

INSPECTION REPORT

Surrey Springboard

08 October 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
- **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

Surrey Springboard is a registered charity established in 1997 and based in Dorking in Surrey. It offers foundation training to New Deal 18-24 clients under Gateway, the voluntary sector option and the environment task force, and to offenders referred by Surrey Probation Area. Most of the probation contract was outside the scope of the inspection. It also runs a social firm, a commercial business set up to create new employment for people with disabilities and disadvantages in the open labour market, but this was outside the scope of the inspection.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of foundation programmes is very weak. The leadership and management and quality assurance of Surrey Springboard are very weak and its equality of opportunity arrangements are weak.

GRADES

Leadership and management	5
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	5

Foundation programmes	5
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	5
Life Skills	5

KEY STRENGTHS

- good relationships with, and support for, clients

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ineffective initial assessment
- poor rates of progress into employment
- poor use of management information
- no systematic staff development
- no systematic quality assurance across all departments

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- closer links with Jobcentre Plus for more effective use of staff resources

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at Surrey Springboard in October 2002. Inspectors were based at the head office and training centre in Dorking, but also visited a number of other locations throughout Surrey at which Springboard activities were taking place. They observed reviews, training and assessment sessions, and examined a range of documents including learners' records, progress review documents, assessment records, minutes of meetings, strategic plans and organisational policies. Inspectors studied Surrey Springboard's self-assessment report which was produced in August 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Foundation programmes	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	6
Total	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	6

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Surrey Springboard is a registered charity established in 1997 and based in Dorking in Surrey. It has 31 permanent members of staff, supported by 33 part-time volunteers. Many of its 46 clients and learners have never worked before and have a history of criminal offending. The organisation has contracts with the probation service in Surrey and Sussex, the prison service, and a local advice and guidance network. Surrey Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds the key skills and basic skills training that is offered to learners on all contracted programmes. Through the organisation's contract with Jobcentre Plus in Surrey and Sussex, Surrey Springboard provides Gateway, the environment task force and the voluntary sector option to New Deal clients. It is one of very few contractors in Surrey registered to provide these and, consequently, clients may be referred to Surrey Springboard more than once. Surrey Springboard uses money provided by charitable agencies and the European Social Fund to operate a social firm, a commercial business set up to create new employment for people with disabilities and disadvantages in the open labour market. Clients on New Deal options and learners referred by the probation service follow the same programmes in key skills and basic skills.

3. Surrey Springboard offers foundation programmes, concentrating on two units of key skills at levels 1 or 2 and on basic skills training. In the past, clients were registered for vocational qualifications linked to their job aspirations. Because of constraints with the programme length and clients' needs and abilities, this approach met with little success and, with the agreement of Jobcentre Plus, the vocational element of the New Deal programme is now represented by key skills units or basic skills qualifications. All training is given by Surrey Springboard staff or volunteers, either at the training centre or at the probation office or Jobcentre Plus nearest to the client's home. Assessment, verification and certification are subcontracted to a college of further education.

4. In May 2002, the unemployment rate in Surrey was 0.9 per cent. It was 1.7 per cent in the Southeast and 3.0 per cent on average in England. In May 2002, the percentage of unemployed people who were aged between 18-24 was 17.1 in Surrey. At the time of the 1991 census, 2.8 per cent of the population came from minority ethnic groups. In England, the proportion was 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 47.9 per cent in England and 58 per cent in Surrey.

New Deal 18-24

5. The training and job preparation for New Deal clients are unsatisfactory. Few clients find employment at the end of their programme although the inspectors recognised that many clients have a background which makes it difficult to gain employment. In the three years the programme has been available, between 11 per cent and 22 per cent of voluntary sector option clients have found work. The rates for environment task force clients have also been poor at times, but in 2001-02 three out of five clients gained employment. The initial assessment of clients' needs is ineffective, and attendance at training sessions is poor. Progress reviews are weak and there is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Achievement rates have been very poor. No New Deal client has achieved a key skills unit or a basic skills qualification since the programmes began.

Life Skills

6. This programme is funded by the local probation service and by Surrey LSC. It is intended for offenders under the statutory supervision of Surrey Probation Area. The outcome of basic and key skills training for these learners is unsatisfactory. Surrey Springboard's contract with the LSC sets a target for the number of learners starting programmes. The organisation's performance is measured against this target alone. There is no requirement to reach a target figure for the number of learners gaining qualifications or finding work. This programme has only been running for one year, but its performance has been very poor. No learner has achieved a qualification. The learners on this programme are trained alongside clients on the various New Deal options. Both programmes share the same weaknesses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**Grade 5**

7. The director of Surrey Springboard reports to a board of trustees. The training operations are run by the client services division, under the direction of the client services manager. There are two deputy client services managers, one responsible for the New Deal and key skills staff, and one for the basic skills co-ordinator and the employment adviser. There is also a client development manager, responsible for the social firm and its supervisors and operatives. Surrey Springboard has a finance manager, who is supported by a quality assurance and compliance manager and a team of clerical staff. In addition to its own staff, Surrey Springboard uses 33 part-time volunteers to work with clients on key skills and basic skills programmes. They are recruited through a volunteer bureau and, while there is no requirement for them to have any specific qualifications for the work, many have teaching or basic skills qualifications or experience. The volunteers are not supervised individually but are given broad guidelines to work within. They meet quarterly as a group.

STRENGTHS

- good financial planning and controls

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective strategic planning
- poor use of management information
- poor management of subcontractors
- no systematic staff development
- insufficient promotion or monitoring of equal opportunities for some clients
- no systematic quality assurance

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- closer links with Jobcentre Plus for more effective use of staff resources

8. Surrey Springboard has equal opportunities and quality assurance policies. It produced its first self-assessment report in August 2002 in preparation for the inspection. The organisation has recently lost a large part of its funding, and its business planning has been concentrated on finding other business to replace that funding.

9. There is clear evidence that stringent financial controls have been introduced during 2002, to counteract the effects of losing a major contract. There is good budgetary control and fully detailed budgets are forwarded to managers for comment and agreement. Surrey Springboard's finances have been arranged to allow for a budget deficit. Cash flow is currently positive, and measures are being taken to acquire additional funding. The management team and the trustees are given regular detailed

reports on the financial health of the organisation.

10. Surrey Springboard produced its latest strategic plan in the early summer of 2002. The plan concentrates on immediate initiatives to attract charitable funding, particularly to the social firm. The strategic plan does not adequately cover the organisation's training activities. There is no reference in the plan to the training contracts run by the client services division, or to the targets they may contain. The plan does not deal with the long-term management of client services' contracts, although it does acknowledge the importance of the division to the continuing existence of the organisation. The plan contains insufficient detail on the objectives for staff. It does not identify realistic and achievable targets, set timescales or allocate responsibilities for action. Surrey Springboard does not have a business plan which encompasses the contractual targets negotiated with its major customers.

11. Surrey Springboard makes insufficient use of management information to help operational managers in their decision-making. The organisation produces comprehensive data which are used to generate funding claims. Although it is possible to use the databases to produce detailed reports, this is not done for management or team meetings. Operational staff collect information as part of the contracts with Jobcentre Plus, Surrey LSC and the probation service. These data are fed into the databases, but the reports generated for the funding agencies are not made available to staff without a specific request.

12. Surrey Springboard's management of its subcontracting arrangements is poor. Until recently, a local college of further education was responsible for registering key skills clients with awarding bodies, and for the assessment and verification of key skills units. These arrangements were set up by an external fundraiser with a close connection to the college, and were not monitored by Surrey Springboard. Surrey LSC requested that a different college be used, and the original contract has now been terminated. However, Surrey Springboard staff have been unable to find out which clients had been registered for a qualification. A contract is being negotiated with another college, but has yet to be signed. This leaves the learners unregistered for their qualification. There are still no procedures for monitoring the quality of subcontracted assessment and verification.

13. There is no systematic staff development. Surrey Springboard has an appraisal system and a detailed system of supervision. Bi-monthly reports are produced on the training and development needs of many of the permanent staff. Although some training has taken place, there are no formal procedures for examining and implementing the training needs identified in supervision reports. There is no planned observation of training so there is no opportunity to evaluate and improve it.

14. Surrey Springboard staff spend a lot of time travelling to jobcentres throughout Surrey and in part of Sussex to interview New Deal clients referred by personal advisers. However, many clients fail to turn up to these interviews. Client services division managers have discussed this situation with Jobcentre Plus staff, but it has not

SURREY SPRINGBOARD

been resolved satisfactorily. The present arrangements waste considerable amounts of staff time on fruitless journeys.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 4**

15. Surrey Springboard's director is in charge of equal opportunities, although the organisation encourages all staff to take responsibility for this aspect of their work. Surrey Springboard has a clearly written policy covering equal opportunities, harassment and complaints, both for staff and clients. Equal opportunities features in the induction of New Deal clients and newly recruited staff. However, the policy is not systematically reviewed at regular intervals and there is no further training in equality of opportunity for staff. Some promotional material is produced which recognises the diversity of the clients. However, there are few displays or images to reinforce this. Data are not regularly analysed to identify the under-represented groups, or to compare the achievements of different groups of clients.

16. There is no induction programme for the clients referred by the probation service. These clients do not receive any equal opportunities training, and are not clear about their rights or responsibilities. Little attention is paid to equal opportunities during clients' progress reviews. Clients are not asked questions to confirm their understanding. They are not asked whether they have any problems with bullying, harassment or any other equality of opportunity issue. The paperwork used does not encourage the discussion or recording of specific problems.

17. New Deal clients have a good understanding of the complaints and grievance policy and make use of it when necessary. However, the records of complaints are stored in clients' files, not centrally. The complaints are not analysed to identify trends. Complaints and appeals are not a regular agenda item at management meetings.

18. Surrey Springboard's recruitment literature states that it is an equal opportunities employer. Although it has a policy which expresses its commitment to openness and competition in its staff appointments, the organisation has not always complied with this when recruiting or promoting staff.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 5

19. There is no systematic quality assurance applied across all departments. However, some takes place within the client services division. For example, managers and their staff maintain a wall chart showing who is on what option or programme and the stages they have reached. Managers use the chart as a basis for discussions with their staff and clients on progress and achievement. There are policies for many of the key processes relating to staff and employment, but no detailed procedures in place to monitor their effectiveness. Document control is weak and many documents are not dated. The self-assessment process did not identify the lack of a quality assurance system as a weakness.

20. There is no systematic monitoring of training and learning. Training sessions are not formally observed and judged against agreed performance criteria, and there is no record of any feedback given to staff. The quality of activities such as induction, advice and guidance and assessment is not measured. These key indicators are not a regular agenda item at team meetings and staff are not encouraged to consider their performance against agreed standards. The staff review process does not set clear, measurable priorities.

21. There is ineffective target-setting throughout the organisation. Targets are not used to measure improvements in quality. For example, clients are not set targets during their progress reviews, and they are not given structured, short-term challenges. The quality of the mentoring provided by the volunteers is not systematically evaluated against appropriate standards. The new strategic plan does not identify targets, timescales, staff responsible or who will monitor progress towards any actions.

22. The company produced its current self-assessment report in August 2002. The management team responsible for the client services division carried out the self-assessment and circulated the draft report to staff for comment. Few comments were received and the report was adopted. Surrey Springboard has no development plan to deal with the weaknesses identified in the report. Inspectors made many judgements which differed from those in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report graded the provision of quality assurance as satisfactory. Inspectors found it very weak.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	18	5
Life Skills	28	5

23. There are two entry routes to foundation programmes. Jobcentre Plus refers New Deal clients, and Surrey Probation Area refers clients who have a background of criminal offending. All are funded by Surrey LSC. All clients have an initial interview and an initial assessment. New Deal clients are given an induction, but the probation service's clients are not. Surrey Springboard's target for New Deal clients is the achievement of the key skills units or of defined basic skills. There are no achievement targets for probation clients but the programme is offered in addition to the contract.

24. There are three clients on the environment task force option and five on the voluntary sector option of New Deal 18-24. The programmes last for 26 weeks, and their main purpose is to get clients into paid work as soon as possible. Training programmes are marketed to prospective clients at Gateway to Work courses run by Jobcentre Plus. Surrey Springboard gives each client an initial interview and assessment, following which a learning plan is agreed and a suitable work placement identified. The client is interviewed by the prospective employer before the work placement is confirmed. Surrey Springboard provides a one-day induction at the training centre. It covers the aims and benefits of the programme, attendance, health and safety, the role of staff, the support available, appropriate behaviour, equal opportunities, and the complaints and grievance procedure. Clients attend their work placements for three days each week, and spend the remaining two days at the training centre working on jobsearch and job skills.

25. All the clients are offered training in key skills at level 1 or level 2. The units followed are working with others, and improving own learning and performance. Clients are also offered basic skills training to help them to progress onto mainstream programmes. Clients are assessed by the key skills or basic skills co-ordinators, and then matched with a volunteer who works with them on their basic and key skills. Training co-ordinators provide a link between the volunteers and the clients. They also monitor the clients' progress. Training takes place in a number of locations in Surrey, including probation service offices and jobcentres. There are 10 New Deal clients in the Gateway on basic skills programmes. One former New Deal client is continuing on a key skills programme although his time on the New Deal option has ended. Nineteen of the learners referred by the probation service are on basic skills programmes and nine are on key skills programmes.

SURREY SPRINGBOARD

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Life Skills																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	32		15													
Retained*	32		15	100												
Successfully completed	13		6	40												
Still in learning	19		9	60												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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

New Deal 18-24											
New Deal 18-24											
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	41		85		75		34				
Retained*	10	24	29	34	26	35	12	35			
Planned learning completed	4	10	18	21	18	24	11	32			
Gained job	6	15	13	15	8	11	3	9			
Still in training	18	44	0	0	0	0	0	0			

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

STRENGTHS

- good relationships with, and support for, clients
- good training in interview skills

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective initial assessment
- poor attendance rates at basic and key skills sessions
- poor key skills training
- weak reviews of clients' progress
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- poor rates of progress into employment

26. Staff have experience of working with a wide range of clients and are sensitive to their social and support needs. Relationships between trainers and clients are friendly and relaxed. These relationships enable the clients to develop confidence, trust and self-esteem. The ratio of staff to clients is good. Clients speak highly of the help and support they receive from their trainers and other staff. Surrey Springboard has given financial support to clients to help them buy clothing and personal items and to enable them to engage in constructive leisure activities.

27. Training in interview skills is good, and clients are prepared effectively for job interviews. The building of clients' confidence and self-esteem is at the core of the programme. In mock interviews, clients are encouraged to be self-critical, and trainers give constructive feedback. There are good resources including digital video equipment which is used to show clients how they perform at interviews, and enable them to improve their interview technique. The job skills training includes writing curriculum vitae and filling in application forms.

28. Initial assessments are not fully used as a basis for planning clients' learning. Clients' individual learning plans are developed following an interview and assessment with a member of the Springboard staff. Information about learning programmes is recorded by Jobcentre Plus and Surrey Springboard, but not always used to plan and measure progress. A basic skills assessment is completed after the individual learning plan has been drawn up. It is not used to identify learning needs. As a consequence, some clients' plans are inappropriate. The learning goals set are too general to enable clients to clearly understand their targets, or to measure how far they have progressed. In some sessions, the activities fail to meet clients' identified learning needs.

29. The attendance rate at basic and key skills sessions is poor. Considerable staff time is wasted travelling to external venues when the clients fail to turn up for sessions. During the inspection, the attendance rate in basic skills sessions was only 40 per cent.

30. Key skills training is poor. The training takes place at one-to-one sessions and, although a range of topics is discussed, units or elements of key skills are not always referred to. There is no planning of specific targets for sessions, and learning and progress is not measured. Clients are not registered with an examination awarding body, and there are no arrangements for assessment or internal verification.

31. Progress reviews are weak. For New Deal clients, reviews are regular but targets are not set and the reviews are not thorough. Staff are committed to what they do but some give unrealistic guidance in reviews because they lack expertise. The post of employment adviser is currently vacant and Surrey Springboard has no formally-trained guidance staff. The focus of progress reviews is mainly on pastoral support and the discussion of personal issues. There is insufficient reflection on achievement or on planning further small learning steps.

32. There is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training for New Deal clients. There is no evidence of realistic short-term goals being set or monitored. Although they give clients the opportunity to learn transferable work skills, some work placements are poorly matched to the client's interest and skill level.

33. There are poor rates of progress into employment. Between 1999 and 2002, no more than 15 per cent of clients gained jobs. Many clients leave the option and then return and go through the programme for a second time.

34. The self-assessment report graded the foundation programmes as satisfactory. Inspectors regarded the weaknesses identified as significant enough to award a grade 5.

Good Practice

During interview training, clients were asked a specific question about their understanding and view of equal opportunities. This activity was intended to check and reinforce their understanding of the issues. All the clients, who were of differing ability levels, gave adequate answers.

Poor Practice

The portfolio of a client working on the key skills unit, improving own learning and performance, was held and managed entirely by the trainer. The client's action plan was determined by, and written by, the tutor. The client merely agreed and signed the plan with no involvement in its production.