

INSPECTION REPORT

Prospect Training Services (Gloucester)

11 September 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas 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

Prospect Training Services (Gloucester)

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Prospect Training Services (Gloucester) Ltd (PTS) was established in March 1997 as a sole trader and became a private limited company in April 2001. Initially, the organisation ran programmes for young mothers-to-be (YMTB) and single mothers, funded through the European Social Fund (ESF). PTS has developed its provision to reach disadvantaged groups in the community. It provides a full range of training to meet the needs of learners and employers in the community. PTS has developed and extended its provision to include work-based learning for adults funded by Jobcentre Plus and foundation programmes primarily funded by Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). PTS has gained additional funding from other sources such as the Regional Development Agency and Connexions. PTS has training centres in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean, and subcontracts with a number of local training providers. PTS also carries out some privately funded training, which accounts for approximately 20 per cent of its income.

2. There are currently 76 adults on work-based learning programmes for adults. Of the 35 clients on programmes in information technology (IT), eight are on short job-focused training (SJFT) and 27 are on longer occupational training (LOT). There are 24 clients on transportation programmes; five are on SJFT and 19 are on LOT programmes. Three LOT clients on childcare programmes were included in the inspection of foundation provision. There were too few clients in other areas of provision for these to be inspected and graded. However, this provision was included in the inspection of leadership and management. There are 86 learners on foundation programmes. Of these, 71 are funded by the local LSC, five are on New Deal 18-24 programmes, three are on work-based learning programmes, and seven are funded through additional government funding streams, including four learners under 16 years of age. New learners on foundation programmes are recruited on to entry to employment (E2E) provision. Currently, 17 foundation learners have been recruited directly onto E2E provision. Most foundation learners are completing Life Skills or national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1.

3. The company has grown rapidly over the past two years and there are now 40 staff, two of whom are part time. The senior management team has recently been restructured and consists of the managing director and eight senior managers. The managers are, a company operations manager responsible for personnel and marketing, a quality assurance manager, a health and safety manager, and managers responsible for equality and diversity, literacy and numeracy, adult learning programmes, youth learning programmes and the operational management of the training centres. The company also has a marketing co-ordinator and a financial controller who attend senior management team meetings as appropriate. PTS gained the Investors in People standard in December 2000, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. PTS has produced annual self-assessment reports since 1999. The most recent report was produced in April 2003.

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4. In the Gloucester area, from where PTS draws most of its learners, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 7.5 per cent, compared with 2.8 per cent in Gloucestershire and 9.1 per cent nationally. Unemployment rates in April 2003 were 2.7 per cent in Gloucester and 1.8 per cent in Gloucestershire, compared with 2.6 per cent nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

5. There are 35 clients on IT programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus. Eight of these clients are on SJFT and 27 are on LOT programmes. Of these, 14 clients attend in-house provision at PTS training centres in Gloucester or the Forest of Dean. The other 21 clients are in subcontracted provision in Cheltenham and Gloucester. All clients are on accredited programmes and attend well-resourced workshop provision at times to suit their availability. Clients are scheduled to attend for 16 hours a week, and can attend for more hours.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

6. There are 24 clients on work-based learning programmes for adults in transportation. Jobcentre Plus carries out initial assessment and refers clients to PTS. Nineteen clients are working towards a licensed goods vehicle qualification part 1 or part 2, four are working towards certification in lift truck driving, and one client is working towards a certificate of professional competence. Licensed goods vehicle programmes last for 26 weeks and clients attend training for a minimum of 16 hours a week. Three subcontractors in Gloucestershire provide the practical training for licensed goods vehicles. Background knowledge training is provided by PTS. Most lift truck training is provided over two weeks. Lift truck training is available at the Forest of Dean training centre and through a subcontractor in Gloucester. All clients receive an induction at the start of their programme and also at the workplace. Seven clients attend work placements and two are employed.

Foundation programmes

7. There are 86 learners on foundation programmes at PTS. Of these, 41 are working towards an NVQ at level 1 or the equivalent. Twenty-four of these learners are on childcare provision, nine are on trowel trades and plastering programmes, and eight are on hairdressing provision. Twenty-three learners are on a non-vocationally specific skills for work programme, of whom 20 are in subcontracted provision. Of these 64 learners, 17 have been recruited as E2E learners and the rest are completing programmes started before E2E was introduced. The purpose of the E2E programme is to prepare learners for entry to a modern apprenticeship, further education or employment, by building up skills, confidence and motivation. In addition, there are 22 learners on the YMTB programme, five of whom are New Deal 18-24 clients. This is a special programme for young mothers to be and covers information and skills that will enable young mothers to take care of themselves and their baby and to consider future training opportunities. Most learners on foundation programmes are referred by the Connexions service. Literacy and numeracy skills are assessed at the beginning of the programmes and appropriate support is provided weekly. Personal advisers keep in contact with the learners and carry out regular progress reviews. Learners attend initially for 16 hours a week which extends to 30 hours later in the programme. Learners stay on average for 20 weeks but the programme is flexible to allow learners to stay for longer periods as long as progress towards agreed targets is being made.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	28
Number of learner interviews	53
Number of staff interviews	38
Number of employer interviews	6
Number of subcontractor interviews	5
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of partner/external agency interviews	5

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The leadership and management of the company are satisfactory, as is the approach to equality of opportunity. However, the quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. Training is good in ICT, transportation and foundation programmes.

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	3
Quality assurance	4

Information & communications technology	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for adults	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for adults	2

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	2
Other government-funded provision	2
New Deal 18-24	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. There is good achievement of IT skills and qualifications. Learners on foundation programmes produce good portfolios. In childcare, learners make good progress. Many foundation programmes are new and it is too early to make judgements on standards of learners' achievements. Learners on the YMTB programme reach good standards within the length of time that they stay on programme. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

10. There is good progression into employment from licensed goods vehicle programmes. In 2001-02, 52 per cent of learners gained jobs. This rose to 62 per cent in 2002-03. Although job outcomes are satisfactory overall, in IT they are below Jobcentre Plus targets.

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	1	1	0	0	0	2
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Foundation programmes	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Total	0	1	4	3	0	0	0	8

11. **There is good teaching and learning in foundation programmes.** All observations of learning during the inspection were good or better. Teaching is planned to suit individual learning styles and is tailored to individual learning needs. **Teaching on licensed goods vehicle programmes is good,** while on other transportation programmes it is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory in IT programmes, though a limited range of teaching styles is currently used.

12. **There are good learning resources on all programmes.** The premises are well decorated. A good range of equipment is available for all practical elements of the programmes. Resources are generally well developed and appropriate to learners' needs. **Teaching staff at PTS are well qualified and have appropriate experience.** Teaching staff in some subcontracted provision do not have appropriate teaching qualifications.

13. **There is a good range of qualifications in each area of learning. There is a good matching of learners to programmes in foundation.**

14. **There is good support for learners in all areas of learning.** Many learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Staff give learners appropriate individual support. Learners are referred to specialist agencies if staff are unable to provide the full range of support needed.

15. Assessment is generally satisfactory, although there is insufficient written feedback given to learners on IT programmes.

16. **Progress reviews are unsatisfactory on all programmes.** There is insufficient action-planning and target-setting. Targets are often not specific or time-bound. There is inconsistency in recording the outcomes of progress reviews. Learners do not receive a copy of the review forms. Employers and subcontractors are not routinely included in the progress reviews, and do not receive copies of the progress review forms. There is insufficient focus on learning in the reviews of learners in subcontracted provision.

17. **Some learners do not develop their jobsearch skills and do not engage in regular jobsearch activity throughout their programmes.** Jobsearch provision is inadequate and is not monitored adequately.

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18. **In childcare, there are inadequate progression routes for some learners.** Learners are recruited onto the programmes expecting to be able to progress on to level 2 provision on completion of the course. However, some learners need to complete a top-up course before they are accepted onto such programmes. This is not made clear to learners and appropriate progression routes have not yet been established.

Leadership and management

19. **PTS has strong strategic vision and direction.** The company has grown quickly and has developed a range of provision for disadvantaged groups. Provision in foundation programmes has expanded to meet identified local skills shortages.

20. **PTS has effective external partnerships.** This is a key factor in the development of effective brokering arrangements for programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus. Learners on foundation programmes benefit particularly from good working relationships with a range of specialist agencies. PTS has good links with employers and is fully involved in local provider networks.

21. **There is good investment in teaching and learning.** PTS has expanded from one site in 1997 to four sites currently. All premises are well furnished and provide a good learning environment. There is good investment in specialist resources for each area of learning. PTS staff have appropriate teaching qualifications and vocational experience.

22. **Learner feedback is used effectively to improve provision.** For example, a wheelchair user recruited on to the hairdressing programme was consulted on the planning of the facilities and resources of the new hairdressing training centre.

23. Staff appraisal processes are satisfactory. There is good investment in staff development. However, target-setting for individual staff is poorly developed. There is not enough staff training in equality of opportunity.

24. Internal communication is satisfactory. The company has grown substantially since 1997 and has appointed many new staff. Staff are highly motivated and work well in their teams. PTS holds regular management and team meetings. However, the outcomes of these meetings are not shared effectively and there is inconsistent practice across the company. More effective communications are currently being developed. There is no formal mechanism for sharing good practice.

25. There is not enough use of data to plan, monitor and develop provision. PTS has not routinely collected data by area of learning or by individual learning programme. There is no history of collecting or analysing data by learner group. Data are not used effectively to provide the management with information about retention and achievement trends.

26. **There is inconsistent promotion of equality of opportunity to learners.** Adult learners are not given enough information about equality of opportunity at induction. Progress

reviews do not monitor effectively learners' understanding of relevant issues. Improved learning materials on equality of opportunity have been piloted on some foundation programmes. Other than childcare learners, other learners have a poor understanding of equality of opportunity.

27. PTS does not consistently promote and monitor equality of opportunity arrangements with employers. PTS checks if employers have an equal opportunities policy, but does not check that these are implemented effectively.

28. PTS has incomplete quality assurance arrangements. Arrangements are poor for quality assuring teaching and learning. There is no planned programme to observe teaching, progress reviews, or induction.

29. There is ineffective quality assurance of subcontracted provision. There are inadequate arrangements to monitor the provision effectively. Subcontractors are not included in progress reviews. Individual learner progress is not monitored effectively. There is no formal procedure to observe teaching.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong strategic vision and direction
- effective external partnerships
- good investment in teaching and learning
- good individual learner support
- effective use of learner feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to plan, monitor and develop provision
- inconsistent promotion of equal opportunities to learners
- inconsistent promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity of some employers
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements
- ineffective quality assurance of subcontracted provision

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good achievement of IT skills and qualifications
- good retention rates
- good learning resources
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- inadequate progress reviews
- insufficient development of jobsearch skills

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- good progression into employment from licensed goods vehicle programmes
- effective planning and implementation of training in licensed goods vehicle programmes
- good learning resources
- good range of appropriate learning programmes
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- ineffective progress reviews
- poor jobsearch activity by some learners
- insufficient ongoing monitoring of equality of opportunity of employers

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good standard of portfolio work
- good teaching and learning
- good learning resources
- good matching of learners to programmes
- effective learner support
- effective links with external agencies

Weaknesses

- poor target-setting
- inadequate progression routes for some childcare learners
- inadequate use of quality assurance procedures

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT PROSPECT TRAINING SERVICES (GLOUCESTER):

- the friendly staff
- the welcoming atmosphere and learning environment
- the good pastoral support
- the key skills support in bricklaying
- the provision of a free minibus to help them attend training
- the games room
- the use of CD-ROMs during training
- having access to the internet

WHAT LEARNERS THINK PROSPECT TRAINING SERVICES (GLOUCESTER) COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of hours available for training
- the availability of work placements
- the jobsearch training
- the provision of appropriate books and learning materials
- the use of handouts
- the number of staff in childcare

KEY CHALLENGES FOR PROSPECT TRAINING SERVICES (GLOUCESTER):

- establish coherent and consistent quality assurance arrangements
- improve progress reviews
- ensure the development of learners' jobsearch skills
- ensure the effective monitoring of subcontracted provision
- use data more effectively to set achievement targets
- ensure that learners have an effective understanding of equality of opportunity
- ensure the effective monitoring of equality of opportunity

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- strong strategic vision and direction
- effective external partnerships
- good investment in teaching and learning
- good individual learner support
- effective use of learner feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to plan, monitor and develop provision
- inconsistent promotion of equal opportunities to learners
- inconsistent promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity of some employers
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements
- ineffective quality assurance of subcontracted provision

30. The growth of PTS has been steered by the strong vision and direction of the managing director. The company is fully committed to developing provision for under-represented and socially excluded groups. The company started with a YMTB course for 12 learners in 1997. The YMTB provision has since grown, and PTS formed a subsidiary company in 2000 to develop nationally accredited provision. The subsidiary company currently has contracts with 32 providers throughout the country, and provides learning materials and internally verifies all provision. Learners at PTS are consulted over changes to the learning materials and their feedback has been used to make further changes. Games and activities now included in the pack were piloted at PTS. The externally accredited training now enables learners to achieve nationally recognised qualifications. Outreach provision of the YMTB programme is currently funded by Connexions, to help extend the provision. PTS has provided work-based learning for adults since 2001. It has focused on attracting disadvantaged groups and on providing very effective personal support. Because of its success in supporting disadvantaged learners, PTS has been selected by Jobcentre Plus to pilot a system of brokered provision. PTS subcontracts the learning provision according to the qualification aims of the learners. The company has successfully extended its provision for disadvantaged young people through its range of NVQ foundation programmes at level 1, or equivalent. These include childcare, hairdressing, and construction. These areas of learning were selected to provide training for local skills shortages. PTS has also begun a non-vocationally specific skills to work programme this year. All of these developments are appropriate to E2E. All learners recruited on to foundation programmes from August 2003 will be funded as E2E learners by the local LSC. PTS has developed much of this provision by gaining funding from a

number of government-funded initiatives. The company is now seeking to consolidate its provision through Jobcentre Plus and LSC contracts. The growth of provision has been managed well.

31. Effective external partnerships have been a significant element in the success of PTS to date. PTS plays a key role in local provider networks and participates in co-operative ventures to strengthen effective partnership working. An example of this is the development of literacy and numeracy assessment tools and materials by the PTS basic skills manager and a member of staff from another organisation. These materials are available throughout the local provider network. PTS has good links with external organisations to support learners, including social services, and housing and voluntary organisations. Good links with personal advisers and Jobcentre Plus staff ensure that learners are on the right programmes and that they are supported effectively. PTS maintains a database of employers in the area. This is used effectively to provide appropriate work placements.

32. There is good investment in teaching and learning. The rapid expansion of PTS has been managed carefully to ensure that learners have good resources. Since 1997, new premises have been opened in Gloucester for childcare and hairdressing provision. The training centre in the Forest of Dean caters for learners across all programmes. Investment in the Forest of Dean is a long-term strategy and has been partially funded by income from PTS's private work and by additional funding from government sources. The intention is that the Forest of Dean site becomes a self-funding unit as learner numbers increase. All premises are well furnished and decorated and provide a good learning environment. New equipment has been bought to ensure that all areas of provision are suitably provided for. The hairdressing salon is well equipped to industry standards. The construction provision at the Forest of Dean enables trowel trades and plastering skills to be developed effectively. Lift truck equipment is available at the site to ensure learners have access to a range of relevant qualifications. The investment in equipment fits in with identified skills shortages in the area. Learners at PTS can develop appropriate employability skills through this investment in resources. The IT workshops have up-to-date equipment and a good range of software is applications available. All programmes are well resourced with an appropriate range of materials to support learning. The resources in subcontracted provision are also good, and PTS works to ensure that all learners have access to appropriate resources.

33. PTS has recently developed a literacy and numeracy strategy. This is being implemented effectively for foundation learners. Two new staff will join PTS within the next month to ensure that all foundation learners receive appropriate individual literacy and numeracy support. The provision of support with literacy and numeracy is less well developed in the Jobcentre Plus funded provision. In general, Jobcentre Plus does not refer learners with substantial literacy and numeracy development needs to PTS. However, some learners placed with PTS have skills gaps that are not effectively supported at PTS.

34. PTS has grown rapidly over the past two years. A number of new staff have been recruited in this time. Care has been taken to recruit staff with appropriate qualifications

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and experience. The induction of new staff is effective and ensures that the supportive ethos of the company is maintained. Some longer-serving staff are ex-learners from PTS. They use their expertise well to provide appropriate learner support. PTS has recently restructured its management team in order to manage effectively the growth of provision. There is now a team of eight managers supporting the managing director. Most of the management team have been with PTS for a number of years, and three are ex-learners. PTS has provided good promotion opportunities for these staff.

35. The staff appraisal process is currently being reviewed. Staff are appraised annually by their line managers. However, although there is a common format for the appraisals there is no training or guidance given to line managers about the process. The staff appraisal process does not focus sufficiently on setting targets for staff or on identifying staff development needs. Five per cent of PTS's budget is allocated to staff development. Many staff have benefited from staff development activity. However, PTS does not have an overview of staff training needs. Staff have a poor awareness of the 'Common Inspection Framework' and of good practice in teaching and learning.

36. The management of the growth of PTS has been particularly challenging in terms of maintaining effective internal communications. Internal communications are satisfactory overall, but work better at team and site level than across the organisation. Regular management and team meetings are held. These are minuted, but the decisions made are not always communicated effectively across the company. There is inconsistent practice across the company. This was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report and action is being taken to rectify it. It is too early to judge its effectiveness.

37. There is insufficient use of data to aid the planning, monitoring and development of provision. The management information system in use for the foundation provision is based upon the requirements of contract compliance. PTS does not have a data collection and reporting strategy adequate for the company's decision-making process. Data are not routinely collected by area of learning or by programme. Data are not collected or analysed by learner group. Data cannot be used effectively to review retention and achievement rates and to identify problem areas. PTS was unable to provide the inspectors with reliable data on retention and achievement rates in all areas of learning. Data are not used systematically to monitor learners' progress. There is some regular use of data for equal opportunities monitoring purposes. This has identified target groups and some action has been taken to tackle issues. Some aspects of data collection are good, such as the database on employers. This has helped with the monitoring of work placements and in quickly identifying appropriate employers for work placements. PTS works to keep updated records of job outcomes, not just within the period specified in the contracts but also over a longer period.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

38. PTS is fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for its learners. It has an open-door recruitment policy. Staff respond rapidly to any relevant individual learner needs. Some transport to training is provided. For example, a minibus was bought to enable learners to attend the Forest of Dean training centre. Learners unable to attend

the provider are provided with additional support.

39. Learner feedback is used to ensure that appropriate facilities are put in place. For example, a wheelchair user recruited on to the hairdressing programme was consulted on the planning of the facilities and resources at the new hairdressing training centre. Although there is poor access to many of the training centres, all learners have been accommodated to date by changes of venue. Individual adaptations have been made for particular learners. Staff have an excellent reputation in the community and with Connexions and Jobcentre Plus.

40. PTS has appropriate staff policies and procedures relating to equality of opportunity included in the induction arrangements for all new staff. However, systematic discussion of equal opportunities is not included in the staff appraisal process. There is not enough formal staff training on equal opportunities. Until this year, annual training was provided by external agencies. This has been replaced by a questionnaire devised by the manager responsible for equality and diversity. All staff complete this and receive feedback. Staff identified as having a poor understanding of equal opportunities meet with the manager to discuss the issues raised. There is no formal programme of training to follow up this activity. There are no formal arrangements for sharing good practice.

41. PTS collects and uses equal opportunities data to identify under-represented groups. For example, there are plans to publicise PTS on a radio station for minority ethnic groups. Data on job outcomes for learners are used to help reassure learners over 40 years of age that they can gain jobs. Some marketing materials include images of learners from minority ethnic groups. However, there are no images of learners with disabilities and there is no use of images to challenge gender stereotyping. PTS is aware of recent relevant legislation, and is planning to commission an external accessibility audit of its premises.

42. There is inconsistent promotion of equal opportunities to learners. On the adult programmes, a leaflet is used at induction to raise awareness of equal opportunities issues, but this is not followed up during the programmes. The leaflet is not specific about the complaints, bullying or harassment procedures. Progress reviews do not monitor learners' awareness of equal opportunities. Staff ask learners relevant questions but do not check their answers. There is adequate promotion of equality of opportunity on the foundation programmes. Interactive software has recently been piloted in the induction to the childcare programme. These new materials include follow-up activities to maintain learners' awareness of equal opportunities issues. Current plans to extend the use of these materials are restricted to foundation programmes only. Although foundation learners are given information about the company's commitment to equal opportunities during their induction, this information is not adequate or followed up at a later date. There is no systematic checking to ensure that learners understand how to resolve these issues. Learners are not given copies of any policies and procedures. There is a grievance procedure for learners, but this is only given to staff. Learners do not fully understand their rights or responsibilities. However, there are many examples of displays of materials at PTS's training centres that promote equality of opportunity.

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43. The promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities of employers and work-placement providers is inconsistent. PTS has detailed monitoring procedures for employers, but these focus primarily on health and safety issues. At the initial monitoring meeting PTS's staff check whether the employer has an equal opportunities policy. If there is no policy, PTS's staff provide guidance and support in introducing an appropriate policy. However PTS does not check that the policy is implemented and this is not followed up on subsequent visits. Other relevant issues are not discussed during visits to employers.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

44. PTS has recently developed some good use of learner feedback. The use of questionnaires has not proved effective, so PTS has pioneered the use of learner forums in the childcare provision. PTS provided guidance on how to set an agenda and write minutes. Learners participate effectively in reviewing the quality of provision and making suggestions for improvements. Some examples of the improvements made as a result of learner feedback include the upgrading of computer facilities and the development of citizenship skills at the Forest of Dean training centre. Learner forums are being extended to other foundation programmes.

45. The quality assurance manager is only recently in post. Much action has been taken to change the focus of quality assurance from contract compliance to continuous improvement. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these initiatives. There are some well-established elements of a quality assurance framework in place, including regular internal audits.

46. Internal verification procedures for accredited programmes are satisfactory. Not all staff responsible for assessment are appropriately qualified. However, arrangements have been made to ensure compliance with external awarding body regulations. For example, the internal verification of YMTB portfolios by a member of staff employed by the subsidiary company.

47. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The current self-assessment report was not produced against the 'Common Inspection Framework'. PTS does not operate by area of learning but by adult and youth programmes. Analysis by area of learning is therefore superficial. The report is generally descriptive and does not give sufficient evidence to support strengths. The report accurately identified several weaknesses, including weak progress reviews and poor target-setting. Not all staff contributed to the self-assessment process, and many have a poor understanding of the purpose and value of self-assessment. Employers, subcontractors and learners were not involved in the self-assessment process. PTS produced a thorough development plan as a result of self-assessment. It is monitored closely and updated monthly. Progress in fulfilling objectives is reported to relevant staff. Poor progress has been made in some areas that have been recognised as ineffective for some time, for example the review process.

48. PTS has incomplete quality assurance arrangements. There are substantial gaps in the quality assurance framework and also significant examples of inconsistent

implementation. There is no process of course evaluation, and no programme of observations of teaching, reviewing or induction. There have been some observations of teaching, but these have not occurred within an evaluative framework. Although the areas of learning were graded as good by the inspection team, the weaknesses identified by the inspectors were largely related to poor quality assurance. The pattern of ineffective reviews and inadequate jobsearch provision throughout PTS demonstrates a poor understanding of key elements of good learning provision. Examples of good practice are not routinely identified or shared within teams or across the company. Sharing of good practice is not a standard agenda item at meetings and there is no mechanism for publicising good practise throughout PTS.

49. Most learners funded by Jobcentre Plus are in subcontracted provision. At the time of the inspection, PTS had learners based with 12 subcontractors, including one offering foundation provision to LSC funded learners. The quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are ineffective. The contract is not sufficiently specific and does not clearly identify each party's responsibilities. For example, it specifies that the subcontractor will allow the provider access to the learners for review purposes, but does not include a requirement for subcontractors to attend reviews. PTS does not request formal reports on learners' attendance and progress. The reviews are carried out by PTS's staff who do not have relevant subject or teaching expertise. Communication with subcontractors is largely informal. PTS's staff make regular visits to subcontractors and keep some detailed records on each subcontractor, for example, health and safety monitoring. However, monitoring arrangements do not effectively cover equality of opportunity, learners' progress or the quality of teaching.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for adults	35	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good achievement of IT skills and qualifications
- good retention rates
- good learning resources
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- inadequate progress reviews
- insufficient development of jobsearch skills

Achievement and standards

50. Learners develop good IT skills. Some learners start with poor IT skills and make quick progress. Many learners take nationally recognised qualifications. Achievement rates are good. For example, 87 per cent of learners who took an examination-based qualification in IT in the past year gained the qualification. A good range of IT qualifications is available through the subcontracted provision. The number of learners completing their programmes successfully has risen from 64 per cent in 2001-02 to 74 per cent in 2002-03. The provider has identified a need to provide more basic IT courses for some learners and this provision has been piloted at one subcontractor.

51. Retention rates are good, at 78 per cent in 2001-02 and 79 per cent in 2002-03. This is particularly impressive as many learners are from socially excluded groups and have not been successful in completing learning programmes in the past. Many are also ex-offenders, and have a background of drug misuse, or have other difficult personal circumstances. However, progression into employment does not match Jobcentre Plus targets. The proportion of learners who have gained jobs has fallen from 27 per cent in 2001-02 to 21 per cent in 2002-03. Only one current learner is on a work placement.

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

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																
Work-based learning for adults																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	17		222		251											
Retained*	0		174		195	78										
Planned learning completed	0		164		161	64										
Gained job	0		46		67	27										
Still in training	17		18		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

52. Learning resources at PTS and the subcontractors' training centres are good. The IT workshops provide a welcoming learning environment, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The computer equipment is modern and regularly updated. A good variety of software applications is available. Specialist equipment and adaptations are available if required. Learners pre-book their attendance at the workshop at times that suit them. Learners often attend for more than the 16 hours a week allocated to them. Learners are given appropriate support on request. However, when the workshop is fully occupied it can take some time for individual queries to be dealt with. There is not enough space to teach small groups of learners and all teaching is carried out on an individual basis. Access to some training centres is not adequate for people with mobility difficulties. For example, the workshop at the PTS training centre in Gloucester is on the first floor and is inaccessible to wheelchair users. This has been identified in the self-assessment report and action is being taken to resolve it.

53. PTS works well with Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus refers all learners to PTS after an initial assessment. They are then given the option of attending subcontracted provision within easy travelling distance. PTS works with two subcontractors, but will arrange for provision elsewhere if appropriate. Staff from PTS interview the learners to identify the correct programme of study before an individual learning plan is agreed. PTS has recently introduced additional tests to assess the IT skill level of each learner and to confirm whether literacy and numeracy support is required. The test results are communicated verbally to the learner and recorded on a database available through the company's internal network. Learners do not receive a copy of the outcomes of the assessment. If literacy and numeracy support needs are identified, learners are referred back to Jobcentre Plus.

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54. Learner support is good. Staff are fully aware of learners' individual needs. For example, many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are ex-offenders or have a history of drug misuse. PTS staff work very well with all learners to help them succeed. Weekly reviews of learners take place for the first month that learners are on programme. This regular contact helps staff develop good working relationships with the learners and provides appropriate learning and pastoral support.

55. Teaching is satisfactory. Learners are taught on an individual basis in open learning workshops and are given appropriate guidance and support. Learners' work is generally assessed through computer-based tests. Learners are not given copies of their assessment results. Verbal feedback is given to learners on areas that need to be improved to gain the qualification. Generally, learners do not write notes or keep their own files. They cannot check their understanding and it is difficult for them to build up a portfolio of materials to help reinforce their learning. Insufficient evidence of individual progress and achievement was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

56. The range of programmes available is satisfactory. Most of the programmes are equivalent to NVQ level 2. Learners with poor IT skill levels at the beginning of their programmes often require additional support to achieve. Most learners make good progress. However, PTS has identified the need to provide more basic learning programmes. It has introduced better initial assessment in order to accurately identify learners' IT skills levels and to ensure the learning programmes meet learners' individual needs.

57. Progress reviews are inadequate. After the first month on programme, progress reviews are scheduled every four weeks, but take place more frequently if required. The outcomes are recorded on the internal electronic database. Learners are not given a copy of the review form. Subcontractors are not involved in the review process, although the outcomes of the reviews are communicated verbally to them. Subcontractors do not have access to the PTS electronic network. There is not enough focus on learning during the reviews. This is particularly the case for learners at subcontracted provision. PTS staff who carry out these reviews do not have appropriate IT expertise and are unable to agree relevant specific outcomes. Specific time-bound targets are generally not set. The reviews are not used to plan and monitor progress effectively. The process does not identify learners making slow progress or appropriate remedial action. The accommodation for progress reviews is not adequate for confidentiality to be maintained. For example, an open café area is regularly used for reviews. This has been identified as a problem by PTS management.

58. There is insufficient development of learners' jobsearch skills. All learners are expected to spend four hours a week on jobsearch activity. Not all learners are aware of this and many do not carry out enough jobsearch activity. Activities during induction include working through three jobsearch self-study packs. A session at the end of the week is specifically focused on jobsearch. The jobsearch coach who runs the session is available to learners throughout their programme. However, some learners are not aware of this. There is insufficient emphasis during progress reviews on monitoring jobsearch activity and on setting specific jobsearch targets.

Leadership and management

59. The management of individual IT workshops is satisfactory. An electronic record is kept of all assessment and review decisions and the progress of learners is monitored. Data are available to other members of staff through a secure company intranet and actions can be monitored as soon as they are entered onto the database. Information on individual learners can also be entered and monitored through this system. This information is not available to staff at subcontracted provision. Staff within the IT workshops at the PTS training centres are briefed well on the requirements of their learning programmes. Most staff in the IT workshops at the PTS training centres have teaching or assessor experience and relevant IT qualifications. However, staff employed by the subcontractors do not have teaching or assessor experience.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for adults	24	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good progression into employment from licensed goods vehicle programmes
- effective planning and implementation of training in licensed goods vehicle programmes
- good learning resources
- good range of appropriate learning programmes
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- ineffective progress reviews
- poor jobsearch activity by some learners
- insufficient ongoing monitoring of equality of opportunity of employers

Achievement and standards

60. There is good progression into employment from licensed goods vehicles programmes, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Over the past three years, progression into employment has exceeded contractual agreements with Jobcentre Plus. Fifty-two per cent of the 27 leavers in 2001-02 gained employment. In 2002-03, 61 per cent of the 41 leavers gained employment. So far, during 2003-04, 56 per cent of the 16 leavers gained employment. Retention and achievement rates on all programmes in transportation are satisfactory.

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

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																
Work-based learning for adults																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		233		199											
Retained*	0		204		164	82										
Planned learning completed	0		172		142	71										
Gained job	0		60		77	39										
Still in training	13		11		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

61. Training in licensed goods vehicles programmes is planned and implemented effectively. There are two stages of training. The first stage involves background knowledge training provided by PTS. Learners work independently through a range of well-produced resource materials. Learners also have access to a good range of CD-ROMs that enable them to practise theory tests. There is good monitoring and recording of learners' progress during this period of training. Learners must pass the theory test before they can progress onto the second stage of training. This second stage consists of subcontracted practical training and a practical test. There is good communication between PTS and subcontractors throughout the practical training. Each learner receives an informative action plan that explains in detail the requirements for successful completion of the programme. Learners have a good understanding of the demands of the training programme. Lift truck training programmes are satisfactory.

62. Resources are good, a strength identified in the provider's self-assessment report. Training areas are well resourced and provide a suitable setting for good training. Learners have access to a range of learning resources that are appropriate for effective independent study. There is a strong focus on health and safety, which is monitored effectively by PTS. There are excellent learner to trainer ratios on all programmes. Training vehicles and lift truck equipment meet current industrial standards. Staff at PTS and all subcontractors are appropriately qualified and have a thorough understanding of the subject area.

63. There is a good range of appropriate transportation programmes and qualifications. Learners can work towards part 1 or part 2 licensed vehicle goods qualifications, a passenger carrying vehicle qualification and transportation management training. There are four different lift truck training programmes. PTS adds additional components to

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individual training programmes if a specific need is identified. However, details of additional training programmes carried out are not always recorded on individual learning plans. The programmes in transportation meet locally identified skills shortages.

64. PTS and subcontractors provide good learner support. A drivers' forum takes place every Monday at PTS to enable all drivers to share experiences and provide each other with support. Since its introduction in 2001-02, achievement rates have increased from 50 per cent to 63 per cent. Staff from PTS provide effective ongoing pastoral support to all learners. There is a strong partnership between learners, subcontractors, employers and PTS staff. All learners on licensed goods vehicle training have to pass a medical before starting the background knowledge training. Learners are given additional support during this stage of the programme. Staff from PTS have made effective representations to the licensing authority for learners refused a provisional licence because they have a criminal record.

65. Satisfactory arrangements are made to meet identified literacy and numeracy needs. Initial assessment is carried out by Jobcentre Plus before learners start their programme and the results are made available to PTS. Additional literacy and numeracy training is made available where a need is identified. However, details of this are not always recorded on individual learning plans. In addition, there is effective individual support for learners throughout their programmes, especially in the preparation for background knowledge testing.

66. There is poor take-up of jobsearch activity by some learners. During the induction week, an intensive period of jobsearch training is carried out through the use of self-study packs. This is followed up at the end of the week by a session led by an experienced jobsearch coach. Preparation for interviews is not included in the induction period. After the induction, jobsearch skills can be developed through individual sessions with the jobsearch coach and by attending sessions in the IT workshop to access the internet. However, this access to additional jobsearch activities is voluntary. Not all learners carry out additional jobsearch activity throughout their programme. PTS does not effectively follow up jobsearch activity after the induction.

67. Progress reviews are held frequently, but the process is ineffective. Progress reviews are not used to set specific, demanding targets. There is not enough setting of target dates, and subsequent progress reviews do not always follow up any previously agreed actions. The review process does not involve the employer or subcontractor and it is difficult for them to monitor learners' progress. Copies of completed review forms are not given to learners. Questions on equality of opportunity are asked during progress reviews but most recorded responses are vague and unspecific. Some reviews are conducted in inappropriate locations with no privacy.

Leadership and management

68. The leadership and management of this area of learning are satisfactory. There is adequate staff development and staff are appraised annually. Staff meetings are held for all staff involved in adult programmes. All staff on the adult programmes have access to

the learner database that records and monitors learner progress. Staff follow published quality assurance procedures for the monitoring of subcontractors, but some aspects of this monitoring are not adequate. The self-assessment report was descriptive, with not enough judgements to support the identified strengths and weaknesses.

69. There is insufficient ongoing monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace. All work placements are subject to an initial monitoring visit which includes a check on whether the employer has a equal opportunities policy. Once learners are placed with employers, there is no procedure to ensure the effective ongoing monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	42	2
Other government-funded provision	39	2
New Deal 18-24	5	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standard of portfolio work
- good teaching and learning
- good learning resources
- good matching of learners to programmes
- effective learner support
- effective links with external agencies

Weaknesses

- poor target-setting
- inadequate progression routes for some childcare learners
- inadequate use of quality assurance procedures

Achievement and standards

70. Learners produce a good standard of portfolio work. In childcare, learners produce portfolio work of a satisfactory standard for the award. Ninety per cent of the current learners on childcare programmes were assessed as having literacy and numeracy support needs. Their portfolios provide evidence of their good progress. There are good standards of work in the portfolios of learners on the YMTB programme. Learners have a good understanding of the development of a baby and of their own health needs during pregnancy. The YMTB portfolios are internally verified by a subsidiary company of PTS. Clear written feedback is provided on what has been achieved in the work submitted and good direction is provided so that learners know what they need to do to achieve the standard. The portfolios of learners on other programmes are also good. Work is corrected for literacy errors and portfolios include sensitively expressed guidance on how to improve.

71. Data are not adequate for judgements to be made on retention and achievement on foundation programmes overall. In childcare in 2003, 49 per cent of learners progressed to further education or training on leaving their programmes. The learners make good progress on this first step towards becoming competent childcare workers. Retention rates vary on the YMTB programme because of the personal and health needs of learners. Between February and June 2003, 20 per cent of these learners gained units

towards their certificate before leaving to give birth. Plans are in place for a programme in January 2004 to encourage young mothers to continue with their training following the birth of their baby. A satisfactory proportion of learners who are on the hairdressing programme which started in April 2003, have progressed on to other programmes with the provider or to further education. To date, 33 per cent of these learners have progressed. It is too early to make any judgements on the achievements of learners on trowel trades, plastering programmes and E2E programmes.

72. Provision in foundation is both recent and expanding. PTS has not been able to provide reliable data on retention and achievement for LSC-funded learners, as the data include learners funded from other government funding sources.

Quality of education and training

73. The standard of teaching and learning is good. All of the sessions observed during the inspection were graded good or better. Teaching styles meet the learners' individual needs and preferred learning styles. Teaching programmes are comprehensively planned and taught. Learners are encouraged to work at their own pace. However, the work is not sufficiently demanding for more able learners. In childcare, good work placements are matched well to individual learner needs. Liaison between PTS and the workplace is informal and is not recorded adequately. There are no learner targets specific to their achievements in the workplace. There is good teaching and learning on the YMTB programme. Learners follow an accredited programme that takes account of learners' future training needs as well as their personal needs during and after pregnancy. Sessions are planned carefully for both group and individual learner activities. Learners participate effectively in both practical and background knowledge activities. A session on the stages of development of the unborn baby was followed by practical games to reinforce learning. There is good teaching and learning in E2E programmes and in the other vocational areas. For example, a session on nail art included good use of practical activity to reinforce the skills demonstrated, as well as personal and general hygiene. Learners on the trowel trades programme have refurbished training rooms as part of their learning.

74. Learning resources are good. All training rooms are well maintained. There are good displays of learners' work throughout the training centres. The childcare training rooms are spacious and well lit. There is a very good supply of books, pamphlets, leaflets and posters, as well as art materials and children's books and games. Work sheets are available to learners and some are produced to meet individual needs. Computers are frequently incorporated into training sessions and are also used to provide literacy and numeracy support. On the YMTB programme, learners produce a new baby book with good use of graphics and photographs. The book includes records of their baby's development. There are good learning resources for practical training for learners in all vocational areas. Literacy and numeracy provision is well resourced. Computers are generally available and learners use them to produce work for projects. Staff have a wide range of training experience and most hold relevant teaching and vocational qualifications. Staff training in the national curriculum for literacy and numeracy is

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planned. However, some staff are not qualified assessors.

75. There is good matching of learners to the learning programmes. Initial assessment is effective. If necessary, initial literacy and numeracy assessment is followed up with a more detailed assessment. Results of initial assessments are used to plan individual learner support. However, some learners on the YMTB programme do not get the results of their assessment. Foundation programmes are planned so that learners' prior achievement is adequate for them to immediately begin work and progress. Learners' self-confidence improves well. Most learners on childcare programmes work well towards becoming fully qualified childcare workers.

76. There is effective learner support. The learning environment is appropriate to learners' individual needs. Additional individual learner support is provided through a programme of weekly individual sessions. Staff provide good pastoral and vocational learner support and deal with other issues such as accommodation. Many learners have social, personal and additional learning needs. There are excellent working relationships between learners, staff and other partners. On the YMTB programme, attendance and personal or health issues are followed up immediately with effective communication between the provider, the personal adviser and the learners' midwife. If learners need specialist advice they are referred to appropriate specialist support. A counsellor is available, by appointment, on one day each week.

77. Literacy and numeracy provision is satisfactory for all learners on foundation programmes. Where a common theme for a specific group has been identified, group sessions take place. Ninety per cent of the childcare learners are receiving literacy and numeracy support specific to their needs. Their progress is checked regularly and action plans are routinely updated. Learners on the skills for work programmes have timetabled literacy and numeracy sessions, and work is planned through projects that have been chosen by the learner. Currently, learners do not carry out the national literacy and numeracy tests. Links with the national curriculum are in the process of being implemented.

78. Target-setting is poor. Not enough specific short-term targets are identified in individual learning plans. Targets are not clear and do not have achievement dates. Although progress reviews take place at least every month, the section on the review form on future action is not completed in sufficient detail. Detailed actions are not identified for improvement by the next review. On the childcare programme, specific targets are not set for the work placement and learners do not understand that success in their work placement is an integral part of the qualification.

79. Progression rates are inadequate for some childcare learners. The provision is publicised as an NVQ at level 1 and as the first step to further training and a career in childcare. Learners who achieve their qualification may be able to progress immediately to an NVQ at level 2. However, PTS does not make it clear that the childcare qualification it provides is not the equivalent to an NVQ at level 1. Some learners have to follow up the qualification gained at PTS with a top-up qualification before they can progress to an NVQ at level 2. This is not made clear to learners, either at the start or

during the programme.

Leadership and management

80. There are effective links with external agencies. For example, PTS has secured funding from statutory and voluntary services such as Connexions and Young Gloucestershire to fund an outreach worker who provides individual support and training for young parents who live in isolated parts of Gloucestershire, or who may have mental health difficulties. One of the aims of this initiative is to encourage learners to take up other training. During 2002-03, PTS exceeded the target number for this contract. Childcare learners are invited to visit and observe other early years programmes in the county. On the YMTB programme, personal, health or attendance issues are followed up immediately with effective communication between PTS's staff, personal advisers and the learners' midwife. On other foundation programmes, learners are referred to specialist agencies if necessary.

81. The management of learning is satisfactory. Good preparation for E2E has taken place and staff are aware of the required changes to the curriculum and of the purpose of the programme. The subcontracted provision is new and it is too early to judge if it is being managed satisfactorily. The learner forum is used effectively by learners and staff to exchange views and solve problems. Learners and staff contribute to the agenda.

82. There is inadequate use of the quality assurance procedures. There is poor recording of progress reviews and action plans. Learners' files contain several documents that repeat information. Some documents found in learner files are out of date or incomplete and others are not updated. On the childcare programme, liaison between PTS and the work placement is informal and is not formally recorded. Data are not used to monitor retention, achievement and progression on individual programmes. Comparative data are not used to carry out trend analysis from year to year or to implement a strategy of continuous improvement. The self-assessment report of April 2003 was too descriptive and did not include any contribution from workplace managers or other external agencies.