

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Certified Computing Personnel**

10 July 2003



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## CERTIFIED COMPUTING PERSONNEL

### 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**

## **Certified Computing Personnel**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Certified Computing Personnel (CCP) is a privately owned company, limited by guarantee. It was established in Wembley in the borough of Brent in 1996, to provide training for employers and learners in the west London area. Currently, the provision includes work-based learning funded by the London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC), a New Deal 18-24 option subcontracted from the college of Northwest London and funded by Jobcentre Plus, a number of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) initiatives, and full cost training for employers. Work-based learning includes foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship training in information and communications technology (ICT). CCP also offers a 12-week preparatory training course for learners in ICT and construction. There were no learners on the preparatory programmes at the time of inspection.

2. The senior management team consists of a managing director, a training director and an operations manager. The managing director is responsible for the strategic and financial planning. The training director is responsible for the training and assessments, and the operations manager has overall responsibility for operational activities. The training director and operations manager report directly to the managing director. Two co-ordinators have responsibility for specific areas of the company, such as New Deal 18-24. CCP has expanded in recent years and now employs 11 staff, two of whom are part time.

3. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Brent is 54.7 per cent, compared with 28.8 per cent for London as a whole and 9.1 per cent nationally. In May 2003, the unemployment rate in Brent was 4.8 per cent, compared with 2.6 per cent nationally. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Brent achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 46 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Information & communications technology

4. There are 30 learners on ICT foundation modern apprenticeship programmes. The standard length of the programme is 18 months. Foundation modern apprentices can take an industry-recognised qualification after they achieve the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Most modern apprentices have work placements in information technology (IT) related industries, and some are employed. There is no formal off-the-job training and CCP's staff visit learners in the workplace to provide tuition and assessment. CCP is accredited to offer the advanced modern apprenticeship, but currently has no learners on this programme.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learner interviews	30
Number of staff interviews	14
Number of employer interviews	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, CCP's leadership and management are satisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity is good, but its quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in ICT programmes is satisfactory.

## GRADES

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

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

6. **Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices are poor.** For learners who started in 2001-02, the best possible outcome would be that a third of learners are retained. For 2002-03, 45 per cent of learners have already left the programme, most of whom gained a job in the IT industry. Achievement rates are poor, although NVQ assessment rates are better at a potential 40 per cent for 2001-02. Retention and successful outcome rates on the preparatory course have remained good, at approximately 85 per cent.

7. **The standard of practical work achieved by learners is consistently good** across the employer network. Some learners take on significant roles of responsibility and many learners make good progress. However, some do not always feel sufficiently challenged

by the requirements of the NVQ and are capable of achieving higher level qualifications.

## 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	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

8. **Work placements are good.** CCP carefully checks the suitability of work placements before sending a learner for an interview. Learners have good individual support from CCP's staff and their employer. Progress reviews are effective and take place every four weeks.

9. **The employers' involvement in all aspects of the training process is good.** CCP ensures that employers and supervisors have a good understanding of the requirements of the NVQ. Most learners have experience of a wide range of activities. Some employers offer additional qualifications at their own expense.

10. **The 12-week preparatory course is effective** and prepares learners for the foundation modern apprenticeship programme. A good proportion of learners who complete the preparatory course, are retained on the modern apprenticeship programme. Completion of the course leads to a nationally recognised qualification at level 1.

11. The initial interview and assessment process is mostly satisfactory. However, the initial test is not sophisticated enough to identify specific areas for improvement. Those who are identified with poor literacy and numeracy skills are not well supported.

12. Some learners are very able. Although it is difficult for CCP to find work placements for advanced modern apprentices because of the requirement for supervisory duties, some learners are not sufficiently challenged by foundation modern apprenticeships. Learners are keen to gain the industry-recognised qualification, which is offered by CCP in addition to their NVQ. However, as the 18-month programme progresses, some learners lose interest and do not complete the foundation modern apprenticeship.

13. **There is no structured off-the-job training** either in the workplace or at CCP's training centre. CCP mostly relies on the quality of the work placements to ensure that learners' gain the necessary knowledge for their NVQ. Tutors and assessors generally have good and relevant experience in ICT, but not all tutors have teaching qualifications.

14. **CCP does not provide or recommend technical materials to support learning.** Some learners have access to good ICT technical resources and additional training courses, but only due to the initiative of their employer.

15. **Learners' understanding of portfolio-building is poor.** Portfolios generally contain a satisfactory range of evidence, but learners have an over reliance on their assessor to instruct them on what to collect.

## Leadership and management

16. **CCP is effective in securing a range of good work placements** for the modern apprentices. CCP checks that employers have appropriate policies in place and offers encouragement and guidance if this is not the case.
17. **CCP actively networks with other providers in the area** and is responsive to the training needs of the community: for example, developing preparatory courses in IT and construction.
18. **Learning resources in the workplace are mostly good**, but learners have limited access to the resources at CCP's training centre. Several IT tutors are new and have little training experience or relevant qualifications. However, most have good industry-recognised technical knowledge.
19. **CCP has been ineffective in developing appropriate support strategies for learners who have poor literacy, numeracy and language skills**, and the initial assessment process does not adequately identify learners' difficulties. The support available is poor and the tutor who is responsible is very inexperienced and unqualified. The company's approach to developing learners' key skills is satisfactory.
20. **The promotion of equal opportunities is good** and this is demonstrated through the company's commitments and actions. CCP is very effective in attracting and recruiting learners and staff from a wide range of backgrounds. Many of the learners develop a good awareness of equality of opportunity, particularly in the workplace. The induction and review processes are effective in promoting equal opportunities.
21. **Data on equal opportunities are routinely collected and analysed.** CCP checks that employers have an appropriate policy and help those who do not have one. CCP's employees have good training in equal opportunities. Promotional and marketing materials are satisfactory. There are anti-racist posters and positive case studies of successful learners on the classroom walls.
22. **Good use is made of feedback from learners to evaluate learning programmes.** The overall findings are carefully analysed and improvements are made when appropriate. Employers' surveys are also carried out, but the response has been limited.
23. **Internal verification meets the requirements of the awarding body.** A consultant takes an internal verification role once a month, and this works satisfactorily.
24. The self-assessment process and report are satisfactory. The report was candid and judgmental and most of the strengths and weaknesses matched those identified by inspectors.
25. CCP has taken steps to reduce the number of learners who do not complete the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. A student support officer has been



appointed to provide additional help and learners value this role. However, the impact of this and other measures is not yet evident.

26. **Quality assurance arrangements are not sufficiently thorough.** The company's primary focus is on meeting contractual requirements and does not set its own targets for improvement. The quality assurance handbook and procedures are neither complete nor effectively monitored. The management team periodically considers the quality of provision, but the reviews are not comprehensive. The company does not have a quality improvement strategy or action plan.

27. **There is insufficient structured support for staff.** CCP invests in staff training, but it is not linked closely enough to individual or company objectives. The induction for new staff is good, but those who teach or train have insufficient guidance or support.

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

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- effective development of working relationships with employers
- good responses to community and employers' requirements
- good use of learners' feedback to evaluate programmes
- good promotion of equal opportunities

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient appropriate support for learners who have poor literacy, numeracy and language skills
- insufficiently thorough quality assurance arrangements
- insufficiently structured support for staff

## **Information & communications technology**

### **Strengths**

- good work placements appropriate to learners' needs
- good involvement of employers in training
- good support for learners
- good development of practical skills
- effective preparatory course in IT

### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rates for foundation modern apprentices
- insufficient off-the-job training opportunities
- insufficient technical learning resources
- poor understanding of portfolio-building by learners

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CERTIFIED COMPUTING PERSONNEL:**

- the opportunity to learn new skills and build confidence
- the very good support from the assessor and other staff
- the friendliness of CCP's staff
- the usefulness of the preparatory course before starting the foundation modern apprenticeship
- the quality of the work placements
- the opportunity to take some additional industry-recognised qualifications
- the opportunity to drop into CCP's offices at convenient times

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK CERTIFIED COMPUTING PERSONNEL COULD IMPROVE:**

- the limited opportunities to train away from work
- the range of computers at CCP for repair and installation work
- the requirement for so much paperwork
- the time taken to explain about how portfolios should be built
- the opportunity to access technical books and learning resources

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR CERTIFIED COMPUTING PERSONNEL:**

- improve retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices
- develop a comprehensive quality assurance system
- deal with the needs of learners who have literacy, numeracy and language difficulties
- ensure that staff contribute fully and effectively to corporate developments
- develop flexible learning resources and materials which meet individual needs
- develop relevant off-the-job training opportunities for learners

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

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

#### Strengths

- effective development of working relationships with employers
- good responses to community and employers' requirements
- good use of learners' feedback to evaluate programmes
- good promotion of equal opportunities

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient appropriate support for learners who have poor literacy, numeracy and language skills
- insufficiently thorough quality assurance arrangements
- insufficiently structured support for staff

28. CCP is effective in securing a range of good work placements for modern apprentices. Through a mixture of speculative telephone calls, referrals and personal recommendations, CCP is able to identify a sufficient number of work placements. At the first visit to an employer, CCP carries out a thorough health and safety audit of the workplace and employers find the process helpful and valuable. CCP checks that employers have the appropriate policies in place. Where this is not the case, CCP offers encouragement and guidance to help employers develop their own. Once a work placement has been agreed, employers are given a thorough induction to the requirements of the programme, and the responsibilities of the different parties. The key skills components of the framework are carefully explained. The induction process is supported with clear, explanatory materials. Employers are encouraged to contact the company immediately if they have a concern.

29. CCP makes good use of labour market information for its strategic direction. Local skill shortages and other relevant information are used for business planning. This includes publicly funded training programmes and commercial activities. CCP is responsive to the employers' needs. For example, the preparatory course in IT was developed in response to employers' concerns that learners had insufficient IT skills, before a placement. As this programme develops, it is proving to be an effective progression route onto the modern apprenticeship framework. A similar preparatory course in construction has also been established. To meet the employers' demands for better-skilled employees, the company has introduced additional, occupationally specific qualifications for learners. CCP actively networks with other providers in the area and is responsive to the training needs of the community. It offers a full-time New Deal 18-24 training option which is subcontracted from a local college of further education, and IT training funded through the SRB. The company is about to embark on a scheme to

## CERTIFIED COMPUTING PERSONNEL

encourage employers to take on socially excluded learners and plans to offer Entry to Employment (E2E) provision in the near future.

30. The company's approach to developing learners' key skills is satisfactory. The company was slow to recognise the importance of integrating key skills assignments into workplace activities. However, learners are now making good progress, even though some assignments, particularly application of number, are still not vocationally relevant.

31. Learning resources in the workplace are mostly good. Computer hardware and software at CCP's training centre are generally good and are constantly being updated. However, when learners have left the preparatory course, there is little or no opportunity for learners to use the resources. Several tutors are new and have insufficient teaching experience and relevant qualifications. However, they generally have good and relevant experience in ICT. Currently, only two members of staff have a stage one teaching qualification and one other is a qualified assessor. CCP is actively encouraging staff to take teaching and assessment qualifications.

32. CCP has been ineffective in developing appropriate support strategies for learners who have poor literacy, numeracy and language skills, and the two-stage initial assessment process does not adequately identify learners' difficulties. The very general approach of giving learners a series of workbooks to work through independently is inadequate. The recent appointment of a tutor for individual support is a positive development, but the tutor has insufficient support. Learners who have additional needs do not have an individual action plan and their progress is not effectively monitored. The company has not met its own commitment to provide suitably qualified staff for basic skills. Staff are not well informed about the national curriculum for basic skills.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

33. The promotion of equal opportunities is good and this is demonstrated through the company's commitments and actions. The equal opportunities policy is regularly updated and contains clear references to sexual and racial harassment, and bullying. However, the policy does not identify how it has been changed to meet the requirements of new legislation. The company has written an equality and diversity action plan for 2003. At the time of the inspection, most commitments had been achieved and others were being progressed. For example, the plan to develop learning materials in different languages is taking place. However, the success indicators attached to the plan are not challenging or specific enough. The company has improved its staff recruitment process and well-established personnel procedures are now used. CCP is very effective in attracting and recruiting learners and staff from a wide range of backgrounds. At the time of inspection, 53 per cent of the learners are from a minority ethnic group, as were 91 per cent of the staff. The overall intake of learners is representative of the local community.

34. Many learners have developed an awareness of equal opportunities, particularly in the workplace. They comment positively on CCP's efforts to welcome and support them. During induction, learners and new staff are given a copy of the equal

opportunities policy and additional guidelines. Equal opportunities are a central theme throughout the two-day induction. For example, learners are split into groups to consider a number of case studies relating to different prejudices. The trainer is effective and empathetic and encourages the learners to explore their thoughts and feelings. Responses are recorded on a flipchart before being related to situations in the workplace. Learners can clearly remember the impact of these sessions even a year later. During progress reviews in the workplace, assessors discuss and record the arrangements for equal opportunities. In one instance, a learner was moved to a new company within two weeks of raising a concern. Learners are made aware of the complaints procedure during induction. They understand how to make a complaint and are confident that problems will be dealt with appropriately. However, the few concerns raised by learners are not analysed for common trends.

35. Data on equal opportunities is routinely collected and analysed, for the full range of CCP's programmes. For example, a detailed report on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme for 2001-02 was discussed at an equality and diversity team meeting. The analysis indicated a low number of female learners and the same proportion of early leavers, irrespective of their ethnicity. CCP has actively started to promote modern apprenticeships to young women in schools and in other organisations and applications have started to increase. Before learners are sent on a work placement, CCP checks that employers have an appropriate equal opportunities policy in place. The relevance and importance of equal opportunities in relation to learners' experience is stressed. Those employers who do not have a policy are helped by the equal opportunities co-ordinator to develop one. A recent survey of employers highlighted a number of training needs. Although the response was poor, an event to deal with them is planned.

36. CCP's employees recently attended three half-day training events. Topics included good practice guidance and how to monitor equality of opportunity. To develop employees and learners' understanding further, a qualification on serving disabled customers, is soon to be offered in conjunction with Brent County Council. Team meetings always include an agenda item on equal opportunities. There have been a number of good initiatives to widen participation. For example, visits to local schools and stands at job fairs. CCP works in partnership with a wide range of organisations, such as a social inclusion unit and a hospital trust. It has plans to widen the learning programme, with an increased focus on socially excluded groups.

37. Promotional and marketing materials are satisfactory. Most leaflets have positive images of non-traditional groups, relating to different occupational areas. Recently, promotional materials have been produced in different languages. However, few carry a clear statement about the company's commitment to equal opportunities. There are anti-racist posters and case studies of successful learners on the classroom walls.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 4

38. Good use is made of learners' feedback to evaluate learning programmes. At the end of each programme, learners complete a detailed questionnaire which covers most

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aspects of the provision. They also take part in focus groups, which are led by someone who is not involved in the programme. Learners' feedback is also collected on an informal basis through regular reviews and other points of contact. The overall findings are carefully analysed and improvements are made when appropriate. For example, there has recently been a substantial investment in furniture and IT resources. Surveys from employers are also carried out, but the company recognises that more work is needed to generate a larger response.

39. Internal verification meets the requirements of the awarding body. The procedures and documents are well written and are appropriate. A consultant carries out an internal verification role once a month and this works satisfactorily. However, the assessment of some learners' portfolios is delayed by this arrangement. CCP recognises that if numbers increase as predicted in the business plan, then other arrangements will need to be put in place.

40. The self-assessment process and report are satisfactory. Staff are involved in the self-assessment process, but some are not aware of how their contribution is reflected in the final report. Individual and collective responsibilities for bringing about the improvements identified in the development plan, are not clear to everyone. The report was candid and judgmental and included most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

41. The company recognises that too many learners leave the modern apprenticeship programme early. It has recently taken steps to improve the situation, but the impact of these measures is not yet proven. Plans are in place to introduce psychometric testing as part of the selection process. The testing will aim to provide a closer match between the learners and the training opportunities offered. A member of staff has trained for this purpose. The company has also appointed a student support officer whose primary role is to respond to learners' problems and queries. They also regularly review learners' action plans and help them prepare for assessment. Learners value this role, and in general have a very good understanding of their progress and what is required. The student support officer also helps learners with portfolio-building. Although training is planned, the officer is not appropriately qualified for this purpose as yet.

42. Quality assurance arrangements are not sufficiently thorough. The company's primary focus is on meeting contractual requirements. It does not set its own quantitative and qualitative improvement targets for its programmes or its staff. CCP does not draw on the material available on other providers to gauge its own performance and to develop good practice. There is a quality assurance handbook, which includes a set of carefully considered policies. However, it does not include policies or procedures for the observation of learning or programme evaluation. Some lesson observations are carried out using appropriate documents, but this is not a regular feature of a planned quality assurance process. Although the management team periodically considers the quality of provision, its reviews are not comprehensive. The team does not draw on evidence from a wide enough range of sources. For example, although the feedback from learners is detailed, it is not used systematically as part of an overall review of the quality of provision. The company does not have a quality



assurance improvement strategy or action plan. The management team does not receive formal quality assurance reports although quality assurance issues are regularly discussed. Administrative procedures are clear and well documented. The monitoring of some of these is carried out more regularly and consistently than others.

43. There is insufficient structured support for staff. Performance review and action-planning are not an established part of the management process, even though the company has procedures for this purpose. It is difficult for staff to see the connection between their own work, and the CCP's aims to expand and improve. The company invests in staff development, but there is no overall staff development plan which is linked to business needs. Staff are aware that they need to develop new skills, but are not always clear how or whether this will happen. New employees attend a well-structured induction, but those who teach or train do not have sufficient guidance or support.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	30	3

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

#### Strengths

- good work placements appropriate to learners' needs
- good involvement of employers in training
- good support for learners
- good development of practical skills
- effective preparatory course in IT

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates for foundation modern apprentices
- insufficient off-the-job training opportunities
- insufficient technical learning resources
- poor understanding of portfolio-building by learners

### Achievement and standards

44. Learners develop good occupational skills which are related to their work placement. Many demonstrate good independent learning skills and most learners make an effective contribution in the workplace. Learners' attendance is good. Employers are enthusiastic about the support they receive from CCP and the contribution made by learners in maintaining their business. A number of learners take on significant roles of responsibility. The standard of learners' practical work is consistently good across the network of employers. The internal verification system is satisfactory and external verifiers' reports are mostly favourable. CCP has recently introduced a new approach to teaching key skills and this is being monitored. During reviews, learning goals and targets are discussed, but the process is not formal. As a result of everyday activities at work, some learners progress very quickly. However, some learners do not feel sufficiently challenged. Many are capable of achieving the NVQ level 2 more quickly, before progressing to a higher level qualification.

45. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices are poor. For learners who started in 2001-02, the best possible outcome would be that one in three learners are retained, including the 20 per cent still in learning. In 2002-03, 45 per cent of learners have already left the programme, many to move into jobs in the IT industry. Some of those who are still in learning have only recently started. Achievement rates are poor,

but NVQ achievements are better and are likely to be 40 per cent for 2001-02. Some learners who started in 2001-02 have made slow progress, but most have nearly completed their portfolios. In general, learners who are still in learning are making satisfactory progress. On the preparatory 12-week training course, retention rates and successful outcome rates have remained good, at approximately 80 per cent. Many learners take this course before starting a foundation modern apprenticeship.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	40		40													
Retained*	0		13													
Successfully completed	0		6													
Still in learning	22		8													

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

## Quality of education and training

46. The self-assessment report identifies that learners' work placements are good. CCP carefully check the suitability of work placements before sending a learner for an interview. The matching of individual needs to those of the employer is set as a priority. Once placed, learners have good individual support from CCP's staff and their employer. The learners' induction takes place in the workplace. It is thorough and includes topics such as equality of opportunity, and health and safety. The company identified as a strength the support which learners receive in the workplace in the self-assessment report. Progress reviews are mostly effective and take place every four weeks. Learners can contact their assessor or student support officer at any time for additional support. It is not uncommon for meetings to be arranged in the evening or at a weekend.

47. Employers' involvement in all aspects of the training process is good. CCP ensures that employers and supervisors have a good understanding of the requirements of the NVQ. This is achieved through a personal visit and detailed documents. Employers are required to sign a learning agreement which highlights their responsibilities and time commitment to the learner. This is mostly monitored effectively. Most employers ensure that learners experience a wide range of activities and some offer additional qualifications at their own expense. Learners are enthusiastic about their work placements and contribute to the running of the business. A significant number have gained full-time employment at the end of their work placement. CCP has a good relationship with the employers and most would provide a work placement for a future

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learner, if requested.

48. The 12-week IT preparatory course is effective in preparing learners for the foundation modern apprenticeship. It is offered three times a year and many learners and employers consider that the course is a major contributor to a successful outcome. During the course, learners develop their understanding of computer components and peripheral devices. Basic installation and support activities are a part of the programme. A much higher proportion of learners who complete the preparatory course are retained on the foundation modern apprenticeship. Some learners leave the course early when a suitable work placement has been identified and they feel confident to do so. Completion of the course leads to a nationally recognised qualification at level 1.

49. The initial interview and assessment process is mostly satisfactory. At the initial stage, applicants have an introductory talk before completing a key skills test. If the results are poor, the applicant is advised to consider other training alternatives. If successful, learners are invited to a second interview. This is much more detailed and acceptance onto the programme is based on a number of attributes, including motivation. However, learners' prior IT experience is not fully explored. The initial test is used to identify the appropriate key skills level and whether a learner needs literacy or numeracy support. For learners with additional needs, the testing process is not sophisticated enough to identify specific areas for improvement. Few learners, even those with poor GCSE results, receive literacy or numeracy support. Those who are identified as having a need are given a set of workbooks with practise exercises. Tutor support is available, but staff are unqualified and do not use individual learning plans to monitor progress.

50. CCP offers the advanced modern apprenticeship, but due to the requirement for learners to be in a supervisory role before starting, there have been no enrolments to date. Some learners are very able and do not find the foundation modern apprenticeship sufficiently challenging. As the 18-month programme progresses, a small number of learners lose interest in gathering evidence and decide not to complete the modern apprenticeship. The limited opportunities for progression do not meet the aims of many learners. However, learners are keen to gain an industry-recognised qualification which is offered by CCP, in addition to the NVQ.

51. There is no structured off-the-job training either in the workplace or at CCP's training centre. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. CCP relies on the quality of the work placements and their relationship with the employers to ensure that learners' gain the necessary background knowledge. Opportunities for learners to use the hardware and software at CCP's training centre are limited. Tutors and assessors generally have relevant experience in ICT but where staff are not appropriately qualified, CCP is actively encouraging future training.

52. CCP does not provide or recommend technical materials to support learning. Some learners have access to good technical resources and additional training courses, but this is solely dependent on the work placement and the initiative of their employer. The weakness in off-the-job training was identified in the self-assessment report.

53. Learners' understanding of portfolio-building is poor. Learners have good initial guidance on portfolio-building at the start of the course, but this is not reinforced. Portfolios generally contain a satisfactory range of evidence, but learners have an over-reliance on their assessor to instruct them on what to collect. When questioned, few learners could explain how their portfolio was structured or why additional evidence from the workplace was not included.

### **Leadership and management**

54. The management of the ICT programmes is mostly good. An electronic record is kept of all assessment decisions and the progress learners are making with units. This and other data are available for all staff on the company's intranet. Learners' progress is recorded and monitored. Learners' or employers' concerns are quickly resolved and a detailed record is entered in the learners' log. The work placements are well planned and well organised. Managers in the workplace are well briefed on the requirements of the programme and how to support their learners. Individual learning targets are agreed with the learners at each review meeting. Managers are involved in the review process and are aware of key dates and targets, but some are not given a copy of the agreed assessment plan. The ICT management team has a clear vision of the future and the need to develop its ICT programmes and the team meets frequently on an informal basis. The team is knowledgeable about IT and most staff have teaching or assessing experience. When necessary, an external consultant is used to improve the provision, such as making key skills an integral part of the NVQ. The present arrangement to use an external consultant for internal verification is satisfactory, but only for the current size of the provision. The self-assessment report identified the main strengths and weaknesses of the provision.