

INSPECTION REPORT

The Laird Foundation

20 February 2004



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

The Laird Foundation

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Laird Foundation is based in Birkenhead. It is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Partners from public and private sectors, together with local community groups formed the company in February 1998. The Laird Foundation offers training and education facilities for people entering engineering, manufacturing, marine and technology related industries on Merseyside. Training leads to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3 and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. The facilities include industrial standard workshops, classrooms, offices and an operational dry dock. A second company, the Laird Foundation Enterprises Limited, was formed in August 1998 as a commercial company which reinvests profits into the charitable training company.

2. The Laird Foundation contracts with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Greater Merseyside for government-funded work-based learning. The Laird Foundation is a lead provider for Entry to Employment (E2E), holds two workforce development contracts to support employer engagement with the Greater Merseyside LSC and has provisional Centre of Vocational Excellence status for marine engineering.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

3. The Laird Foundation provides training for 89 learners in mechanical engineering and fabrication and welding. There are 25 advanced modern apprentices in fabrication and welding and 12 in mechanical engineering. There are 19 foundation modern apprentices in fabrication and welding and 33 in mechanical engineering. All learners take an initial assessment test and attend an interview along with a further key skills test to identify additional learning needs.

4. Basic craft training is carried out in The Laird Foundation's training centre in Birkenhead where assessment of practical skills, technical certificates and key skills is carried out. This initial training takes place over a minimum period of 12 weeks, after which some learners move into employment and return to the centre on day release to cover key skills and academic requirements for the framework. Learners who do not have employment or a work placement stay in the centre working through the NVQ until suitable employment with training or a work placement is found. These learners work on projects which provide evidence for NVQ assessments.

5. On-the-job assessment is carried out in the workplace by a team of assessors, who also carry out progress reviews every six weeks.

6. The Laird Foundation provides pupil apprenticeships for school pupils in years 10 and 11 and student apprenticeships for those in year 12. Some year 10, 11 and 12 pupils

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work towards vocational general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) in engineering and key skills. Others have programmes relating to NVQ units, or other nationally recognised qualifications. This gives students an introduction to engineering and is used to progress suitable students into modern apprenticeships.

Foundation programmes

7. The Laird Foundation has held a contract on behalf of a consortium of six partners for the delivery of E2E since August 2003. There are 177 learners currently on programme within the partnership. The E2E programme aims to prepare young people who are not yet ready to enter employment, further education or training. The programme must include the three core strands of personal and social development, literacy, numeracy and language and vocational skills. Each provider within the partnership is responsible for recruitment, initial assessment, induction and programme delivery. Most learners are referred by Connexions. A member of staff from one of the providers has been seconded for 12 months to co-ordinate the provision. The Laird Foundation is responsible for the management, co-ordination and monitoring of the provision and for assuring its quality.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	31
Number of learner interviews	74
Number of staff interviews	51
Number of employer interviews	7
Number of subcontractor interviews	11
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of partner/external agency interviews	10
Number of visits	17

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, The Laird Foundation's training in engineering and E2E are unsatisfactory. The leadership and management are also unsatisfactory, as is the quality assurance. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Entry to Employment	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. **In E2E, learners develop useful personal skills, social skills and key skills** through external visits and trips.

10. **In engineering, learners develop good practical skills for work.** There is a good range of additional practical activities to help learners develop a wider range of skills and experience.

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
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	9
Foundation programmes	0	1	1	3	2	0	0	7
Total	0	1	4	9	2	0	0	16

11. **There are effective links with external agencies to provide support for learners on E2E programmes.** Counselling is available, and so is advice on personal matters. In E2E and in engineering, learning programmes are not planned well and the various elements of the programmes are not structured to help the learners achieve quickly or easily.

12. **In E2E, most lessons are based on handouts, and there are few other teaching methods used.** Some lessons are dull and uninteresting. In E2E and in engineering, progress reviews do not help learners to understand what they have already achieved and what they need to do to complete their programmes. **There is insufficient emphasis on literacy and numeracy and on work-oriented parts of the E2E programme.**

13. **In engineering, there is a good range of resources,** and learners can use them to develop marketable skills. In engineering, learners make slow progress with their qualifications, and some of the work they do has to be repeated so that it is captured as evidence to meet the standards of the NVQ.

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14. **In engineering, assessment of learners' progress is not well communicated to them,** and much of it takes place late in the programme. Learners do not know if they are progressing, and do not have a clear idea about how to improve.

15. **In engineering, internal verification is weak.** Units of the training programme are not signed off early enough, and mistakes or omissions are picked up too late to help learners.

Leadership and management

16. The Laird Foundation works with a number of partners, to give learners a range of opportunities for employment and for personal development. **The Laird Foundation's operational managers respond quickly to new situations** and do their best to support learners through difficult times, such as in the case of redundancies.

17. **The Laird Foundation does not plan comprehensively for all aspects of the provision.** Programmes are taken on without being planned, and some programmes are subsequently withdrawn.

18. **There is inadequate planning of the learning programmes,** so the different parts of the programmes do not form a logical sequence for learners. Learners are left to work alone, and errors and omissions are not recognised early enough.

19. There are arrangements for assuring the quality of E2E provision, but these are being put into practice very slowly. **Subcontractors are not adequately monitored,** and the Laird Foundation is not able to make changes quickly because it has a poor overview of the provision.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective partnerships to widen learners' opportunities
- responsive operational management

Weaknesses

- incomplete strategic planning
- inadequate planning of learning programmes
- slow implementation of quality assurance arrangements for E2E

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good development of learners' practical skills
- good range of resources
- good enhancements for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- some weak assessment practices
- weak progress reviews
- weak internal verification

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- effective links with external agencies to provide personal support
- good use of practical activities to develop personal and social skills

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning of individual learning programmes
- insufficient range of teaching strategies to meet learners' needs
- ineffective progress reviews
- insufficient development of the literacy and numeracy and vocational strands of the programme

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT THE LAIRD FOUNDATION:

- being treated like an adult
- supportive staff
- working on projects
- feeling more confident

WHAT LEARNERS THINK THE LAIRD FOUNDATION COULD IMPROVE:

- levels of practical work - there is not enough of it
- transfer from E2E to foundation modern apprenticeship - it is not quick enough
- the way key skills are delivered - they are not clear enough
- lessons are too long and there is insufficient group work

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE LAIRD FOUNDATION:

- improve the arrangements for quality assurance
- share good practice consistently
- improve the planning of training programmes
- develop and implement a strategy for literacy and numeracy
- improve assessment and verification
- support E2E and develop the network
- increase awareness of all aspects of equality and diversity

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- effective partnerships to widen learners' opportunities
- responsive operational management

Weaknesses

- incomplete strategic planning
- inadequate planning of learning programmes
- slow implementation of quality assurance arrangements for E2E

20. There are effective partnerships to widen learners' opportunities. The Laird Foundation is active in forming partnerships and leading them to ensure more opportunities for learners. The E2E partnership is enthusiastic and committed to the aims of the group. Monthly strategy meetings are held and sub-groups on quality assurance, curriculum, initial assessment, equal opportunities and marketing meet regularly. As a result of the initial assessment group, a standard assessment tool has been adopted by all partners to allow E2E learners to move across partners' provision. Joint training sessions have been held and tutors are encouraged to meet each other to stop isolation. Some work to raise quality has been carried out. The good range of partners and the willingness to share information has led to the widening of curriculum subjects on offer for learners.

21. The Laird Foundation has effective links with schools. This is a long-standing arrangement where learners aged under 16 come into the company, and these include learners at risk of exclusion from school. These links actively promote progression to the provision. Few women progress from the schools initiative to mainstream provision. There are some good partnerships with commercial organisations and employers. For instance, the Laird Foundation has a working dry dock which it leases to a shipbuilder employer. The Laird Foundation negotiates learners' participation with this employer so they can experience working in a dry dock in real conditions. Learners have access to practical projects and workplace training based on partnerships with employers in the UK and under European Union initiatives at home and abroad.

22. The Laird Foundation has responsive operational management. Staff work closely together to respond to situations, such as putting funding bids together to support learning. In situations where employers have had redundancies, the Laird Foundation has responded effectively by supporting learners and ensuring their learning and job prospects are maintained. Employers report that management is quick to develop bespoke training that meets learners' needs. The Laird Foundation resolves problems

quickly and effectively. Partners and external organisations have good communications with the company, and they work well together on projects. Management are responsive to the needs of staff. They have identified staff training and development as a priority and have allocated time every week for staff members. Staff are encouraged to attend development activities. Up to eight members of staff are currently taking teaching qualifications with time allocated every week.

23. Overall resources are satisfactory. There is a good standard of accommodation in the training centre, with good access to a range of training facilities. These include workshop facilities for engineering learners, computer suites and computer-aided design technology. General teaching rooms and furniture are good. However, teaching resources for literacy and numeracy and key skills are very limited in the centre and across E2E partners. There is an over-reliance on basic and key skills builder and, in some cases, this is the sole teaching resource. An audit of resources is in place for E2E with a view to sharing materials, but this has not yet happened. Staffing is satisfactory. All staff have the vocational experience and qualifications necessary to develop the learners' practical skills. However, some of the staff are not experienced or trained teachers, and few staff in the Laird Foundation and across the partnership are experienced or qualified in teaching literacy or numeracy.

24. The strategic planning is incomplete. There is a strategic vision for the company which is centred around the development of marine engineering and the resources to support this. Some work has been done to assess skills shortages which underpin this central strategy. The company has a business plan and a three-year development plan prepared for the LSC. Strategic documents give outline aims around accommodation development, staff development and commitment to learners generally. At present, most learners in engineering are following non-marine engineering options. Their new contract, the E2E partnership, represents two-thirds of all learners. The strategic and business planning documents do not reflect planning for the needs of current learners. There is an E2E implementation plan but this is only for one year. It outlines operational outcomes but gives little indication whether these have been fully achieved to date. There is little further planning. The strategic group has a strong commitment to E2E as a partnership. While one partner has a good strategy for the development of literacy and numeracy, developed for their own organisation, the Laird Foundation has no such policy either across the company or the E2E partnership. There is no plan for staff development or resourcing for this issue. Little consideration has been taken in the equality of opportunity strategy of the training of internal or partner staff to prepare them for the multiple barriers to learning that E2E learners have. Resource planning for specific difficulties such as dyslexia is not included.

25. Programmes of learning are not adequately planned in the Laird Foundation. When employers are involved there is little planning of on- and off-the-job training. In engineering, some employers are not aware of the requirements of the framework, so cannot plan for this. In addition, if learners cannot achieve the full competences with a particular employer, learning is not adequately planned to ensure timely achievement in an alternative setting. Literacy, numeracy or key skills training is delivered to learners mainly through the use of booklets. The provider places an over-reliance on learners'

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ability to develop their own learning. Background knowledge and vocational skills training are not planned effectively. In E2E some work has been carried out to provide a chart of the types of learning offered across the partnership, but this is not always shared with the learners. The various parts of the programme are not consistently available to all partners and their learners. Planning of the various parts of the learning programme, such as work taster sessions, literacy and numeracy or personal and social sessions, is not always cohesive. Internal verification processes across both areas have weaknesses, with the process in engineering having been identified as a key weakness. Internal verification of assessment standards is carried out by the individual partner in E2E and partnership arrangements for this have not been fully developed.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

26. The Laird Foundation works with its school links to introduce pupils from the region to engineering. Members of the Laird Foundation's staff visit schools to raise the profile of engineering in the community. Pupils attend summer schools, open days, taster courses, and some work towards vocational GCSEs with the Laird Foundation. The company is also providing training for some disengaged pupils. Some pupils have progressed on to foundation modern apprenticeships with the Laird Foundation after leaving school.

27. The Laird Foundation has a satisfactory policy for equality of opportunity. It has produced a booklet which is distributed to all members of staff, employers and learners. The booklet gives a summary of the Laird Foundation's equal opportunities policy and a clear overview of current legislation. Learners are taken through the booklet as part of their induction, and show a broad awareness of how to assert their rights, particularly with regard to bullying and harassment. Equality of opportunity is also included in progress reviews. However, learners have a limited understanding of their responsibilities.

28. Staff have received some general training in equality of opportunity. Feedback from staff indicates that some of them want more specific and detailed training in this area. There is a working group for equality of opportunity which meets once a month to discuss and monitor problems that learners may experience.

29. Practices relating to equality and diversity are satisfactory, but there is limited understanding of the wider issues of equality. For example, in some work environments inappropriate images are displayed. Staff and learners frequently use imprecise terminology which can be interpreted as condescending or dismissive. There is no awareness of the impact this might have on under-represented learners, and no recognition that this reinforces negative stereotypes.

30. Access to the Laird Foundation is possible for people with restricted mobility, although the heavy double doors make unaided access extremely difficult. There are lifts in the building, and corridors are wide and uncluttered. Equipment and resources are standard. There are no induction loops, no facilities for learners with dyspraxia and no adjustable workbenches. The height of chairs in some of the rooms can be adjusted.

31. The Laird Foundation has run a number of Women Into Science and Engineering programmes. It has also made contact with representatives from minority ethnic groups, although there has been no follow-up to this. Data are collected and can be broken down to give a profile of the learners. The Laird Foundation has identified that there are under-represented groups, but has not specifically targeted them to date. Promotional material is generally informative. However it uses stereotypical images and is not specifically targeted at under-represented groups.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

32. The appraisal process is satisfactory. Staff are notified at least two weeks before the date of appraisal. They fill out a standard proforma which outlines key areas of their development or challenges in the past year. The appraisal meeting identifies specific staff training and individual actions. Any agreed training is entered onto the chart. New and established staff access an appropriate range of training linked to the development needs of the company and learners. The lesson observation procedure has recently been revised. The process now focuses on the experience of the learner, and is graded in line with the seven point scale. However, some staff have not been observed as yet and new staff have not been adequately prioritised to ensure they receive the support needed. Information on development needs is not yet being collated and used systematically in the appraisal process.

33. Policies such as health and safety are satisfactory. They are mostly written in plain English, conform to legislative standards and are used appropriately by staff when checking placements. Procedures have recently been reviewed and re-written to simplify them. They have been organised into 31 key processes, of which 14 have been highlighted as key learning processes. The learning processes are prioritised for audit purposes with six-monthly audits instead of the yearly audits for other sections. The audit is carried out by a team of four trained internal staff using a standard compliance system. While the procedures are mainly clearly written, some processes are not timebound and do not have specific, measurable outcomes. For instance, in initial assessment there are no indications of the timescale involved between learners being assessed and receiving their results. Similarly there is no timescale to indicate when learners who need additional support will receive it.

34. The implementation of quality assurance arrangements is slow in E2E. Quality assurance is being developed through the E2E partnership, primarily through the quality subgroup. The process uses existing quality assurance arrangements within the various partners, with an agreement on minimum entitlements. The first draft on quality guidelines for key learning processes has been written, but these are mostly general and are difficult to measure. An agreement was reached in early Autumn 2003 by all partners to adopt an initial assessment tool to improve learners' progression through the programme. Some joint training has been organised and delivered to raise quality. Trainers have had some training in how to observe teaching sessions. Some observations using the seven point scale have been carried out and some of these show key weaknesses in teaching and learning, particularly with reference to learners being

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insufficiently challenged. However, these sessions are given a satisfactory or good grade. This is a new programme and little impact has been made to date. Some training has been carried out on the completion of the Passport document. Some initial good practice took place where partners agreed to monitor each other's provision, matching a more experienced worker with a less experienced one. This did not continue due to pressure of work. Passports are still sampled through each partner bringing in three files each to be monitored. Monitoring at present is mainly on a compliance basis. Comments are based on whether paperwork or signatures are missing. There are few comments on quality of content. An audit of resources, including staffing experience and qualifications is in process, but is not yet complete. Few staff are qualified to teach literacy or numeracy and some have no teaching or training qualifications or little experience.

35. Management meetings with individual contractors are not held. Problems are discussed in partnership meetings and there is no formal opportunity to discuss individual matters confidentially.

36. Monitoring of key processes with individual contractors has not yet taken place. An audit process is to be carried out next month by the Laird Foundation's audit staff, but they have not yet agreed quality guidelines. There has been no agreement on the key processes they will audit, and no measurable outcomes have been specified.

37. Internal verification systems are the responsibility of the individual partners. There is no partnership agreement of the amount of assessment and verification across the partnership.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	89	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good development of learners' practical skills
- good range of resources
- good enhancements for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- some weak assessment practices
- weak progress reviews
- weak internal verification

Achievement and standards

38. All learners who started in 1997-98 completed the full framework. The overall achievement rate for learners for subsequent years is poor and the trend is downwards, at 50 per cent in 1998-99 and 31 per cent in 1999-2000. One major employer made 278 apprentices redundant in the summer of 2001. The Laird Foundation managed to secure employment for 70 per cent of them in different industries. Those who remained in training completed their full frameworks. Since 2000, 106 advanced modern apprentices have started, of whom 37 are still in learning. Foundation modern apprentices are less successful, with none of the learners from the 1999-2000 intake completing their programmes. In 2000-01 only one learner completed the framework. The Laird Foundation did not recruit any foundation modern apprentices in 2001-02. Recruitment was restricted by Greater Merseyside LSC. To date, of 76 starts, 52 are still in learning.

39. Learners achieve good practical skills in the centre and in the workplace. The practical skills achieved in the centre by carrying out jobs related to the qualification aim are also enhanced by access to work-related projects. Examples of this are the refurbishment of ships' engines, and work on restoring a historic ferry. In the workplace, most employers ensure that learners get a wide variety of experience that gives them opportunities to improve their skills. The learners are adequately supported by supervisors who ensure that they are carrying out tasks to the standards required by the industry. However, the Laird Foundation does not record whether employers are able to offer learners the full range of experience in fabrication and welding. As the assessment

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mostly takes place at the end of the training programme, this cannot be planned for early enough.

40. There are good additional enhancements for learners. Many learners are working towards qualifications outside the requirements of the framework. Examples of this are achievement of coded welding qualifications for fabrication and welding learners, and additional health and safety courses which are delivered internally for all third-year advanced modern apprenticeships. Learners have also received training on slinging and lifting of large equipment and scaffolding. Foundation modern apprentices are given training in computer-aided design techniques and a basic pneumatics course. In addition to this learners have the opportunity, through a selection process based on attendance and performance, to take part in European exchange visits.

41. Learners are making slow progress towards the completion of their framework. Learners are not encouraged to gather evidence early in their employment. In some instances learners have been employed for over six months and no evidence has been gathered. There is also insufficient evidence gathered for key skills. Learners have to repeat some elements of their programme to be able to generate the evidence for key skills and are confused about where this fits into their learning. Some portfolios contain very little evidence despite learners being well into the programme. Some opportunities for gathering evidence towards the NVQ are not taken. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report, but to date it remains unresolved.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	3		19		2		82		100		80		17		
Retained*	3		15		2		17		34	34	40	50	17	100		
Successfully completed	0		0		0		0		31	31	40	50	17	100		
Still in learning	3		15		2		17		0	0	0	0	0	0		

*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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	33		43				15		3						
Retained*	27		25				4		0	0						
Successfully completed	0		0				1		0	0						
Still in learning	27		25				0		0	0						

*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

42. Some of the progress reviews are poor. Progress reviews take place between learners and learning co-ordinators on a regular six-weekly basis. Target-setting is ineffective. Few short-term targets are set and when they are, they are not followed up in reviews. In some cases the review process is combined with assessment and there is no clear distinction made between the two. Learners are unclear about what they have to do to achieve their qualification, and do not have sufficient control over the process to be able to work at their own pace. Learners are given minimal feedback through the completed review sheets, although comprehensive verbal feedback is given as part of the assessment.

43. Assessment practices are weak. Most of the assessment is towards the end of the programme, and portfolio evidence is not authenticated correctly by supervisors or assessors. In some cases evidence cannot be directly linked to the learner. Some employers do not fully understand the frameworks or the NVQ and while there has been some recent improvement in informing employers, the process is still weak. Good verbal feedback is not followed up by a written record, so learners have no point of reference. Observation sheets are not routinely shared with learners, so they cannot be used to generate evidence towards the qualification. Learners frequently have to repeat work in order to generate evidence. Learners demonstrate insufficient awareness of what they need to do to complete units, and of where they are on their learning programmes. Many learners see key skills as superfluous to their learning.

44. There is a good range of resources in the centre. The engineering workshop is adequately equipped with appropriate machinery and equipment. Some of the machines are old, but are still adequate for the learners' needs. The machine shop has only one milling machine, and occasionally there is insufficient access; however, alternative work is allocated in these circumstances. The fitting area is currently being moved, and a project is in place for learners to design the new layout as part of their key skills evidence. Classrooms are spacious and well equipped, but not all of them has natural light. Very good facilities are available for computer-aided design, electronics, hydraulics and pneumatics, with a good range of software which is industry compatible.

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There is no adaptation of equipment and facilities for people with disabilities. For example, work benches are not adjustable, there is no induction loop and access is difficult for people with restricted mobility. Staff are generally adequately qualified and experienced. The company has recently taken on three new members of staff for key skills, and three new tutors in engineering. Two of these tutors are currently working towards the assessor qualification. There is also a new training manager in post.

45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is delivered through classroom tutorials and workshop instruction. Observed sessions vary in content and quality of delivery. Some are interesting and engage learners, but there is little differentiation, and different learning styles are not easily accommodated. Overall the grade profile for observed lessons is satisfactory. New tutors shadow experienced tutors and receive informal verbal feedback after observations of their lessons.

46. Support with literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Learners take numeracy, literacy and manual dexterity tests as part of the interview process. During induction learners undergo further testing and the results of these tests are fed back to the learner and are recorded in their file. Support requirements are noted in the file and are delivered in the centre by key skills staff. Learners can also request help if they need it.

Leadership and management

47. There is insufficient planning and management of engineering programmes. For example, the Laird Foundation took on the construction programme from another provider in 2003. Working areas were adapted to cope with this, but there was a detrimental effect on fabrication and welding, as the space was limited and some machinery became inaccessible. The construction programme was abandoned after a year. High levels of dust from construction have contaminated the fitting shop and it is currently being moved and upgraded to the new standards that have been available since September 2003.

48. Staff development is satisfactory. It is arranged to meet the needs identified during appraisals. Two new engineering instructors are receiving training for assessment and teaching qualifications.

49. Equal opportunities provision is satisfactory. Learners have an adequate knowledge of the policy and are aware of help available and appeals procedures in place. The learners' knowledge of their rights is reinforced during the review process.

50. Internal verification is weak. There is inadequate planning of the process and poor target-setting in assessors' action plans. Where targets are set, there is no monitoring to check whether they have been achieved. A plan for monitoring assessors is being implemented, but it does not include new assessors who have just joined the company. Revised procedures do not give sufficient guidance on planning strategies. Most of the internal verification takes place towards the end of the programme when assessors submit completed portfolios. There is inconsistent practice in completing internal verification reports, and feedback reports to assessors do not include targets, so it is

unclear if actions have been completed. Quality assurance arrangements did not identify the weak internal verification and assessment practices.

51. The self-assessment report identified two strengths and one weakness which were also identified by inspectors. One strength and three weaknesses were not identified. Staff were involved in the self-assessment process through regular discussion at team meetings. Senior management produced the self-assessment report in consultation with staff who were asked to comment on the final version.

Foundation programmes

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Entry to Employment	177	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- effective links with external agencies to provide personal support
- good use of practical activities to develop personal and social skills

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning of individual learning programmes
- insufficient range of teaching strategies to meet learners' needs
- ineffective progress reviews
- insufficient development of the literacy and numeracy and vocational strands of the programme

Achievement and standards

52. Between August 2003 and February 2004, progression from E2E to work-based learning, further education or employment has been low. Ninety learners have left the programme in this period and of these only 33 per cent have progressed successfully. At the time of inspection, 177 of the 267 learners who started the programme are still attending. However, 60 of the 90 learners who have left the programme did so before their expected end date.

53. Most learners' development of personal and social skills is satisfactory. For example, one learner improved his skills in starting conversations and making eye contact with others in groups and in one-to-one situations. In a personal and social skills session learners effectively developed their speaking and listening skills during group activities. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is insufficient.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment	2003-04															
	No.		%		No.		%		No.		%		No.		%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	267															
Progression ¹	30															
Achieved objectives ²	30															
Still in learning	177															

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

Quality of education and training

54. Links with external agencies to provide personal support are good. The partnership works closely with a good range of organisations to provide individual support. For example, there are regular visits from specialist counsellors to provide individual support and guidance to learners, and visits from guest speakers to give talks on drug and alcohol misuse, and entitlement to benefits for learners living independently. Practical support is also effective and is provided for learners when necessary. For example, learners can receive help with bus fares and interview clothes. One learner was provided with funding for a passport to attend an organised trip abroad.

55. Practical activities to develop learners' personal and social skills are good. Learners regularly attend social events that enable them to develop their personal skills and widen their life experiences. Activities include visits to museums, restaurants and trips abroad such as a recent visit to Belgium. Most activities are well structured, and learners are involved in the planning of some visits. Events such as bowling and ice-skating further develop learners' communication and teamwork skills. Many learners also achieve basic qualifications in health and safety and first aid. Some learners have achieved a basic computer literacy qualification. Resources to support learning are adequate. Most centres have sufficient computers, paper-based resources and books. However, there is too much use of handouts to develop literacy, numeracy and social skills. Most staff have experience of working with the learner group and are effective at developing personal and social skills. However, some staff do not have the expertise in teaching literacy, numeracy and language skills. Staff are not appropriately qualified to teach or support learners with literacy, numeracy or language needs. Induction is satisfactory, and includes information on health and safety, equality of opportunity and programme content.

56. The planning of individual learning programmes is inadequate. Clients complete an initial assessment that effectively identifies literacy, numeracy and language needs,

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personal and social skills, learning styles and occupational preferences. However, this is not used effectively to plan a detailed programme of learning. Overall aims and objectives are stated, but these are not always adequately broken down into clear, measurable steps. It is not possible for the partnership to effectively measure each learner's progress over a period of time. Some plans are more detailed, but do not always record how skills will be developed. Learning in the workplace is not adequately linked to the overall learning plan. Teaching methods do not effectively meet individual learners' needs. Literacy and numeracy sessions and some sessions to develop personal and social skills inappropriately rely on the use of handouts. Teaching methods are not adapted to meet individual learning styles and some work is not at an appropriate level for the learners' ability. Many lessons are dull and uninspiring, and learners often become bored and disruptive. In some lessons learners download their own handouts from the internet, and the progress they make depends entirely on their level of motivation. In the weaker lessons learners are taught about the theory of communication, but are given little opportunity to practise what they have learned. Staff check learners' progress in these teaching sessions, but some learners are not sufficiently challenged and find the work easy. In the better sessions teaching is lively and actively involves all learners. Learners make good progress and develop a good understanding of the topics. For example, in one childcare session, learners developed a good knowledge of how to promote equality and diversity through play and appropriate choice of toys.

57. The review of learners' progress is ineffective. Targets identified in the fortnightly reviews are often too vague to measure progress. For example, a target may be expressed as 'key skills', giving no guidance to the learner, and no means of reviewing for the assessor. In some instances targets are repeated at reviews, but it is not clear what progress has been made since the previous review. On some reviews development needs are identified, but there is no plan for how they will be dealt with. Some aims and objectives on individual learning plans are not discussed at reviews.

58. The vocational and literacy and numeracy strands of the E2E programme are not fully developed. There is no overall strategy for the development of literacy, numeracy and language for the partnership. However, some providers have their own literacy, numeracy and language strategy. Some learners do not make sufficient progress in literacy and numeracy as they are not effectively challenged. Those who demonstrate successful completion of work packs are unable to apply this knowledge in other contexts. Learners' work often contains mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation, even though these topics have previously been covered by work packs.

59. Vocational options available within the partnership include engineering, carpentry and joinery, childcare, retailing and business administration, and information technology. However, too few learners have had sufficient opportunity to access occupational and work experience tasters to help them choose suitable training or employment goals. For those learners who have work placements there is insufficient information given to employers to help them support the learners in the workplace. There is insufficient monitoring of learners in the workplace.

Leadership and management

60. Quality assurance arrangements are not adequately developed to measure the standard of the learning experience across the partnership. Some strategies and plans have been developed, but these have not been fully implemented as yet. Recently training in the observation of teaching has taken place and some observations have been carried out. However, some have been insufficiently evaluative and do not represent the grade given. Some observers are inexperienced and unqualified in teaching. Recently introduced learner satisfaction surveys have taken place across the partnership, but the actions needed to resolve the problems raised by learners have not been identified. The self-assessment report identified many of the weaknesses, but some of the strengths could not be substantiated. There is no formal contract management by the Laird Foundation of individual partners, and no setting of specific achievement and retention targets to ensure overall contract targets are met. Most staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Communication within the partnership is satisfactory. There is a range of meetings from strategic to operational level. These meetings are used effectively to share practices across the partnership.