

REINSPECTION REPORT

North East Employment Training Agency Limited Reinspection

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

SUMMARY

The provider

North East Employment Training Agency Limited is a small private training company in Gateshead. It contracts with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning in hairdressing and Entry to Employment. It also has a contract with Jobcentre Plus to provide New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults. Since the previous inspection in December 2001, there have been some changes to staffing and training. North East Employment Training Agency Limited's board is now made up of four directors. These are the chair of the board, the managing director, the company secretary and a recently appointed non-executive director. North East Employment Training Agency Limited now has a senior management team of three. Its members are the managing director, the training manager and the quality assurance manager. The managing director is responsible for managing North East Employment Training Agency Limited and reports to the chair of the board. The training manager is responsible for training and health and safety. The quality assurance manager is responsible for quality assurance and equal opportunities. The company has a total of 28 staff and 195 learners. Of the learners, 89 are young people working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) or modern apprenticeships in hairdressing. Over 95 per cent of these are employed. A further 53 learners are young people in Entry to Employment. These learners transferred from North East Employment Training Agency Limited's former Life Skills programme. The remaining 53 learners are in work-based learning for adults, which was not covered by the previous inspection. At the time of the reinspection, 47 adults were on basic employability training or short intensive basic skills programmes and a further six were on the full-time education and training option of New Deal. North East Employment Training Agency Limited also has a contract to provide Entry to Employment on behalf of another training provider, but this provision was not covered by the reinspection. Learners attend training at North East Employment Training Agency Limited's main training centre in Gateshead or one of its other training centres, in Washington, Blyth, Newcastle and South Shields.

Overall judgement

In December 2001, the Adult Learning Inspectorate judged that North East Employment Training Agency Limited had unsatisfactory leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance. Life Skills provision was satisfactory but work-based learning in hairdressing was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection, all aspects of provision were judged to be good.

Grades awarded

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

	Inspection	Reinspection
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4	2
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	2

	Inspection	Reinspection
Foundation programmes	3	2
Contributory grades:		
Life Skills	3	None
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults		2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- strong strategic and day-to-day management
- effective management action to achieve continuous improvement
- good equal opportunities policy and practice
- particularly good support for learners
- good training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate collection and use of data
- lack of consistency in initial assessment

THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of North East Employment Training Agency Limited (NEETA) was carried out in four phases, including the planning meeting. Three inspectors spent a total of 14 days at NEETA's training centres between February 2003 and September 2003. They interviewed 45 learners and 20 staff. They also visited six workplaces and interviewed five employers. Inspectors examined 22 portfolios and 18 individual learning plans. They observed reviews of learners' progress and observed and graded 10 learning sessions and assessments. Inspectors examined management information, including the company's strategic plan and new development plans. They also studied the action plan produced after the previous inspection, which was updated throughout the reinspection to reflect achievement of targets.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Foundation programmes	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	4
Total	0	1	0	4	1	0	0	6

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Foundation programmes	0	1	4	2	0	0	0	7
Total	0	1	7	2	0	0	0	10

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

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

STRENGTHS

- strong strategic and day-to-day management
- effective communications
- good links with other organisations
- effective strategies to help learners with literacy, numeracy and language
- good equal opportunities policy and practice
- effective management action to achieve continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate collection and use of data

2. Leadership and management are now good. The senior management team has guided staff effectively in putting right the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. All staff have copies of NEETA's three-year strategic plan. NEETA has clear strategies for finance and accommodation. All new work has a detailed budget. Managers have obtained extra funding to develop NEETA as a business. The quality assurance manager and an external consultant thoroughly audit and assess the risk of all new business developments. Since the previous inspection, NEETA has adopted a new staffing structure with fewer tiers of management. This has simplified reporting. Roles and job descriptions are clear. NEETA has increased the number of staff providing foundation programmes by 25 per cent, to help with the introduction of E2E. There has also been a 14 per cent increase in the number of hairdressing staff. Staff salaries compare favourably with local salaries. This helps to attract and retain well-qualified staff. NEETA has recently devised a yearly staff awards ceremony, at which it presents badges for long service.

3. All staff are aware of their personal targets and the company's overall targets. These are reflected in targets for the recruitment and retention of learners. All staff are involved in planning training and producing action plans to deal with weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The action plans are regularly updated as tasks are completed. Day-to-day management is good. Staff and learners find managers easy to approach. This encourages the speedy resolution of problems. Since the previous inspection, strategies to improve retention and achievement rates have focused strongly on improving procedures for training, assessment, initial assessment and induction. Managers consider the retention of staff essential to maintaining quality and continuity for learners. This strength was recognised at the previous inspection. Staff development and training are given a high priority, in line with the government's Success for All

strategy. All staff have individual development plans which are regularly reviewed and updated. NEETA's strategic plan reflects its commitment to ensuring that all staff are able to meet current standards. All staff have attended training days on the new core curriculum for adults. All staff training is evaluated and the results are used to plan future training. New staff receive a helpful induction. Staff appraisal is effective. As well as having yearly appraisals, staff have regular reviews throughout the year to assess their progress against business targets and to identify any needs for training. Training needs may be identified by staff themselves or by the company, for example through its regular observation of training. NEETA has increased employers' involvement in training by introducing an employers' pack and agreements with employers. The agreements show when learners will receive assessment and training. There are incentives for employers to encourage learners to attend training. Some employers' staff have achieved an assessor's award, with NEETA's encouragement. NEETA is promoting awareness of the assessor's award but assessment is still carried out by NEETA's staff. Retention and achievement rates have improved since the previous inspection. In hairdressing, the overall achievement rate is over 60 per cent. On foundation programmes, retention rates now exceed 60 per cent and there has been a large increase in the proportion of learners who move on to work.

4. Internal and external communications are good. Managers now provide the board with quarterly summaries of performance against targets. Staff receive regular updates about progress through team and staff meetings, staff newsletters, memoranda and informal conversations. There are well-planned training and consultation days for all staff every six months. All meetings have agendas and minutes. There is a clear chart showing all learners' progress on the wall of the staff area. Staff identify learners who need additional support and set deadlines for their progress. Contact with employers is good. NEETA seeks employers' views through telephone calls and regular monitoring visits and responds to their suggestions. NEETA has set a target of 75 per cent of employers being involved in reviews of learners' progress and is working with employers to achieve this. The training centres display photographs of all staff, including cleaners and maintenance staff. This makes it easier for learners to contact them with their queries. An attractive marketing and induction pack has recently been developed. This includes a booklet on the procedures for supporting learners with disabilities, which includes useful names, numbers and e-mail addresses. At the time of reinspection, however, this was not ready for distribution. A learners' forum meets frequently and sends written requests and reports to managers. Managers respond in writing and record all correspondence.

5. Since the previous inspection, NEETA has increased its links with other organisations. It now has links with the Prison Service, local emergency services, the local Jewish community and a broad range of specialist agencies. NEETA is a member of a work-based learning consortium in Gateshead, which has well-advanced plans to set up a purpose-built training centre for all work-based learning and to achieve Learning and Skills Council (LSC) recognition as a centre of vocational excellence. The consortium meets regularly to share good practice and this arrangement has been adopted by similar groups across the country. NEETA has good links with employers and a local

college of further education. Volunteers from the college work alongside learners in literacy and numeracy classes. NEETA's link with the college helps learners to move on to further education and training. Effective links with specialist agencies enable learners to receive guidance and support, for example with housing or health problems. NEETA has good relationships with Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and local schools. All the Entry to Employment (E2E) learners are referred from Connexions and NEETA stays in contact with Connexions to ensure that learners continue to receive suitable work experience.

6. NEETA has effective strategies to meet additional learning needs. Additional learning needs are identified through initial assessment or an extended induction and recorded in individual learning plans. The company then arranges suitable support from specialist staff, volunteers or other agencies. Volunteers work alongside less confident adult learners to encourage them to develop their writing skills and to speak during group sessions. A literacy and numeracy trainer visits learners in their work placements to give individual help. The trainer uses a laptop when work needs to be done on a computer. Learners can describe the progress they have made and speak confidently about their improved literacy and numeracy skills. NEETA uses a diagnostic assessment to identify learners with dyslexia, as part of their initial assessment. A specialist trainer provides support for these learners and all staff can contact the trainer for guidance on assessment or resources. However, NEETA does not check new learners for hearing or visual impairments, even though observations of some learners suggest that their vision is poor. Records of literacy and numeracy sessions have insufficient detail about the specific areas that have been covered, for example addition or subtraction. The literacy and numeracy trainer records this information in a diary, but this is not easily available for other trainers to refer to.

7. NEETA monitors and analyses learners' achievement, retention and attendance rates as required by its various contracts. It also gathers equal opportunities data and uses the information to plan further developments. Until recently, however, the company has collected information manually and submitted it when required. Throughout the reinspection, it has been difficult to detect trends, because data have not been gathered in a consistent manner. Reports are submitted to the board. Information about learners' progress is contained in various memoranda and tables and in charts on the walls of the staff area. This enables staff to understand their own performance against set targets. Some staff were uncertain about the process for recording learners' retention and achievement rates. However, their understanding had greatly improved by the end of the reinspection. Managers have identified a system that will collect this information electronically. At the time of the reinspection, however, it had not been installed and training in its use had not been provided for all the appropriate staff. Data are collected and analysed and used to set targets. However, there is no formal system for recording and comparing the performance of each training centre to help develop strategies for improvement. NEETA is a small company and managers and staff have a good, up-to-date knowledge of all learners on its programmes.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

8. NEETA has good equal opportunities policies and practices. The previous inspection report recognised NEETA's commitment to widening participation by offering training to learners considered difficult to help. Thirty per cent of E2E learners and all adult learners have additional learning or social needs. Many have both. Since the previous inspection, the company has thoroughly revised its equal opportunities policies and procedures. There are separate versions for staff and learners. NEETA has ensured that the simplified version given to learners is at a suitable level of readability. The quality assurance manager is the named equal opportunities officer. All the learners know her name and contact number. All induction packs contain a training agreement, which describes learners' rights and responsibilities.

9. NEETA provides particularly good learning and pastoral support for learners. There are good relationships between learners and staff at all levels. Learners are confident about stopping senior staff to talk to them or ask them questions. Left-handed learners are discreetly offered individual training in hairdressing techniques, which are generally taught with right-handed demonstrations. The company uses its links with specialist agencies to resolve more difficult and sensitive personal and social problems, such as housing problems or mental, sexual or physical health problems. To promote respect for others, training centres have zones where swearing is prohibited and punished. There is an attractive room for learners to take breaks and eat their lunch. The room is checked by managers, but learners are encouraged to keep it tidy and use it appropriately. Learners value the support they receive and the independence involved in being able to organise their own room. Learners who complain about bullying or harassment receive good support and staff are kept up to date about problems as they arise.

10. Managers give a high priority to training in equal opportunities. Staff have had recent training, through training sessions and e-learning. Learners are able to talk confidently and readily about equal opportunities. Popular group activities are effective in promoting awareness of equal opportunities and challenging inappropriate behaviour and language. These include drama with a local drama group and poster competitions. Winning entries in the poster competitions are used to decorate displays in the training centres. Staff share information about activities to promote equal opportunities so that good practice can be extended throughout the organisation. The corridors and training rooms in the training centres have attractive wall displays about individual learners' achievements. Learners take responsibility for writing stories of their success and mounting the displays and photographs.

11. Data are used to plan staff training and strategies to recruit learners from under-represented groups. All complaints are recorded and analysed by the equal opportunities officer. Information about equal opportunities and complaints is summarised in the company's newsletter and discussed at meetings. The company is seeking to provide training in African-Caribbean hairdressing but is finding it difficult to recruit suitable trainers because of the low number of African-Caribbean people in the region. An effective scheme has been developed to promote hairdressing careers for men and a

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healthier lifestyle through sport. This uses male role models who have achieved success in the local area.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 2**

12. NEETA's quality assurance arrangements have improved greatly since the previous inspection and are now good. Managers are working hard to achieve continuous improvement. The quality assurance manager is a member of the senior management team. She is assisted by an external consultant, who audits compliance with quality assurance procedures. The company has comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures. These are closely linked to its strategic and business-development plans, which thoroughly cover all aspects of training and organisational development. Since the previous inspection, NEETA has amended its quality assurance procedures to focus on the service provided to learners. The quality assurance manual contains clear guidance on all procedures, with examples showing how to complete all paperwork to ensure consistency. There is strong control of procedures and documents. Staff are given checklists to ensure that they follow the correct procedures. NEETA carries out regular audits of the effectiveness of its systems.

13. All staff were involved in the most recent self-assessment, which was guided by an external consultant. Staff also have copies of the most recent self-assessment report, which was produced in January 2003. The action plan produced after the previous inspection deals thoroughly with all the required improvements, listing actions with timescales and the names of those responsible for carrying them out. It is reviewed by the managing director every three months and the findings are posted on the staff notice board. However, not all staff read these notices. All staff are updated about the action plan at regular meetings and a two-monthly newsletter provides details of progress against targets. The most recent self-assessment report accurately reflects the strengths and weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. It also assesses the company's progress since the previous inspection and identifies areas that still need to be improved. NEETA has used its regularly updated action plan effectively to monitor progress towards set targets. Inspectors agreed with the company's judgements about the progress it had made by the end of the reinspection.

14. Observation of training now forms part of the quality assurance and staff appraisal processes. The relatively narrow four-point scale used to grade staff provides information about their performance, but not sufficiently to allow a direct comparison with the 'Common Inspection Framework' grades. Senior staff carry out scheduled and unscheduled observations of training. This ensures consistency with set practices. Trainers also observe each other. This enables them to share good practice and to find out about activities in other training centres. Staff receive detailed and objective written and spoken feedback, which identifies any needs for training or development. Staff value the appraisal and staff development processes. Good practice is effectively shared, through team meetings, newsletters and observation.

15. The company vets salons thoroughly before accepting their staff as learners. This ensures that all learners have opportunities to practise the skills they need for their qualifications. NEETA telephones the salons every month to check on each learner's progress and to identify any concerns that employers have. These calls form part of the company's auditing. The calls are made by senior tutors from other training centres to

ensure that they are carried out objectively. A record is kept of each call. The company collects and analyses learners' and employers' views on the quality of training. Internal verification in hairdressing is satisfactory. It is managed by the training manager, who uses clear systems for planning and monitoring. There are clear procedures for induction, training, assessment, internal verification, progress reviews and the recording of off-the-job training. The training manager checks that all the procedures guarantee quality. Managers now ensure that feedback from internal verifiers is signed to confirm that any necessary actions have been carried out. An initial assessment manual contains examples of tests to be used. However, there is no guidance to ensure that the results of initial assessments are recorded clearly and consistently.

Good Practice

Learners have their own room in the main training centre where they can spend breaks and rest periods. NEETA provides good furniture and equipment and encourages learners to decorate and maintain the room themselves. This encourages responsibility. Learners decide what they want in the room and on the door. They are paid to clean it and recognise cleaning as essential. They enjoy having the room and respect the rules for keeping it in a good condition. Rotas for maintaining the room are posted up and followed. The room is used for discussion groups and the learners' forum. Learners receive free fresh fruit, sandwiches and drinks. This ensures that they have at least one healthy meal each day.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	89	2

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

STRENGTHS

- good support for learners
- good training
- good work placements
- good progress reviews

WEAKNESSES

- lack of clarity about learners' long-term targets

16. Since the previous inspection, NEETA's strategies for improvement have focused on improving retention and achievement rates by improving training, assessment and the recording of information.

17. Learners receive good pastoral support and good support with their training. NEETA's staff intervene when learners are experiencing problems in the workplace. They also support learners who are experiencing personal problems and provide guidance on housing, benefits and transport. This support has enabled some learners with serious personal problems to stay in training.

18. NEETA provides good training in hairdressing. The company's trainers are effective role models and work to an excellent standard. The three training sessions in hairdressing that were observed were all graded as good. The ratio of learners to trainers, approximately six learners to one trainer, allows effective teaching. Training sessions are well planned. NEETA's trainers give individual help as required with practical work and background knowledge. Training sessions provide a range of learning opportunities through individual and group activities. Trainers provide good handouts to improve understanding. A wide range of videos is used for training. Learners develop good skills during their training. They discuss training and personal matters confidently with NEETA's staff, who are considered easy to approach. The company celebrates learners' achievements by arranging frequent press coverage and organising displays in its training centres. The training centres are now open five days a

week, which gives learners greater flexibility in choosing when they attend. Left-handed learners who are finding it difficult to develop hairdressing skills receive support from left-handed hairdressers employed by NEETA. These hairdressers demonstrate how to develop various techniques. Learners are set suitable targets throughout their training and receive financial rewards for achieving them.

19. NEETA continues to provide good work placements. This strength was identified at the previous inspection. Learners' work placements achieve good commercial standards and provide a wide range of hairdressing services. The company's own salon in the centre of Newcastle compares well with other commercial city-centre salons. The salons have good resources and a wide range of professional products. Senior staff at the salons set very good professional standards. Employers arrange extra training in the workplace and arrange for learners to attend courses, such as manufacturers' courses, that extend their understanding to beyond what is required for the NVQ. Employers have a good understanding of the NVQ and help learners to make progress towards their qualification. NEETA has given assessor training to staff at some of the salons, to improve their understanding of the requirements of the qualification. However, these staff do not carry out assessments. Learners are able to develop their confidence in training; some learners have opportunities to attend or take part in hair demonstrations and shows. Most learners are encouraged to enter hairdressing competitions.

20. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks and are now good. Learners who are receiving additional support have their progress reviewed more frequently. Progress reviews take place at the workplace. Either the employer or the salon manager attends. There is some co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. Employers arrange tasks that reinforce background knowledge taught off the job. The records of progress reviews are copied to learners and their employers. NEETA's staff now contact employers by telephone, sometimes weekly, to update them about learners' progress. At the previous inspection, target-setting was identified as a weakness. Now, however, learners and employers are encouraged to help set short-term targets. Learners are aware of their targets and the deadlines for achieving them. Targets are sufficiently demanding to motivate learners.

21. It is too soon for apprenticeship completion rates to have improved much since the previous inspection. However, retention rates have improved greatly for all hairdressing programmes. Inspectors found good work in learners' portfolios and good short-term target-setting. Learners were receiving suitable support that was helping them stay in training. For learners taking NVQs only, retention rates improved from 44 per cent during 2000-01 to 80 per cent during 2001-02. Over the same period, the achievement rate improved from 38 per cent to 76 per cent. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices have also improved. The retention rate for 2000-01 was 25 per cent. Of the learners who started during 2001-02, 60 per cent either completed their apprenticeships or stayed in training for the time planned, and a further 16 per cent are still in training. Completion rates for foundation modern apprentices also improved, from 25 per cent to 27 per cent. Of the learners who started advanced modern apprenticeships in 2001-02, 31 per cent either completed their frameworks or stayed in

training for the time planned. However, a further 26 per cent are still in training. NEETA has worked hard to improve retention and achievement rates, which were a key weakness at the previous inspection

22. Internal verification takes place regularly. It is planned in advance and covers all aspects of assessment. Internal verification is adequately recorded and can be detected from learners' portfolios. Internal verifiers observe assessors regularly and provide good, constructive feedback. New assessors have their work checked more often to ensure that they are working to a suitable standard. Internal verifiers and assessors agree on any necessary action and internal verifiers check that assessors carry it out. The assessors meet often to make sure that they are all following the same procedures.

23. All learners take literacy and numeracy tests during induction. NEETA has systems to support learners who are identified as needing additional support. It provides particularly good support to learners in completing assignments and developing their background knowledge. Help with literacy and numeracy support is provided by a specialist basic and key skills tutor employed by NEETA. Some of this support is well planned and there have been some attempts to evaluate its effectiveness. Literacy and numeracy sessions are recorded by the basic skills tutor in a diary. Other trainers can refer to a monitoring sheet. However, activities are not recorded in detail in learners' files. NEETA arranges literacy and numeracy sessions at a time and place to suit the individual learner. Learners have a good understanding of the additional support they are receiving. One learner felt that the additional support she was receiving was helping her both with her NVQ and with her work more generally. Several learners willingly give up their own time to attend literacy and numeracy sessions. NEETA is planning to offer more sessions, so that learners can attend them during their planned training time.

24. Learners' long-term targets are unclear. Learners take an initial assessment during their eight-week induction period. NEETA uses the results to set long-term targets for each learner, taking into account previous experience, such as a Saturday job in hairdressing. The dates when learners are expected to achieve their qualifications are reviewed at progress reviews and sometimes changed. Learners are unclear when they are expected to achieve the individual units of their NVQs. Long-term targets are not recorded in learners' portfolios and the targets fail to motivate learners to achieve their goals.

Good Practice

Left-handed learners are identified at induction and offered extra support from left-handed hairdressers, who can demonstrate practical skills. This support is offered in a sensitive manner. NEETA's staff write to learners offering the support but learners do not have to accept it. When this support is given, it is provided in a discreet manner.

Prominent male hairdressers who work with the training provider are used to encourage men into hairdressing. The hairdressers give demonstrations at NEETA's premises and talk to learners about how they can progress in their careers. They also give demonstrations at local shopping centres, which members of the press are invited to cover.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	53	None
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	53	2

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

STRENGTHS

- good training
- wide range of learning activities
- good rates of achievement of personal learning goals
- good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- lack of consistency in initial assessment

25. Foundation programmes changed greatly during the process of reinspection. NEETA's pilot E2E programme, involving 25 young people leaving care, ended in July 2003, as did its Life Skills programme. An E2E contract has been awarded so that the remaining 53 learners can complete their programmes. All the learners who have joined E2E since August 2003 are with another provider, which uses NEETA as its subcontractor. This subcontracted provision was not covered by the reinspection. Foundation programmes are managed from NEETA's main office in Gateshead and provided at three of NEETA's training centres, in Newcastle, Blyth and Gateshead. E2E learners are referred to NEETA by Connexions and attend for 16 to 30 hours a week over five days. There are also 53 adults attending work-based learning or New Deal options. Adult learners are referred by Jobcentre Plus. Some attend voluntarily, but most have to attend. Adult learners have an initial interview with NEETA to ascertain their needs, skills and abilities. An action plan is then agreed. Adults who are in basic employability training (BET) can attend for up to 26 weeks and aim to find jobs on leaving. Short intensive basic skills (SIBS) training caters for adults who need intensive help with literacy and numeracy. Learners attend SIBS training for up to eight weeks and aim to achieve a level 1 qualification in literacy or numeracy in that time. Some learners on the full-time education and training option of New Deal attend for 26 weeks and work towards a qualification in literacy and numeracy. Others attend for up to one year and work towards a level 2 NVQ in hairdressing. NEETA provides help with finding work that is tailored to individual learners' needs. Jobcentre Plus contracts a private company to carry out initial assessment of adult learners before referring them to NEETA. NEETA carries out a further assessment of their needs within their first five days

on the programme. All young people are initially assessed within their first eight weeks on the programme. Learners have an induction, which includes discussion of their initial assessment results and agreement on an individual learning plan. They can work towards nationally recognised qualifications in literacy or numeracy at entry levels 1, 2 and 3. Off-the-job training at the training centre pays attention to learners' personal development. All learners are offered full-time or part-time work placements with local employers.

26. NEETA provides good training, which is well planned and meets learners' needs. Of the seven learning sessions observed by inspectors, two were satisfactory and the rest were good or very good. Learning sessions make effective use of everyday situations and tasks are closely related to learners' personal circumstances. Learning sessions cover topical issues, such as healthy living and childcare issues. When one adult learner moved house recently, the trainer designed an interesting and informative day of literacy and numeracy activities related to the event. This enabled the group to understand what is involved in moving house and to make a realistic assessment of the cost of furnishing a new home. Learners in E2E develop their information technology skills by designing a colourful magazine. This activity also helps them to learn about health, relationships and other social and personal matters. A visiting drama group uses role-play and workshops to illustrate specific issues affecting young people.

27. NEETA uses a wide range of training activities to improve learners' teamwork skills and raise their awareness of current social and economic issues. Activities include drama, sport, social events and outdoor activity courses. Learners designed their own room in the training centre. This involved selecting a colour scheme, decorating, furnishing and budgeting. Resources for the foundation programmes are generally satisfactory, although some worksheets are not entirely suitable for learners with literacy difficulties. One worksheet was cluttered and contained too much text for the learners who were using it. It also distracted learners with material that they did not need to read. The training rooms have computers and learners can now use the internet in each training centre. Learners use the internet to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and to seek work and find information for their projects. Staff also make good use of the internet for research and personal development. Computers are used to produce good-quality documents and to add variety to learning methods.

28. Learners make good progress towards their personal learning goals. They speak enthusiastically about their achievements and have confidence in their trainers. Learners' progress is recognised throughout their training, particularly at their monthly progress reviews. Adult learners were particularly enthusiastic about their increased confidence and new skills and their ability to mix with a wide range of people. The main target for clients who are funded by Jobcentre Plus is to gain employment. However, these clients are also encouraged to achieve qualifications, such as qualifications in first aid, health and safety or in literacy, numeracy or computing.

29. Learners receive particularly good individual support. NEETA meets their individual social needs in a flexible way. Specialist agencies are used to help learners stay in

training and make progress. For example, a counselling service has assisted one learner who was facing difficulties. Several learners have been homeless and NEETA has contacted housing agencies and helped them to obtain housing. Two adult learners had been unable to mix with other people for several years. Now both speak out readily and volunteer information in a group. Staff spot difficulties and help learners to find suitable support. Learners suspected of having visual problems have been encouraged to visit an optician with a member of staff. NEETA has paid for spectacles for two learners. Activities include visits to sports and leisure centres and cultural events, such as the Queen's visit to open the Millennium Bridge. NEETA uses a player in a well-known rugby union team who has dyslexia as a role model. The player encourages learners to adopt a healthier lifestyle through sport. Learners who have difficulty in work placements are confident about returning to the training centre and ask for help. In some cases, this has resulted in a more suitable work placement. Staff work hard to keep learners in their work placements, whatever problems they are facing.

30. At the previous inspection, some learners were not being offered work experience. By the reinspection, all learners were being offered either part-time or full-time work placements. All learners have satisfactory individual learning plans, which are followed. Learners' progress is recorded at effective monthly reviews, which are also used to plan actions and set targets to be achieved by the next review.

31. Attendance and retention rates are satisfactory. NEETA did not start to provide programmes for adult learners until the middle of 2001. Therefore, data are available for only one full year, April 2002 to March 2003, and it is not possible to identify trends. However, the proportion of learners who gained employment on leaving BET increased from 31 per cent in 2001-02 to 39 per cent in 2002-03. This exceeds the target of 25 per cent. NEETA began to provide Life Skills in 2001, when 108 learners started training. In 2001, the retention rate was poor, at 29 per cent. The following year, 84 learners started training and the retention rate increased to 60 per cent.

32. All learners have an initial assessment. NEETA makes good use of the expertise of its staff. Any learner who is identified as needing additional support is referred to a tutor who is trained in diagnostic assessment, as well as dyslexia and psychometric testing. This same tutor has been training other staff, to develop their skills in carrying out assessments and reviewing progress. This includes training in carrying out initial assessments and formative assessments, as well as summative assessments. However, this started to happen only recently and some staff are still unclear about the purpose of initial assessment and the procedures they should follow. NEETA has identified some problems with initial assessment and has started to put them right. Staff can refer to a file that contains externally produced diagnostic materials and worksheets and some of NEETA's own materials. However, some worksheets are not clearly marked as being for assessment purposes. Although NEETA has given its staff some training in initial assessment, it has not provided guidance on how to use these worksheets or how to mark learners' work. This means that staff are not carrying out initial assessment consistently and producing objective results. NEETA has introduced a standard initial assessment pack for learners in E2E but it is too soon to evaluate its effectiveness. There

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is no such pack for adult learners.