

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Cathedral Centre

23 June 2003



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based learning 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

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.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Cathedral Centre

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Cathedral Centre (the Centre) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It has been providing education and training to young people and adults since July 1981, and is located in central Bradford. Its purpose is to offer people in Bradford opportunities to gain skills, through vocational training and education, within an accepting and caring community. Most learners are over 19 and unemployed, and many of those on Jobcentre Plus, or Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded programmes have been previously unsuccessfully placed with other providers. Currently, 60 per cent of learners are men, 15 per cent have a disability and 27 per cent are from minority ethnic groups.

2. The Centre provides training for 597 learners variously funded by Jobcentre Plus, the LSC and other sources of funding. Learners are receiving training and education in information and communications technology (ICT), visual and performing arts and media, and foundation programmes.

3. The senior management team consists of the chief executive and three directors, one for learning and quality assurance, one for finance and one for operations. The senior manager for learning, and the learners' progress and support manager, report to the director for learning and quality assurance, and the senior manager for business development reports to the chief executive. There are eight middle managers. An on-site nursery is free for learners' children and a central learner progress and support unit is available for all learners. The Centre expanded rapidly in 2001-02, and was restructured in 2001. It currently has 104 staff, 86 of whom are full time and 18 part time.

4. The Centre is based in Bradford, an area of high deprivation. In 2002, only 65 per cent of learners participated in education after year 11, compared with 74 per cent in the country as a whole. In 2001 the percentage of school leavers in Bradford achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSE) at grade C or above was 39.7 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally. The unemployment rate in May 2003 is 3.8 per cent for Bradford, compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent. According to the 2001 census, the minority ethnic representation in Bradford is 15.6 per cent. The Basic Skills Agency found that 28 per cent of adults in Bradford needed help with literacy or numeracy.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Information & communications technology

5. ICT training accounts for approximately 35 per cent of the Centre's activities. Twenty learners are on New Deal 18-24, of these, 11 are on the full-time education and training option and nine are on the voluntary sector option. Thirteen learners are on New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults and 311 are with other government-funded

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provision. Other learners, for example those on Life Skills provision, take part in ICT lessons in addition to their main programme. All learners are on accredited training programmes. Training is mainly provided in the large information technology (IT) workshop, utilising 64 networked computers which are available for over six hours a day, and some evening sessions. The nine outreach sessions, account for up to a quarter of ICT learners by number, but less than 10 per cent of the centre's ICT provision in terms of teaching hours. Most provision is for level 1 or level 2 courses.

### **Visual & performing arts & media**

6. The Centre provides a range of courses in visual and performing arts and media, with 125 learners on courses in the week of inspection. Eighty-five learners are LSC-funded, four are on New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults, and one learner is on New Deal 18-24. The remainder attending the courses are from other training programmes. The courses include pottery, art and design, photography, computer graphics and digital imaging. Many learners from other training programmes attend lessons in this area of learning in addition to their main programme. All courses have nationally recognised qualifications. Lessons are timetabled in the daytime from **Monday to Friday and run** for three hours.

### **Foundation programmes**

7. One hundred and twenty-eight learners currently attend foundation courses. Twenty-three are clients on the basic employment training option (BET) of New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults. Five more clients are on the Gateway to Work programme. One hundred learners are on other government-funded programmes, including Life Skills. They are all attending literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Most lessons contain learners from more than one funded group working together, and many receive additional support. Some learners are full-time at the centre, others attend lessons for just a few hours a week. Programmes operate on a roll-on, roll-off basis. A variety of accreditation is available, ranging from in-house certificates at pre-entry level in ESOL, to literacy and numeracy at level 2. Learners on the Life Skills programme follow a core of basic skills, literacy and numeracy, social and personal development, opportunities awareness, and employability skills. Options include ESOL, ICT, photography and multi-media. After 10 weeks learners go on to **further education, training or employment**. All Jobcentre Plus clients attend jobsearch for half a day, and work placements form part of all of Jobcentre Plus programmes.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	10
Number of inspection days	47
Number of learner interviews	136
Number of staff interviews	59
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8
Number of partner/external agency interviews	8

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the Centre's leadership and management, including equal opportunities and quality assurance are satisfactory. The quality of ICT provision is good. The provision in visual and performing arts and media is also good. Foundation programmes are satisfactory overall.

## GRADES

*grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

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

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Other government-funded provision	2
New Deal 18-24	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

<b>Visual &amp; performing arts &amp; media</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Other government-funded provision	2
Work-based learning for young people	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	None
New Deal 18-24	None

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Other government-funded provision	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3
Life Skills	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

9. Achievement rates on ICT programmes are very good. Eighty per cent of the 400 learners in 2000-2001 and 90 per cent of the 500 learners in 2001-02 achieved qualifications. Retention rates were 84 per cent and 97 per cent, respectively, during these periods. **Learners gain a good understanding of a variety of software applications and make rapid progress towards interim targets.**

10. **Learners on visual and performing arts and media courses have good achievement rates.** All 31 learners entered for qualifications in 2001-2002 were successful. Retention rates are good, with 97 per cent of learners completing their courses in 2001-02. Standards of work are very good. **Learners develop their knowledge and understanding of subjects and apply these in their practical work.**

11. **The pass rates for LSC-funded literacy and numeracy training are good.** Ninety per cent of the 169 LSC learners who started the programme in 2001-2 achieved a qualification. On Life Skills programmes in 2001-02, 91 per cent of learners progressed to further education, training or employment. Retention rates on all courses are good. They have been above 90 per cent in literacy, numeracy and ESOL lessons for the past two years and 87 per cent in 2001-02 for the Life Skills programme.

12. **Many learners find employment after leaving the Gateway to Work course.** The rates have improved from 39 per cent in 2000-2001, to 51 per cent in 2001-2002. Of the 430 learners, 189 found jobs. So far in 2002-03, 102 of the 147 learners who completed their programme have found work.

13. **Learners on Life Skills programmes develop good independent learning skills.** They are encouraged to plan their own programmes and projects. **However, progress in ESOL is slow.**



## Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Information & communications technology	0	2	5	3	0	0	0	10
Visual & performing arts & media	0	4	3	1	1	0	0	9
Foundation programmes	0	0	5	15	4	1	0	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44</b>

14. The quality of teaching and learning sessions throughout the programme is satisfactory, with 48 per cent good or better. However, 13 per cent were unsatisfactory.

15. **Teaching standards are good on ICT courses, with 70 per cent good or better.** The training is well managed and the workbooks produced by the Centre are very clear and helpful. Clients on Jobcentre Plus courses, who do not attend voluntarily, make slower progress than learners on LSC-funded provision. Outreach provision is good.

16. **Visual, performing arts and media courses also have good teaching standards,** with 88 per cent which are good, or better, and 12 per cent are unsatisfactory. Learners develop good practical and technical skills and apply their work well to producing finished products. **However, the curriculum is Eurocentric, there is insufficient emphasis on cultural diversity.**

17. **Eighty-five per cent of teaching sessions on Life Skills programmes were judged to be good or better.** Learners have a varied and interesting programme, which encourages them to plan and organise their work effectively.

18. **Some teaching in ESOL and literacy and numeracy lessons is unsatisfactory.** In these lessons insufficient attention is given to learners' individual needs. Workbooks and tasks set are not contextualised and do not reflect the needs of learners, particularly those on Jobcentre Plus courses, where the primary goal is employment. In jobsearch, the language needs of learners are not given sufficient attention.

19. **Teaching accommodation is poor.** Although it is largely satisfactory on ICT lessons, for many other learners, the classrooms or interview rooms are cramped and poorly ventilated.

20. **The Centre does not have sufficient expertise in teaching ESOL and in the diagnosis and support for dyslexia.** Learners may be referred to another local college for specialist dyslexia support, but the Centre does not have a specialist on site.

21. **Initial assessment is unsatisfactory on ICT programmes.** On other programmes the learning goals are not specific enough for learners, and the monitoring of progress does not always emphasise the skills learners need to develop in order to improve.

22. **Good work placements are becoming increasingly effective in helping learners to**

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**find employment**, and there has been a substantial increase in the number of employers offering work placements.

23. **The range and timetabling of programmes is very effective**, and for most learners matches their needs.

24. **Support for learners is good**. The staff know the learners well, and the learners' progress and support unit provides helpful guidance. There is some task of co-ordination between this unit and the subject tutors reviewing learners' progress.

25. **The Centre provides a much appreciated nursery free of charge to learners' children**.

### Leadership and management

26. **Performance is good and improving on many programmes**. For all LSC programmes, the Centre has maintained good achievements or shown significant improvements. The Centre had some difficulties with Jobcentre Plus contracts in 2001-2, but those courses have shown improvements in the number of learners who find employment.

27. **Day-to-day operational management is good**. The management information system works effectively in timetabling and planning individual learner's programmes. This is a complex task, with learner's numbers changing daily. Learners and staff know where they should be and who should be in the lesson, and this helps with punctuality and a speedy response to absences. Communications are good.

28. **The Centre has an effective range of partnerships to widen participation for unemployed and disadvantaged people in Bradford**. It is acknowledged locally as a Centre that is welcoming to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. **A small, but significant number of staff showed a lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness towards learners**.

29. **There is no formal strategic plan**. Although the Centre has plans to grow and develop, the plans are not formally written down and agreed as part of strategic planning. The financial position has deteriorated over the past two years, resulting in a significant deficit against revenue targets for the first time in the centre's history. This is being resolved for the current financial year, with improved monitoring of performance against each contract, but there is insufficient financial risk assessment in relation to the volatile nature of many of the contracts held by the Centre.

30. The Centre has expanded rapidly, with many staff changes, and **the quality assurance arrangements are not effectively implemented by all staff**.

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good and improving achievement of challenging targets
- good management of operational aspects of learning programmes
- thorough staff development
- extensive range of additional activities
- strong and effective partnerships to widen the participation of disadvantaged groups

### **Weaknesses**

- weak strategic planning
- insufficiently thorough monitoring of the provision by the trustees
- cramped and poorly ventilated accommodation
- poor understanding of equality of opportunity by a significant minority of staff
- insufficient implementation of the quality assurance framework

## **Information & communications technology**

### **Strengths**

- good achievement rates by LSC-funded learners
- good rates of progress towards individual targets and qualifications
- very effective training
- very effective outreach provision
- very effective support for learners
- good operational management of learning programmes

### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory job outcomes for New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults programme
- poorly designed workstations in the IT workshop
- inadequate ICT initial assessment
- insufficient effective strategies for clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes

## **Visual & performing arts & media**

### **Strengths**

- good achievement rate for nationally recognised qualifications
- good achievement of practical and technical skills
- particularly effective resources to promote independent learning
- good work placements
- effective staff development

### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective individual learning goals for Jobcentre Plus clients
- insufficiently challenging tasks for a significant minority of learners
- insufficient consideration of cultural diversity in curriculum design and content

## **Foundation programmes**

### **Strengths**

- good achievement of primary goals by many LSC learners
- good and improving success in getting jobs by Gateway to Work clients
- very good teaching and learning on the Life Skills programme
- very effective personal support for learners
- effective expansion of links with employers
- very good day-to-day management of individualised learner programmes

### **Weaknesses**

- over-reliance on workbooks in workshops
- insufficient matching of tasks to learner's needs in literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- inadequate target-setting
- cramped and poorly ventilated classrooms
- insufficient expertise in ESOL and dyslexia
- poor cultural sensitivity in ESOL and jobsearch lessons

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CATHEDRAL CENTRE:**

- 'good at looking after you - not left to struggle - very patient'
- 'why couldn't we have had this support before?'
- 'our English improves'
- 'we can use the computer with good support from tutors'
- 'opportunities to choose subjects I like'
- 'it's better than looking at four walls all day'
- 'it's useful here. I feel I'm getting somewhere'
- 'really friendly place, good atmosphere'
- 'gives you an opportunity to be someone in life'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK CATHEDRAL CENTRE COULD IMPROVE:**

- classroom discipline - some of the young learners are a bit noisy and distracting
- the ability of learners to obtain discounts
- the availability of books to help learners do their homework
- the number of learners in some classrooms - too many in some
- the attitude of some staff - some seem patronising
- the ventilation
- the standard of food in the canteen
- secure storage for learners' bags

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR CATHEDRAL CENTRE:**

- provide guidance for all staff in developing strategies to support the needs of learners whose attendance is not voluntary
- make sure that the good practice in meeting the learning needs of a diverse body of learners is reflected in all aspects of the curriculum, and by all members of staff
- build on the successful employment strategies in Gateway to Work, so that more learners are successful in finding jobs
- develop and implement an accommodation strategy so that more learners can study in a satisfactory environment
- raise the standard of teaching and learning in ESOL, literacy and numeracy
- share the good practice in teaching and learning so that individual needs of all learners are met more effectively

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- good and improving achievement of challenging targets
- good management of operational aspects of learning programmes
- thorough staff development
- extensive range of additional activities
- strong and effective partnerships to widen the participation of disadvantaged groups

#### Weaknesses

- weak strategic planning
- insufficiently thorough monitoring of the provision by the trustees
- cramped and poorly ventilated accommodation
- poor understanding of equality of opportunity by a significant minority of staff
- insufficient implementation of the quality assurance framework

31. Challenging targets are set and most are exceeded. On LSC programmes the achievement of the main programme goals has been consistently good. Following an **initial** decline in performance on Jobcentre Plus programmes, the Centre has substantially improved its performance. On Gateway to Work, the number of learners finding jobs has improved significantly, and in the current year to date, 102 of the 147 learners who have been on the programme have found jobs. Curriculum teams are well organised, and managers work effectively to organise and co-ordinate learners' programmes. Communication is good. Curriculum managers value their autonomy and the support they receive from senior managers. The organisation of a diverse range of programmes and complex individual timetables is efficient and effective. Short-term planning is effective. Where managers are clear about their goals, they produce relevant development plans through consultation with their staff and other managers.

32. Arrangements for staff development and training are thorough. This was identified by the self-assessment report. Three staff training days are held annually which develop staff skills and competence in relation to a range of issues, for example, 'ex-offenders as learners', 'learning needs of asylum seekers' and 'manual handling'. In addition, staff-development activities also arise from individual reviews. Most staff regularly undergo further development activities connected with their professional updating needs. Some staff-development activities are connected with organisational policies, for example, all teaching staff are required to gain a teaching qualification within two years of their appointment. A particular focus of the process is work with new and inexperienced staff.

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33. The Centre provides an extensive range of additional activities for learners, in addition to their agreed programmes. The diversity of provision enables learners to extend their learning by taking part in other courses. The Centre also provides a variety of social activities designed to promote social inclusion. The 'family holiday' is a particularly good and well-established example of this. Learners contribute a small sum each week, which is supplemented through fund-raising activities. During the summer, learners, with their children, travel by coach to a seaside resort. Centre staff also attend the holiday. Learners value the opportunity to enjoy recreational time with each other and their children.

34. The Centre has developed and introduced an efficient management information system designed to meet its particular needs in relation to its growing size and more flexible provision. The system is able to produce reports in a variety of formats to meet the needs of different users. The managers also receive reports on gender, ethnicity and disability, but this information is not used sufficiently to set targets for improvement. Data are, for the most part, accurate and managers receive up-to-date reports about learners and their progress. The system has particular value in monitoring learners' progress through a range of activities, in producing reminders about dates of progress reviews, and in providing particularly close monitoring of learners' absence and patterns of attendance.

35. The Centre's approach to supporting the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is satisfactory in most areas. The centre has established appropriate systems for any learners who have literacy, numeracy or language needs. However, there have been recent changes in staffing on ESOL and literacy and numeracy courses, and not all staff have the confidence to adapt paper-based workbooks used in the workshops to meet the individual needs of learners. The literacy, numeracy and language needs of learners are not always taken into account sufficiently in jobsearch.

36. Senior managers have a very clear understanding of the business and its context, but strategic planning is weak. Management activity is too frequently reactive rather than the result of clearly formulated and communicated plans with targets, timescales and identified outcomes. The Centre's strategic plan and business plan primarily describe current issues and are not effective as planning documents for the Centre. Plans do not take sufficient account of risks, particularly the financial risks associated with volatile contracts. Development plans based on strategic issues lack detail. They do not indicate how the Centre's aims will be achieved.

37. Accommodation at the Centre is poorly organised. The lack of an accommodation strategy has led to piecemeal development which lacks coherence. The Centre does not make best use of available space. It is currently renting some additional space in an adjoining site, but there has not been a systematic analysis of alternative locations in the city.

38. Despite high levels of personal commitment to the Centre, the board of trustees does not effectively monitor the quality of provision. Not all board members were involved in the self-assessment process and some are not sufficiently aware of the



'Common Inspection Framework'. The board does not review its own performance. Members do not receive training to improve their effectiveness as a board of trustees. During the past two years, the board has failed to monitor critical financial processes within the Centre, which has led to an unexpected and significant deficit in the year's accounts: the first in the centre's history. Board members recognise this weakness and have since instituted closer financial monitoring arrangements. Board meetings tend to focus on business aspects of the Centre and there is insufficient knowledge and oversight of the education and training that the Centre provides. Recently, some board members have begun to hold regular 'surgeries' for staff and learners, which is improving communication and mutual awareness.

39. A lot of the teaching accommodation, and some accommodation for staff is not satisfactory. Some teaching rooms are too small for the numbers in the class and are poorly ventilated. This restricts the range of possible learning activities and causes learners to feel uncomfortable. Some administrative accommodation is crowded and not suitable for meetings with learners.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

40. The Centre has a strong commitment to the removal of barriers to education for people who are disadvantaged and to widen the participation of under-represented groups. Very strong partnership arrangements effectively support this commitment. The Centre works successfully with a wide range of external organisations, to provide and promote educational opportunities and projects for adult learners in Bradford. The projects create secure progression routes for learners into programmes operated by the Centre and by other providers. One project CALICO, a conservation project attended by learners with disabilities, has been very successful in enabling learners to develop skills in practical settings, such as organic gardening and the maintenance of an urban nature reserve. The Centre is highly regarded by partner organisations and funding bodies for its work in widening participation and promoting social inclusion.

41. The Centre's equal opportunities policy covers employment practice as well as the commitment to foster a climate based on respect for individuals. Learners feel safe and supported. The Centre monitors staffing and learners in relation to race, gender and disability. Aspects of the equal opportunities policy are monitored, but there are no stated targets and few formal arrangements for reporting the outcomes of the monitoring. The Centre has taken steps to encourage applications from members of the minority ethnic population for staff posts, and has had some success in this, although it recognises that the number of staff does not yet reflect the diversity of the learners' backgrounds. The Centre responds promptly to learners' reports of bullying, harassment or discrimination. Any grievances, complaints and discipline issues are responded to, but the action taken and outcomes are not well documented. Learners receive an introduction to the equal opportunities policy during their induction and the policy features in the staff handbook.

42. Members of staff have participated in training events organised by the local LSC. The Centre has taken steps to comply with the 'Disability Discrimination Act part 4 2001

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(DDA)', and the 'Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (RRA)', although not all staff have had appropriate training. All of the main centre, apart from one classroom, has been adapted for wheelchair users, and the adjacent building has ground floor access.

43. A small, but significant, number of staff have a poor understanding of equality of opportunity. These staff use culturally insensitive and inappropriate language, or patronise learners and make inaccurate assumptions about learners' ability on the basis of race or gender. The teaching observation scheme identified some of these issues, but the situation persists. Some Centre brochures are provided only in English with a token section translated into one other language. A large amount of jargon and complex language is used in these brochures. However, induction materials are provided in multiple languages. Equality of opportunity is insufficiently promoted in the curriculum. Materials used in ESOL are not all culturally sensitive or appropriate, and in programmes for visual, performing arts and media the curriculum is Eurocentric, with little attempt to use the diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds of learners.

### Quality assurance

### Contributory grade 3

44. The past two years have been a time of considerable change for the organisation as it has expanded and made changes to its programmes and learner intakes. As the Centre recognises, the quality assurance process has not been strong enough to prevent some decline in standards in teaching and learning during this period. Managers are currently planning to introduce a quality assurance committee to monitor and raise standards more effectively.

45. The Centre has a detailed quality assurance framework which illustrates the reporting structure between the various parts of the organisation. The staff handbook includes a range of policies and procedures covering most aspects of the organisation's activities. Particular emphasis is placed on obtaining, and acting on, the views of learners. Clearly understood arrangements are in place for staff reviews and teaching observations. New projects are carefully evaluated. The quality assurance framework has enabled managers to identify and rectify some weaknesses in the provision. For example, the learner progress and support unit was introduced to improve learners' progress reviews and to provide an additional source of support for learners.

46. Despite the clear framework, the quality assurance process is not conducted thoroughly enough throughout the organisation. A number of activities are developmental for the staff involved, rather than enabling managers to gain accurate feedback about performance. The staff review model provides a structure which enables staff to reflect on their own work and training needs, but does not appraise actual performance against job specifications or targets set. The lesson observation process uses a clear and appropriate structure to enable observers to comment on the various aspects of the lesson; however, there are considerable variations in the way in which observers complete the form. Some observers give detailed comments and feedback, others give much more cursory information. The process lacks a grading, or summary judgement, element to monitor the overall quality of teaching and learning.

47. The Centre began its self-assessment process in 1997 and produced its fifth self-assessment report in April 2003. All staff were involved in contributing to its production and had opportunities to comment on drafts of the report. The process has improved through the years and judgements have become more thorough. Inspectors' judgements matched many of the grades and judgements in the self-assessment report, but they identified additional strengths and weakness. Some identified weaknesses had been resolved by the time of the inspection. The significance of some other weaknesses had not been sufficiently taken into account.

48. In most areas, assessment and internal verification are satisfactory and sometimes good. Assessment procedures are properly standardised and internal verification is thorough. Reports from external verifiers are positive. Any issues arising from external verifier visits are effectively put into action.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information & communications technology

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other government-funded provision	311	2
New Deal 18-24	20	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	13	3

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- good achievement rates by LSC-funded learners
- good rates of progress towards individual targets and qualifications
- very effective training
- very effective outreach provision
- very effective support for learners
- good operational management of learning programmes

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory job outcomes for New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults programme
- poorly designed workstations in the IT workshop
- inadequate ICT initial assessment
- insufficient effective strategies for clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes

#### Achievement and standards

49. The achievement rates for LSC-funded programmes are very good, at around 90 per cent for the 400 learners in 2000-01 and the 500 learners in 2001-02. Approximately 30 per cent of the qualifications achieved are for detailed and complex applications, rather than a low-level understanding of computer systems. Retention rates of 84 per cent in 2000-01 and 97 per cent for 2001-02, are good. The achievement rates for New Deal 18-24 clients, based on those finding employment, are satisfactory, at 35 per cent. However, the employment outcomes for New Deal 25+ and work-based learning clients are unsatisfactory at 22 per cent for 2001-02.

50. Learners' standard of work is generally very good. They all acquire a good understanding of a variety of software applications. Learners generally progress quickly towards interim targets and most learners who find the work challenging are given support and time in order to achieve them. A few of the clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes do not progress as well.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																	
New Deal 18-24	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	67		60													
Retained*	40		40	67													
Planned learning completed	29		28	47													
Gained job	27		21	35													
Still in training	20		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

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	62		67													
Retained*	36		48	72													
Planned learning completed	31		42	63													
Gained job	18		15	22													
Still in training	13		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

## Quality of education and training

51. The training is well organised and very effective. Workbooks, produced by the centre, guide learners through their courses with clear explanations, and a satisfactory range of practical exercises. Learners are required to produce printed copies of their work, such as text processing or database queries, which are then promptly marked by tutors who give immediate advice and practical guidance on weak areas. Coursework builds up in achievable stages to clearly identified assessment points. A small number of Jobcentre Plus clients who do not voluntarily attend, make slower progress. Some tutors try to encourage them, but others spend little time with them, and do not have strategies to work with them effectively.

52. The outreach provision is very good. Training is provided in a variety of locations including community centres, residential homes, council premises, care homes, local schools and in areas of high unemployment. The range supports the Centre's aims of

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widening participation. Learners participate partly because of the convenience of location and time. Learners tend to join the courses as groups, and support and motivate each other. Resources provided for outreach sessions are good, with modern, powerful laptops and new printers. The outreach courses have particularly well-designed induction and course-recording handbooks. Outreach tutors are enthusiastic about their role, which learners appreciate.

53. Learners are very effectively supported. The staff support each other in the workshop, and their flexible approach benefits learners. There is no formal linking of ICT tutors with individual learners, but in practice, most learners have the same tutor and feel well supported. Regular and effective progress reviews are carried out by the learners' progress and support centre, and programmes and support arrangements are changed, if necessary, as a result of those reviews. However, the information from the reviews is not routinely available to ICT staff. A nursery at the Centre is appreciated by parents, who comment on how this provision has made learning accessible to them. Support staff work effectively with learners with disabilities in the ICT workshop.

54. Learners' work is routinely and effectively formatively assessed. A series of marked assignments and mock examinations help learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The regularly marked work is kept in learners' folders at the Centre, and is used by tutors in informal reviews. Individual learners' progress records are well maintained and are an unusually good feature for such open workshop provision. The records clearly state what has been accomplished, but are not used to give learners specific, timebound, short-term targets. Management information about the general progress of all learners is produced centrally on a monthly basis, and is reviewed by the ICT manager. The reviews are satisfactory, although the management information does not allow for easy identification of slow progress by individual learners.

55. The range of courses is satisfactory to meet the needs of the learners. There is an appropriate concentration on entry and level 1 NVQ courses, but with the opportunity to progress to level 2 for some learners. The Centre gives good encouragement for learners to progress, but advice on the options available is not always helpful. Many of the LSC-funded learners continue beyond their original qualification aims. Work placements are well-organised and effective.

56. Resources are generally satisfactory. The main IT training room is a reasonable size, well lit, and with satisfactory sound baffling. Learners' chairs are designed for use with computers, and staff are active in encouraging correct posture, within the constraints of the work station design. The room can become very warm. The computer workstations in the main workshop are poorly designed. Learners face a potential risk to their health with a lack of space for wrist support, and having to sit too close to screens. Most computers are powerful enough for the applications being used. Two-thirds of the machines have Internet access, though the slow connection is frustrating for some learners who are taking an on-line course. The staff have a very satisfactory range of professional and teaching qualifications. Several of the staff began their association with the Centre as learners, before becoming voluntary helpers, and then full-time members of staff.

57. The initial assessment is inadequate. Inappropriate tests are used to establish learner's current skills and knowledge. New learners are dealt with in groups rather than as individuals, with limited opportunities for free discussion of needs and aims. Specialist Centre staff carry out a very comprehensive general initial assessment of Jobcentre Plus clients, including a literacy, numeracy or ESOL assessment. This information is not shared in detail with ICT tutors, during the period of induction and ICT assessment.

58. The ICT workshop does not have specific strategies for the identification and support of learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. This aspect, for Jobcentre Plus clients, is dealt with in other areas of the Centre, but the ICT staff refer clients to specialist staff if they believe that there are needs that have not been identified or met. Support is available through the workshops or groups, as appropriate.

### **Leadership and management**

59. Management is good, in particular the operational management of the area of learning. The main ICT workshop has a very efficient timetabling system to ensure maximum use of resources and to allow learners adequate training time. The management of staff resources is good and staff have access to training to update their skills. However, the annual appraisal system is continually changing, and staff are not clear about their appraisal arrangements, but staff feel they are well supported. There is a range of meetings for ICT staff, from regular weekly tutorial discussions, to more formal monthly meetings. All are recorded and actions identified, however, the completion of actions is not always checked.

**Visual & performing arts & media****Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other government-funded provision	35	2
Work-based learning for young people	85	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	4	None
New Deal 18-24	1	None

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

**Strengths**

- good achievement rate for nationally recognised qualifications
- good achievement of practical and technical skills
- particularly effective resources to promote independent learning
- good work placements
- effective staff development

**Weaknesses**

- ineffective individual learning goals for Jobcentre Plus clients
- insufficiently challenging tasks for a significant minority of learners
- insufficient consideration of cultural diversity in curriculum design and content

**Achievement and standards**

60. Achievement rates for LSC learners are very good. In 2001-2, 97 per cent of these learners gained nationally recognised qualifications. Effective use is made of the credit accumulation system, enabling learners on short programmes to gain full qualifications over a period of time. Most learners achieve their personal learning objectives. Retention rates in 2001 were very good, at 97 per cent.

61. Standards of work are very good. Learners develop their knowledge and understanding of subjects and apply these in practical project work, completed to a project brief. Many learners are able to articulate their learning experiences using professional and technical vocabularies. Learners with learning difficulties and those with mental health problems gain confidence and self-esteem. Learning is celebrated through exhibitions, displays and performances.

**Quality of education and training**

62. Learners develop good practical and technical skills. They use tools and materials effectively to produce experimental work and finished pieces. Learners apply their new skills well to producing finished art work such as photographs, pottery, paintings and



drawings. In graphics and digital imaging lessons, learners use the computer software competently to manipulate text and images. Learners develop the ability to work autonomously in practical workshops and studios. New learners are encouraged to gain hands-on experience with equipment and materials. Tutors and learners develop mutual trust and respect. For instance, one new learner in photography was welcomed to the course and immediately loaned a single lens reflex camera. A clear and informative explanation was given regarding its use, with good checking of learning through questioning. The learner was then sent out with one of the Centre's volunteer workers to take photographs in the city.

63. The Centre has produced very good resources to support independent learning. Very good learners' handbooks support individual learning at all levels and this helps to provide an effective 'roll-on, roll-off' system. The handbooks include lesson plans, learning materials, progress records and assessment against the required criteria. Tutors devise effective additional learning tools and materials to stimulate creative responses from learners.

64. A good range of appropriate work-placement opportunities are available for learners in arts and media. These include theatre companies, community arts projects, graphics and web-page design studios, publishers, galleries and museums. The work-placement officers take care to match learners' needs to workplaces, and learners are well supported when in the workplace.

65. Accommodation and resources are generally satisfactory and fit for purpose. The studios are of a good size, and the darkroom is well equipped with sufficient enlargers for the number of learners. The pottery studio is small and there is insufficient storage space for materials and learners' work. Resources for computer-aided design are adequate, but on some occasions the memory capacity of the machines inhibits learners' ability to create more complex visual images. Learners are provided with the necessary personal protective equipment, including overalls and aprons. Materials are provided free for all learners. Teachers are well qualified in their subject specialises, and all have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. There is insufficient technician support for practical art and design lessons.

66. Induction is effective for new learners attending practical art sessions. This includes safe working practices in studios. Clear information is given both orally and in the learners' handbook about the content of the course and what the learner can expect to achieve. Effective support is provided for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

67. Support for literacy, numeracy and ESOL is satisfactory. There is effective identification of learner's additional needs, and support workers are effective in the classroom. Any learner whose needs are identified may also be timetabled for support through the workshops, or specific lessons that are available for all learners. Most learners receive support for literacy, numeracy or ESOL. Tutors refer any learners with specific needs, such as dyslexia, to the central support unit. However, there is good matching of literacy, numeracy and language skills to the practical art and design skills.

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Effective tutor support reinforces this learning according to learners' needs.

68. Individual learning goals are not meaningful for a significant minority of learners, particularly for those clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes. There is insufficient negotiation of learning aims and little attention is paid to their previous experience and knowledge.

69. Tasks are not sufficiently challenging for a minority of learners. In some cases, learning activities are repetitive and at too low a level for learners' abilities. The teachers sometimes rely too much on the session plans in the learner handbook. Insufficient attention is given in some lessons to stimulating learners' perceptions of art, design and media.

70. Although the curriculum range is satisfactory and includes subjects that can lead to employment, there is insufficient consideration of cultural diversity in curriculum design and content. The curriculum offered is largely Eurocentric and planned on an historical basis, despite the diversity of the learners' backgrounds. Insufficient opportunities exist for learners to research and explore a variety of styles, genres and cultural influences.

### **Leadership and management**

71. Curriculum management is good. Staff meetings are effective and minutes include agreed action points regarding curriculum priorities. The staff induction provides a good introduction to the area and support for teachers' professional development is also good. A range of specialist development events allow the sharing of good practice and there is good support for subject-specific development. Time is allocated for teachers to attend in-house lessons.

72. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Inspectors' judgements matched many of those in the self-assessment report. Some of the strengths claimed were considered by inspectors to be normal practice. Weaknesses are not sufficiently focused on teaching and learning. A comprehensive programme of teaching and learning observations has been carried out by the curriculum manager. Good judgements and comments are recorded, although the observations are not graded. The process has resulted in effective action plans for quality improvement. Effective standardisation of assessment is carried out by the teaching team. Internal verification is thorough and there is good record-keeping in the assessment and moderation procedures. There has been insufficient training for staff in equal opportunities.

**Foundation programmes****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other government-funded provision	76	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	28	3
Life Skills	24	2

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

**Strengths**

- good achievement of primary goals by many LSC learners
- good and improving success in getting jobs by Gateway to Work clients
- very good teaching and learning on the Life Skills programme
- very effective personal support for learners
- effective expansion of links with employers
- very good day-to-day management of individualised learner programmes

**Weaknesses**

- over-reliance on workbooks in workshops
- insufficient matching of tasks to learner's needs in literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- inadequate target-setting
- cramped and poorly ventilated classrooms
- insufficient expertise in ESOL and dyslexia
- poor cultural sensitivity in ESOL and jobsearch lessons

**Achievement and standards**

73. The achievement of qualifications is good on foundation programmes. Achievement rates in literacy and numeracy are good. Ninety per cent of the 169 learners who started the programmes in 2001-02, achieved a nationally recognised qualification. At the time of inspection the achievement rate for learners on literacy and numeracy programmes is 85 per cent, with some learners awaiting certification. On ESOL courses learners make progress between levels, but progress is slow. On Life Skills, the achievements and progression rates are very good. During 2001-02, 91 per cent of learners progressed to further education, training or employment. In some cases, this may be progression to jobs with training and in some instances learners progressed to a NVQ course at level 2. During 2001-02, 50 per cent of learners on Life Skills courses achieved a qualification. Life skills programmes promote very good development of learners' independence.

74. There has been a significant improvement in learners' success rate in getting jobs. On Gateway to Work, the rates improved from 39 per cent in 2000-01 to 65 per cent so far in 2002-03. On Basic Employability Training (BET) courses the numbers were poor, at 15 per cent in 2001-02, but in 2002-03 to date, they have improved to 28 per cent.

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75. Retention rates are very good. They were over 90 per cent in 2000-01 and 2001-02 on LSC courses and 87 per cent in 2001-02 on Life Skills programmes. On BET in 2001 retention rates were 83 per cent.

### Quality of education and training

76. The quality of teaching and learning is very good on the Life Skills programme. The curriculum includes a range of community activities and visits, which the learners organise for themselves. Learners also attend other lessons in the Centre which may be of interest to them. They are encouraged from the outset to develop the skill of working independently to complete projects. The projects include the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills. One group of learners developed a handbook for the Life Skills programme, which involved using the skills they were developing in visual arts and ICT, as well as literacy, language and numeracy skills. Learners are encouraged to make group decisions about how they will work together.

77. Learners receive good individual support. Subject tutors provide constant support both formally through progress reviews, and informally. For example, one woman expecting a baby is allowed to be accompanied by a family member. A young man from a secure establishment attends lessons with discrete support from a security officer. The Centre makes efforts to support learners on an individual basis in matters relating to benefits and housing, and members of staff will sometimes accompany learners to meetings with external agencies. The learner progress and support unit works well for many learners, but others have found a lack of continuity a disadvantage, as the formal reviews are carried out by members of staff who do not teach them.

78. The overall curriculum design at the Centre has the development of literacy, numeracy, language and employment-related skills at its core. It is very flexible and responsive to learners' needs at foundation level. **All learners without GCSEs or equivalent qualifications, are assessed and may take courses in literacy, numeracy or ESOL.** All clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes are timetabled for Jobsearch. Learners attend lessons and workshops based on their learning needs. Work placements for learners are becoming increasingly effective in helping them to find sustained employment. **There are good and improving links with employers.** The Centre holds an employers' forum twice a year to keep employers informed of developments.

79. The initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language needs, is used effectively in the development of individual learning plans in Gateway to Work. In Life Skills, literacy, numeracy and language skills are routinely assessed, as are learners' needs, interests, learning and career goals. These are used to plan individual programmes. In ESOL provision, the initial assessment is very effective in determining which course learners should follow, although the language used in the assessments is sometimes not culturally sensitive for learners. Individual learning plans for literacy, numeracy and ESOL were introduced only three weeks before the inspection on literacy and numeracy courses, therefore it is not possible to evaluate their effectiveness.

80. Teaching and learning are mostly satisfactory on literacy and numeracy programmes, and all learners make progress, on all of the programmes. Where learners work in groups they are often actively engaged in practical activities and developing skills such as measuring and estimating. However, in the workshops staff rely on workbooks, and insufficient attention is paid to the development of communication skills. The real-life experiences of learners are not used sufficiently as the basis for developing skills and understanding. The workshop sessions in Jobsearch are too long, and less successful in meeting learners' needs than the group sessions in the Gateway to Work programme. All learners receive the same quality of teaching no matter which programme they attend.

81. In some ESOL lessons, teachers use good language teaching techniques to help learners improve their confidence in speaking. However, in the more unsatisfactory lessons, the tasks and content are not sufficiently differentiated or contextualised to match the needs of the learners. In many lessons there is insufficient emphasis on skills related to employment for those learners for whom this is their primary aim. Jobsearch staff do not take sufficient account of learners' literacy and language needs when identifying job vacancies in local newspapers. They sometimes make stereotyped assumptions about levels competence in language.

82. Target-setting is a weakness in much of the provision. The targets in lessons are often too general and the recording of progress focuses on activities completed, rather than skills developed. In literacy, numeracy and ESOL lessons, the feedback given does not identify how learners can improve.

83. Classroom accommodation is poor for many lessons. The teaching rooms are cramped, poorly lit and badly ventilated. This adversely affects learners' ability to concentrate and work effectively for the length of the lessons. The interview rooms are too small, and staff accommodation is not adequate.

84. All programmes have a high staff to learner ratio. On the Life Skills programme the staff are well qualified, and experienced in working with learner groups. However, there have been recent staff changes following restructuring, and many staff teaching literacy, numeracy and ESOL are not appropriately qualified or experienced, although many are working towards such qualifications. There is insufficient staff expertise in teaching people with dyslexia, and those learners who require support are referred to a local college. Those staff on the Gateway to Work and Jobsearch programmes who have employment service backgrounds, are particularly helpful for learners.

85. Although there is a very diverse body of learners on the foundation programmes, the language and approach of tutors is not always appropriate. A few tutors observed were patronising, and asked insensitive questions of learners in ESOL lessons, for example, their social status as refugees or asylum seekers and what type of state benefits they were receiving. No such examples were observed on the Life Skills programme.

## Leadership and management

86. The leadership and management of the Life Skills programme are very good. The staff are very responsive to the needs of the learners and the quality assurance of the programmes is very effective, with regular monitoring by the contracts manager, and a thorough self-assessment report for the area. Operational management of the provision for literacy, numeracy and ESOL is also very effective. The system is highly effective in allowing smooth operation of teaching and learning. This is demonstrated by the weekly distribution of a personalised timetable to each learner. The system of daily distribution and collection of attendance sheets means that tutors are updated on expected class arrivals. These also enable absences to be monitored and attended to quickly. Evaluations of learners are carried out regularly. The staff often respond effectively to complaints made by learners in the satisfaction surveys. Internal moderation procedures are well thought out and clear.

87. The self-assessment report did not identify the weaknesses in the workshop provision, in the knowledge and experience of the some staff or the weaknesses in promoting equal opportunities in this area. The teaching observations have not always resulted in improvements when weaknesses have been identified. Many of the weaknesses identified by inspectors have also been identified by the ESOL manager, who has developed an action plan to resolve them.