achievement rates are poor. During the past three years, 50 per cent of learners have left early without achieving the targets in their individual learning plans, and only 28 per cent of those leaving left to go into jobs in business administration. However, many early leavers achieve unit accreditation towards their NVQs and additional qualifications, and a significant proportion leave with a positive outcome.

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	22	4

36. NTC provides NVQ, foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship training for local nursing and residential homes. There are 22 learners, of whom 19 are working towards an NVQ at level 2 and three towards an NVQ at level 3. Ten learners have additional learning needs, 21 are employed, and one is on a work placement. There is one male learner. Learners may join programmes at any time of the year. One trainer/assessor carries out assessment in the workplace and plans and gives the off-the-job training. Off-the-job training is scheduled to take place each Monday. Drop-in sessions are available each Friday. The assessor provides individual support to learners both at work and at the training centre.

**STRENGTHS**

- creative training provided by external trainers
- good support for learners

**WEAKNESSES**

- poor management of training
- poor assessment practices
- poor internal verification practices
- slow progress of learners

37. NTC makes good use of external trainers on a regular basis to deliver some of the off-the-job training sessions. One of the sessions observed was delivered by an external trainer. It was well planned and actively engaged the learners. Information was delivered at a pace and in a manner that suited the learners' needs. The session included a good variety of activities involving group work, worksheets, quizzes, a video and practical activities. These helped to reinforce new information and enabled learners to relate the new information and techniques to their daily work routines and activities. Each learner was asked to give an account of what they had learned and outline one thing that they would be taking back to their place of work to try and improve the quality of care. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report.

38. All learners are formally assessed for basic literacy and numeracy during their

induction. Where additional support needs are identified, these can be provided for by NTC's specialist support staff. Learners also complete a learning styles questionnaire and vocational self-assessment form. The care assessor also has experience and qualifications in support for literacy and numeracy, which enable her to directly support the needs of the care learners. There is frequent contact between the NTC assessor and the workplace supervisors and they are aware of the individual and diverse needs of the learners and work well together to provide effective support. Learners and their workplace supervisors greatly value the frequency and flexibility of the visits by the NTC tutor. Learners are able to supplement their training with additional short courses regularly provided by NTC beyond the requirements of the learners' training plans. Learners can gain additional certificates in first aid, manual handling, and health and safety.

39. The results of the learning styles questionnaire and the vocational self-assessment, during induction, are not used in drawing up the individual learning plans. Frequent progress review discussions between learner, workplace supervisor and the tutor take place. However, specific and measurable targets are often not recorded. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Learners and employers do not receive copies of the learning plan or progress review and are not aware of the learners' assessment needs.

40. Off-the-job training is planned four months in advance, although this information is not systematically shared with the learners or employers and they are insufficiently aware of the topics and activities that are planned. Most learners are entitled to three paid training days a year. Learners choose when and how they use these days. They can be used to attend on- and off-the job training activities. Once these days are allocated learners are expected to attend any further on- and off-the-job training in their own time. Many learners find this difficult as most work full time or live some distance from the training centre. There are insufficient learning resources. The centre holds a small number of textbooks and journals but there are insufficient for the number of learners. Employers provide additional training that learners can attend. NTC does not monitor this training. Most learners are not given time to work on their portfolios at work.

41. There is insufficient planning of assessments. Where plans do exist they are not sufficiently detailed and learners and employers are not always aware of what is expected. There is very little evidence of assessment by direct observation. Where learners have been observed, verbal feedback is given immediately after the activity, although they sometimes have to wait more than six weeks before they receive written feedback. Some learners rely too much on written evidence for their portfolios and are issued with a list of questions that cover both the performance criteria and background knowledge for each unit. Some assessment paperwork is not completed accurately, and names, dates and signatures, for example, are frequently missing. There is very little use of witness testimony, and if this is used, the testimonies frequently do not specify dates, where the activity took place or the status of the witness. Not all learners, or the tutor, are aware of their progress and achievement. Several of the learners have been asked

to provide new or additional evidence or remove evidence that had been internally verified for units they completed over eight months ago. Some learners are concerned and do not understand why they are being reassessed. Learners are unaware of the NVQ appeals procedure. These weaknesses are not recognised in the self-assessment report.

42. Internal verification is subcontracted. NTC does not have written confirmation of the internal verifier's occupational background and there is no written contract between NTC and the verifier. The verifier has not received an induction or been made aware of NTC's requirements. The verifier has not attended an NTC internal verifier meeting in the eight months since taking up the post. NTC has not monitored the work practices of the verifier and there is no internal verification sampling plan. The external verifier identified this three months before the inspection. The tutor leads the internal verification process but has not set dates for internal verifier visits. The tutor contacts the verifier when it is felt a portfolio or a piece of work is ready for verification. There has been no observation of assessment practices. The tutor regularly attends the NTC cross-sector assessment and verifier meetings in the attempt to share best practice.

43. Learner retention rates have been steadily rising. In 1997-98, the retention rate was 50 per cent, increasing to 69 per cent in 2000-01. In 2002-03, the retention rate is 100 per cent. There has been a fall in achievement between 1999-2000 and 2000-01. Thirty-nine per cent of learners in 1999-2000 achieved an NVQ, compared with 22 per cent in 2000-01. Learners are slow to achieve complete units. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Thirty-three per cent of learners have been on the programme for between 12 and 24 months. These learners still have many units to complete.

#### **Poor Practice**

*Learners wear too much jewellery while working with clients. This presents a potential hazard and could cause injury to both clients and learners.*

**Foundation programmes****Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	25	2

44. Accurate data could not be provided during inspection. However, figures suggest that during the first year of Life Skills provision, in 2001-02, the retention rate was 65 per cent and the achievement rate 43 per cent. Of those learners who successfully completed, 18 went on to further training at college and 25 went into work-based learning. Fourteen learners progressed into further employment which did not offer formal training. There are 25 learners on the Life Skills programme. The average length of stay on the programme is 12 weeks. Two full-time tutors organise and provide most of the training on the Life Skills programme. The basic skills co-ordinator provides individual and group support for learners with literacy and numeracy support needs. Other members of staff at the training centre provide input for specific sessions. Off-the-job training is provided at the training centre and other training is provided through placements with local employers. Learners are referred to the programme through Connexions or through personal recommendations from friends or relatives. An individual learning plan is designed for each new learner. All learners receive a comprehensive, detailed initial assessment of their skills, strengths, weaknesses and interests. The Life Skills programme is organised into five key modules.

**STRENGTHS**

- good creative teaching
- good use of resources
- very good support for learners
- wide range of learning activities

**WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate action-planning in the individual development plans

45. The teaching on the programme is creative and interests and motivates the learners. The tutors use a range of innovative methods in their teaching and make good use of visual and practical resources. For example, for a session on self-marketing, learners were given a box and asked to design a lid for it which represented how they saw themselves. Their next task was to fill the box with words which best described their key strengths and skills. Good, clear and flexible session plans were used in all

observed sessions and the learners were enthusiastic. Learners with additional learning support needs in dyslexia can participate in an innovative project which tackles dyslexia through physical exercise. Learners have a good recall of their learning and said that learning was fun. Several learners commented on the progress they had made with numeracy since starting on the programme.

46. The resources for Life Skills provision are very good. Most of the training takes place in two dedicated rooms, both of which provide a well-lit and attractive learning environment for learners. The staff have appropriate qualifications and experience which they use effectively to support learners. Both tutors have teaching qualifications. Job roles are clearly defined and reviewed each year to ensure that any changes in role are formally recorded. Staff understand learners' needs and empathise with the challenges they face. The Life Skills staff regularly take part in staff development activities to improve their teaching. For example, both tutors have had additional training in basic skills. Additional resources are available for residential training and trips. Good-quality learning materials are used on the course. Learners are also given a personal hygiene and presentation kit, which is distributed at the start of the training.

47. Learners receive excellent support from staff and the Connexions adviser. Progress reviews are held every two weeks. They are structured to allow for a full discussion of a learner's progress. The review sessions also allow learners to receive feedback on sessions and discuss personal problems. Links with external agencies are used effectively to offer additional support when appropriate. Learners receive regular encouragement from tutors and their achievements are celebrated. There is a merits board in one of the Life Skills rooms which is used to record success and achievements such as progress on to NVQ courses and new work placements. Unauthorised absences and unacceptable behaviour are dealt with promptly and learners are fully aware of behavioural boundaries. Learners are given good support with literacy and numeracy. A specialist basic skills co-ordinator provides individual and/or group support as required. Learners enjoy the sessions and are enthusiastic about attending and participating in the sessions. In one session, a group of learners receiving additional support for numeracy chose to miss their morning break rather than interrupt their numeracy work.

48. The Life Skills provision offers a wide range of learning activities. Training is offered through classroom instruction, residential courses, practical exercises and trips. In the classroom sessions, tutors use instruction, talks, individual coaching, games, visiting speakers, quizzes and practical work to accommodate a variety of learning styles and promote learning. NTC has a large database of employers to draw on for work placements and all learners have the opportunity to gain work experience. Learners can obtain certificates for completing short courses on topics such as time management, working as part of a team and first aid. There are also some opportunities for accreditation of achievements.

49. Although progress reviews are well structured, thorough and well recorded, there is no detailed target-setting. Goals are set but they are sometimes vague and often not



linked to specific learning activities or to an action plan. For example, one learner was set the target of compiling a curriculum vitae. This appeared on the following record of the review with no reference to the activities that had to be carried out in order for the learner to achieve the goal. Details of learning activities are recorded in the individual development plans but specific measurable targets are not recorded in action plans.

50. Learners thoroughly enjoy their training and have a good understanding of Life Skills provision. Learners commented on the progress they had made since joining the Life Skills programme. They could all identify specific achievements, and felt very well supported by staff.

#### Good Practice

*In a session on curriculum vitae compiling, learners were split into two groups and asked to select two fictional characters and compile a curriculum vitae for them. Learners selected Little Red Riding Hood and Austin Powers and then had a discussion about the characters' known strengths, interests, skills and possible qualifications and experience. They then compiled a full curriculum vitae for each character on a flip chart which the tutors presented.*