

INSPECTION REPORT

WEBS Training Limited

03 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 and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

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

WEBS Training Limited is a non-profit-making training provider based in Beeston in Nottinghamshire. It provides work-based learning for 90 young people who are employed in the furniture industry in the East Midlands.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Work-based learning in manufacturing is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are also unsatisfactory, as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

GRADES

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- particularly good development of job-related skills
- good off-the-job training for most crafts
- very effective support to find appropriate employment
- good implementation of comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor management of training programmes
- no monitoring of quality of training
- inadequate use of data for effective decision-making
- poor target-setting and action-planning
- poor modern apprenticeship framework achievement rates

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- no coherent strategy for the provision of learning support
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at WEBS Training Limited (WEBS) during September 2002. They interviewed 34 learners, and 16 employers/supervisors. There were 22 meetings with staff and two with subcontractors. Inspectors visited 14 employers' sites. They examined 15 portfolios of evidence and 30 individual learning plans and learners' files. Two progress reviews were observed, as well as four assessments. The inspection team did not observe any learning sessions. There is no off-the-job training during the summer. The most recent self-assessment report was written in December 2001 and was updated in June 2002 in preparation for the inspection. The self-assessment report and a range of other documents were examined during the inspection, including minutes of meetings, policies and procedures and records of external meetings.

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. WEBS is a private company based in Beeston in Nottinghamshire. The company was originally set up as a training association for four furniture manufacturers. There are now 12 member companies, and 35 companies currently employ learners based at WEBS. WEBS is a limited company, with a board of directors, which employs a managing director to take responsibility for operational management. Currently, nine furniture companies are represented on the board. WEBS is a non-profit-making company which reinvests any surplus money back into training. WEBS receives funding to provide work-based learning for young people from Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council and Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In addition, employers also pay £3 a week towards the cost of training each employee. WEBS also gains revenue from renting part of its property. All the funding is used to provide training for work-based learning for young people.

3. There are currently 90 learners on manufacturing programmes, comprising 73 foundation modern apprentices, three advanced modern apprentices and 14 learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2. WEBS employs a managing director, four training officers, an administrator and a part-time training co-ordinator. Two training officers provide training in upholstery trades and two provide training in wood trades. Off-the-job training in wood machining is subcontracted to a local further education college, all other off-the-job training is carried out in-house. All learners are employed in small to medium-sized furniture production businesses and receive on-the-job training in the workplace. All employers allow learners to do off-the-job training.

4. The furniture manufacturing industry is a major employer in the area. In April 2002, the unemployment rate for Nottinghamshire was 3.7 per cent, compared with 3 per cent in the East Midlands and 3 per cent nationally. However, in Amber Valley, which is one of WEBS's main catchment areas, unemployment was only 2.1 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers who gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 50 per cent in Derbyshire and 42 per cent in Nottinghamshire. More specifically, in Amber Valley and in Erewash, the proportion was above the national average of 47.9 per cent, at 56 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively.

5. The 1991 census shows that, nationally, 6.2 per cent of the population was from a minority ethnic group. In Derbyshire this figure was 0.9 per cent and in Nottinghamshire it was 1.5 per cent. The figure for Amber Valley was 0.6 per cent and for Erewash it was 1.4 per cent. The small proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups reflects the small proportion in the area. Of the current 90 learners, one comes from a minority ethnic group and six are women.

Work-based learning for young people

6. Approximately half the learners are on wood trades training programmes and the other half are on upholstery training programmes. Despite efforts to provide consistent data, WEBS has been unable to provide reliable information on learner numbers. On the data available, retention and achievement rates for all learners are poor. No learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme have completed the programme successfully. No learners have been recruited to an NVQ programme since 2000-01.

7. On- and off-the-job training are generally good, but the training programmes are poorly managed and are not co-ordinated. Employers value the training offered by WEBS, but are more concerned that learners should develop appropriate skills for the workplace than that they should complete the modern apprenticeship framework. Many learners leave their training programmes in the first two months. There is no analysis of why learners leave and little has been done to keep learners on their training programmes. Individual learning plans are not based on individual learner's needs, and are not updated after learners' progress reviews. The results of initial assessments are not used to provide additional learning support if learners need it.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

8. WEBS is a non-profit-making company managed by a board of directors. Nine directors are also employers in the furniture industry. At present, 35 companies employ learners who are on training programmes at WEBS. In the past, more than 60 different companies have employed learners at WEBS. At present, most of these employers are not involved in the management of WEBS. The managing director of WEBS is a member of the board and reports to the board at quarterly meetings. The managing director is responsible for the operational management of WEBS. In addition to the managing director, WEBS has four training officers, an administrator and a part-time training co-ordinator. WEBS has a comprehensive set of equal opportunities policies, which were updated in May 2002. It also has a quality assurance policy and a series of quality assurance procedures which were revised in April 2002. Self-assessment has been carried out annually since 1998. The most recent self-assessment report was written in December 2001 and updated in June 2002 for the inspection. WEBS was accredited as an Investor in People in April 2001. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

STRENGTHS

- good strategic external partnerships
- good staff involvement in operational management
- good implementation of comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures
- effective sharing of good practice

WEAKNESSES

- poor management of training programmes
- no monitoring of the quality of training
- inadequate use of data for effective decision-making
- no coherent strategy for the provision of learning support
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of internal audit outcomes

9. WEBS has particularly strong links with a nationally recognised furniture training organisation. Three of the directors of the board and WEBS's managing director were involved in founding, financing and developing the organisation, whose national headquarters are in Beeston. WEBS's training officers are members of its working parties to update the occupational standards and formulate the new technical

certificates for the furniture industry. They keep up to date with industry developments. WEBS has also been involved in projects, such as an exercise which cross-referenced key skills training with the NVQ programmes. WEBS is also part of a provider network. The network has recently started a development centre for work-based learning, which has the potential to share good practice and keep up to date with work-based learning developments. WEBS's managing director has been active in these and other external partnerships.

10. Staff are enthusiastic about their involvement in operational management. They all participate in weekly meetings and take responsibility for specific developments. Staff also work well informally and help each other to ensure that policies and procedures are complied with. The induction process for new staff is effective and enables them to understand and implement operational procedures quickly. The newest member of staff, who joined WEBS in January 2002, is well integrated with the team and has already taken some responsibility. Annual staff appraisals have been carried out for some years. The process is valued by staff and identifies individual staff development requirements.

11. The training programmes are poorly managed. The contract with employers specifies that WEBS will give employers a training programme for each learner, but this is not done. Employers do not have an overview of the relationship between on- and off-the-job training. There is no effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Some employers provide poor on-the-job training. Some employers do not have the necessary equipment in the workplace and sometimes learners' needs are secondary to employers' production targets. Employers are not asked for an on-the-job training plan and there is no monitoring of on-the-job training. There are few formal links with employers and there is no process to ensure that they understand the importance of a coherent training programme in enabling learners to achieve their qualifications. The subcontracted off-the-job training for wood machining is not managed by WEBS and there is no monitoring of the quality of training provision. In the survey of learners carried out in July 2002, feedback from learners on upholstery programmes was particularly negative. Many learners are uncertain about their progress and the skills they require to achieve their qualification.

12. There is inadequate use of data for effective decision-making. Data are currently collected by different people for specific purposes, including returns to the local LSCs, data on recruitment, and training officers' records of learners' progress. A lot of basic data is collected and processed manually. It cannot be used to discern trends or identify problems. The data are inconsistent and annual retention and achievement rates cannot be analysed. Steps are being taken to co-ordinate data collection and to improve accuracy by introducing a more comprehensive computer-based system. However, WEBS has had hardware and networking difficulties. There are currently few opportunities to use data effectively. Retention and achievement rates are not prioritised. There are no data to analyse learners' reasons for leaving the training programme early. Overall, data are not used sufficiently as a management tool or to improve training provision.

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13. WEBS has no coherent strategy to provide learning support. Learners are given an initial assessment at interview and their scores are recorded. These outcomes are not used to plan learners' individual learning plans, to identify their additional learning support needs, to provide support for each learner, to review learners' progress or to update their training programmes as required. Staff do help learners to build their portfolios of evidence. But staff are limited in their ability to help with specific learning difficulties. No staff have basic skills teaching qualifications.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 4**

14. WEBS's comprehensive equal opportunities policies cover racial and gender discrimination, disability, grievance and harassment. The current policies were updated in May 2002 and include clear written procedures and guidelines on implementation.

15. The equal opportunities policy is explained in the learners' two-day induction. The policy is also included in staff's and learners' handbooks. Learners have a basic understanding of equal opportunities from the induction, but this is not developed in progress reviews. The equal opportunities officer left WEBS in October 2001. Since then, there has been a greater emphasis on diversity training for staff. Three staff have attended local LSC training. One member of staff is training to take on the role of equal opportunities officer in WEBS. It is too early to judge the effect of the training. Some equal opportunities training materials have been bought to re-emphasise issues raised in induction. WEBS has started to monitor companies' equal opportunities practices in interviewing WEBS's learners. WEBS has also recently gained local LSC funding to develop equal opportunities training materials to help workplace supervisors support learners. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these initiatives.

16. WEBS tries to treat everyone fairly and there are no restrictions on recruitment. There are examples of appropriate responses to concerns raised by learners. For example, a woman learner who had a bad experience during a work-placement interview, was well supported and was encouraged to appeal. Although she decided not to appeal, the organisation was contacted and WEBS is working with the employer to improve its equality practices. WEBS's premises are generally accessible to learners with restricted mobility. There are no lifts, but there are sufficient ground floor training rooms.

17. Equality of opportunity is not promoted sufficiently and there is no marketing strategy. WEBS has a publicity flyer with images of young people in non-stereotypical roles, however, there are no images of minority ethnic learners. Despite the very few women and minority ethnic learners, WEBS does not set targets to increase the proportion of under-represented learners and makes little effort to promote its courses to under-represented groups. WEBS has a database, that records all applicants' gender, ethnicity and postcode information, which is used to monitor learners' progress from application to work placement. These data are not used to produce information that can be analysed to identify trends or to introduce an equal opportunities strategy. There are no formal processes for monitoring, or reporting on, equal opportunities. The contract with employers and the supervisors' guide sets out employers' responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities. WEBS's equal opportunities policy identifies its responsibility to monitor employers' practices. However, no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace has been done. There are some inappropriate images in some workplaces which have not been challenged by WEBS.

18. WEBS has a complaints procedure. There have been few complaints, but those that have been made are kept in learners' files and are not currently collated or analysed. Learners' progress reviews include a question on harassment and bullying, but this has

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not been collated for management purposes.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

19. WEBS has a well-documented quality assurance policy with comprehensive procedures for finance, administration and the main training processes. The procedures are clear and concise and emphasise aspects of learners' training programmes. The training procedures are linked to the master file that clearly identifies which documents should be used for each procedure. Staff understand the system and use the documents in training. The member of staff responsible for maintaining the quality assurance policy ensures that it is reviewed frequently. The most recent update was in April 2002. Since then, there have been additions and changes to procedures. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these changes. For example, a new database has been designed to monitor learners' progress and achievement and to generate performance statistics. WEBS has recently introduced learners' and customer satisfaction surveys. Feedback from these surveys will be passed on to staff and the board and contribute to the self-assessment report as appropriate. The surveys have not been reviewed for relevance and effectiveness.

20. There are 12-weekly internal verifier meetings at which staff share good practice effectively. For example, staff develop and adapt existing documents for internal verification and discuss best practice for portfolio-building and developing guidelines for learners. Internal verification is effectively planned. There are detailed internal verification records and useful feedback is given to assessors. Assessors are observed during on- and off-the-job assessment. Clear, written feedback is given to them by the internal verifier. All staff attend weekly meetings. Minutes are sufficiently detailed and well-recorded and staff are given responsibility for rectifying any problems. At the beginning of each meeting, matters arising from the previous meeting are reviewed and progress is checked. Good practice is also shared at these meetings. For example, a work-based recording form has recently been adopted for all training programmes after being discussed at a staff meeting.

21. There is no formal, systematic observation and evaluation of on- and off-the-job training. WEBS has no system for observing workplace training, or for monitoring training at the subcontracted further education college. There is an over-reliance on the subcontractors' quality assurance systems and insufficient monitoring is carried out by WEBS, which does not review the subcontractors' arrangements for ensuring quality. Trainers in the workplace do not receive feedback on their performance, or any guidance to effectively ensure continuous improvement of learners' experience. Training provision is mainly reviewed at the weekly staff meetings. However, these meetings generally emphasise learners' overall progress and insufficient attention is paid to the quality of learning sessions and other learning. There is no strategy to monitor the training programme and its impact on learners at various stages of their training programmes. Data are not collected or used for continuous improvement.

22. Employers' files, learners' master files and duplicate files are internally audited and the results are recorded. Some records are not signed by the staff who carried out the

audit. Other records show that documents are missing, but there is no record of action taken.

23. The managing director is responsible for the self-assessment report and action plan. The report is shared with all WEBS's staff. They comment on it informally and formally at weekly staff meetings. The strengths, weaknesses and grades were recently updated. Some identified strengths inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report did not identify several important weaknesses. The grades were unrealistic. The action plan is not clear or sufficiently detailed.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	90	4

24. WEBS provides manufacturing programmes for foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and training in NVQs at level 2. There are currently 90 learners on the training programme, comprising three advanced modern apprentices, 73 foundation modern apprentices and 14 learners on an NVQ programme. Thirty-two learners are on furniture production programmes, and there are also 10 wood machinists and one polisher. There are 39 learners on upholstery programmes, there are also five cutters and three learners on sewing programmes. Nine of the upholsterers and five of the cutters are on the NVQ programme. Learners are recruited directly from employers or referred from Connexions. Some come from families already in the trade or from the families of former learners. Most learners live within five miles of the training centre. All of them have an initial assessment and are interviewed. Once they are in employment, learners have a two-day induction at the start of their training programme. Off-the-job training for wood machinists is subcontracted to the local further education college. For other crafts, off-the-job training is provided at WEBS's training centre. Upholstery training is carried out on block release, one week in six. The rest of the off-the-job training is on day release. Key skills training is covered at the training centre for learners who attend there. Currently, learners are employed in 35 small to medium-sized companies. Training officers visit learners at their workplaces at 12-weekly intervals to carry out progress reviews. Assessment of simulated work is carried out at the college and the training centre, and learners collect evidence from the workplace to contribute to their NVQ assessment.

25. There are no data tables as WEBS was unable to provide consistent data about annual retention and completion rates. Overall, the trends in both retention and achievement are poor. Inspectors estimated that the proportion of learners who have successfully achieved the objectives of their programmes is less than 50 per cent.

STRENGTHS

- particularly good development of job-related skills in most areas
- good off-the-job training for most crafts
- effective support to find appropriate employment

WEAKNESSES

- poor target-setting and action-planning
- poor modern apprenticeship framework achievement rates
- late introduction of key skills training and assessment in upholstery
- some weak assessment practice in upholstery
- insufficient skills development for some learners in wood machining

26. Learners gain good experience from a wide range of opportunities at work. One learner on the hand-crafted furniture programme was working on a solid hardwood conference table, and a wood-machining learner was developing a broad range of skills by being trained on a range of machines to produce components for kitchen units. Most employers help and support learners and are responsive to their training needs. Many employers help learners to gain confidence quickly by allowing them to work unsupervised once they have been trained. Some employers offer learners bonuses for completing good work in a specified time. This helps to build learners' confidence and increases their motivation to achieve their qualifications. Some learners, once they have gained the appropriate experience on machines, train the less experienced learners. One company has a mentoring system, using experienced machinists to help a dyslexic learner record his workplace evidence for his NVQ assessment. Excellent working relationships have been developed in the workplace by the training officers, who also act as health and safety advisers when monitoring learners' progress at work.

27. The learners on wood-machining programmes do their off-the-job training at a local further education college. All other learners attend WEBS's training centre. This training provision is good. Trainers and tutors are experienced and are well regarded in the industry. At the training centre and at the further education college, learners work on a variety of projects which allow them to practise and understand the different skills required to produce a finished component. For those on wood trades programmes, training is well planned to develop learners' skills and accredited assessors carry out assessment routinely. Learners collect evidence from the workplace in their logbooks. Health and safety is a priority on and off the job, and is well monitored by training staff. Computers are available for all learners, and one learner with dyslexia was given a laptop to work on at home. Learners with identified learning difficulties are given extra time and help to complete their logbooks.

28. All learners are interviewed when they apply to WEBS. The information is used effectively to identify suitable employers. Most learners find employment within weeks of applying to WEBS. Learners who are unhappy with their employer inform their training officer. Problems are usually resolved successfully and, where necessary, more appropriate employers are found. Learners who need additional support work with employers who provide additional support and guidance. Several learners were made redundant earlier in 2002, but all learners who wanted to stay in the industry were

found suitable employment and have continued with their qualification.

29. Learners have three-monthly progress reviews in the workplace, which include discussions of any pastoral problems. No specific short-term targets are set during progress reviews, there are often only comments on continuing progress towards achievement of units. This does not guide learners to collect evidence or practise skills for assessment, nor does it help to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. Employers are usually involved in progress reviews, but their input mainly involves comments on learners' personal effectiveness and attitude. Learners have little recall of targets set in progress reviews and consider progress reviews to be mainly about pastoral matters. Copies of the progress reviews are not given to the learner, the employer or to college tutors. Individual learning plans include planned achievement dates, which are the same as the end of the training programme. There are no target dates for primary learning goals and all programme completion dates are the same for everyone. Training programmes are not sufficiently individualised.

30. Between 1997 and 2001, 63 advanced modern apprentices began training with WEBS. Fifteen have achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. This represents less than 25 per cent of starters. None of the 16 starters in upholstery achieved the full framework and no advanced modern apprentices have been recruited in this vocational area for the past two years. Foundation modern apprenticeships began in 2000, and no learner has yet achieved the full apprenticeship framework. Nearly 40 per cent of starters have left the training programme early. Key skills training has only recently been introduced to the upholstery programme. Foundation modern apprentices began this programme in 2000-01. Most of them have completed a key skills initial assessment test but do not know their results. Some learners are due to leave the programme within the next few weeks and have not started their key skills training. Most learners do not know what they need to do to achieve their apprenticeship frameworks.

31. The range of work-based evidence in learners' portfolios is adequate and includes the use of photographs. Most evidence for the NVQ is collected in learners' logbooks. Many upholstery learners have poor literacy skills and find the written work difficult. When gaps are identified in their evidence, learners are often asked to give more detailed written evidence. Assessors are aware of the problem and are piloting a paper-free portfolio to reduce the amount of written work required. The assessors do not regularly check learners' understanding. In the past six months, there have been few upholstery assessments through observation of the learners at work. Records of workplace observations are not copied for learners to use in their portfolios of evidence. Detailed witness statements by supervisors and work colleagues are rarely used. In upholstery, there is no system to record evidence collected or completed assessments. Learners do not understand what they have achieved and what they have left to do. Some portfolios of evidence are poorly organised and it is difficult to check which units or elements have been completed. Insufficient written feedback is given to learners on the assessments of evidence. Most assessments are carried out at the end of the training programme, when learners think that they have completed the qualification.

32. Some woodworking employers do not provide satisfactory training opportunities. Some learners on the woodworking machining programmes spend too much time doing repetitive and mundane work, sometimes just carrying out general labouring tasks. One learner reported that one year of his two-year training programme could have been spent more appropriately in acquiring machining skills. In these work placements, there is no structured training programme to enable learners to gain the necessary competences and their accreditation. In one work placement, the range of work and machines available was inadequate.

Good Practice

In one furniture manufacturing company, the NVQ was being provided at the workplace and assessed there by WEBS's staff. The director of the company was tutoring the learner and helping him to build his portfolio. This learner is producing good work and is exceeding the NVQ standards.

Poor Practice

One learner finished work on her logbook in July 2002 and handed it in for checking and final assessment. The logbook has not currently been assessed or cross-referenced. The learner still does not know if she needs to produce any extra evidence.