

INSPECTION REPORT

Bridge Training Limited

04 December 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

Bridge Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bridge Training Limited is a charity based in central Gloucester. It was established in 1989 to help young people and adults with disabilities and ongoing difficulties to improve their prospects of employment. At the time of the inspection, there were 43 learners on the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme, including seven learners who transferred from Life Skills. Eighteen clients were on a Basic Employability Training (BET) course as part of a New Deal 25+ programme.

2. Bridge Training Limited employs 24 staff. The managing director is responsible for all aspects of the company's performance including quality assurance, health and safety, equality of opportunity and personnel. He is supported by a senior management team consisting of a training manager, quality assurance manager and administration manager. There are nine tutors and three volunteer learning support tutors. The company also employs a work-placement officer, and a guidance and support officer.

3. Bridge Training contracts with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Gloucestershire to train young people who require additional support. It also contracts with Jobcentre Plus to provide BET for adults in Gloucestershire with disabilities, learning difficulties and other barriers to employment, and with a local college of further education to provide the full-time education and training option of New Deal 18-24.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Foundation programmes

4. Bridge Training Limited provides foundation training for 61 learners and clients. Forty-three learners are on the E2E programme and 18 clients are on a BET course as part of a New Deal 25+ programme. E2E learners work towards achieving basic and key skills, personal and social skills and vocational skills. Learners are referred from Connexions, schools or by individual application. They attend the training centre for five days a week and they can specialise in information technology (IT), plumbing, wood trades or motor vehicle repair. New Deal 25+ clients attend a 26-week programme, to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and to help them to develop skills to enable them to succeed in finding employment. A team of four basic skills tutors, led by a basic skills co-ordinator, teach numeracy and literacy. Two tutors help learners and clients who speak English as an additional language. A part-time specialist tutor supports learners identified as dyslexic. Learners can work towards computer literacy and IT, and a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 1 in IT.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	29
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of employer interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	3
Number of partner/external agency interviews	1

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, foundation training is satisfactory, as are leadership and management. Equality of opportunity and quality assurance are also satisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Entry to Employment	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Clients make good progress towards their qualifications.** Staff are set clearly defined manageable literacy and numeracy targets that are reviewed and revised on a weekly basis. Clients make effective progress in acquiring the essential skills needed to move onto courses leading to accreditation, and produce work of a good standard. Many gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. The retention rate for E2E learners and clients is satisfactory.

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
Foundation programmes	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	7
Total	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	7

7. **There is good support for learners and clients.** They receive regular support from a personal tutor and a guidance counsellor and are confident in approaching staff for help and guidance about all aspects of their learning programme.
8. **Initial assessment is thorough and clearly identifies all learners' learning and support needs.** Assessment of preferred learning styles takes place and those who are identified as requiring additional help have further screening for dyslexia.
9. **Clients make good progress towards qualifications.** They are set clear targets that are reviewed on a weekly basis. They gain essential skills needed to progress onto courses leading to accreditation.
10. **The learning environment is poor.** The rooms used for teaching are noisy and lessons are frequently interrupted. Some rooms are too small for the size of group. Some classrooms are poorly maintained.
11. **There is insufficient focus on targets for E2E learners.** Some targets are not adequately specific, measurable, achievable or time-constrained.
12. **There is inadequate focus on job outcomes for clients.** Clients do not receive individualised targets for job applications. Some clients have not applied for any jobs and this is not followed up by staff.

Leadership and management

13. **Procedures for staff appraisal and training are particularly effective.** All staff are appraised annually with a follow-up review after six months. The company has recently achieved Investor in People status, which is a national award for improving an organisation's performance through its people.
14. **There is good use of learners' feedback to improve training.** Feedback is collected regularly through questionnaires and regular meetings with learners and clients. Feedback is evaluated by the management team and appropriate changes are implemented. Any actions taken are communicated to all learners.
15. **There is very effective action to promote social inclusion.** The company has an open door recruitment policy. Learners and clients are recruited from a wide and ethnically diverse range of backgrounds.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective procedures for staff appraisal and training
- very effective action to promote social inclusion
- good use of learners' feedback to improve training

Weaknesses

- poor use of data to improve performance
- inadequate health and safety practices in the workshop

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- good progress towards qualifications for clients
- good learner and client support
- thorough initial assessment

Weaknesses

- poor learning environment
- insufficient focus on targets for learners
- inadequate focus on job outcomes for clients

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BRIDGE TRAINING LIMITED:

- 'I'm proud of myself and of what I'm doing.'
- 'the atmosphere is great here, really supportive, much better than my last place.'
- 'I enjoy it here, I'm learning things'
- 'it's good because you're not afraid to ask the tutors questions, and they always try to help you'
- 'you can work at your own speed but if you get stuck, you're given help'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BRIDGE TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the jobsearch activities
- the maintenance of the IT equipment
- the provision of visual aids
- the wheelchair access

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BRIDGE TRAINING LIMITED:

- improve the learning environment
- improve the accuracy and standard of data on learners and clients
- quickly resolve the health and safety issues
- continue to maintain high levels of social inclusion

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- particularly effective procedures for staff appraisal and training
- very effective action to promote social inclusion
- good use of learners' feedback to improve training

Weaknesses

- poor use of data to improve performance
- inadequate health and safety practices in the workshop

16. There are particularly effective procedures for staff appraisal and training. All staff are appraised annually with a follow-up review after six months. Staff prepare for their appraisals by completing a comprehensive self-assessment form which is then used as a basis for the appraisal discussion. Appraisals focus on staff training and development needs and specifically require the member of staff to identify the relevance of the training to improving the company's performance. There is a detailed and comprehensive staff training and development calendar, which is closely tied in with the company's annual action plan. The calendar identifies the training needs of each member of staff, target completion dates and when the training has been completed. The company has recently been accredited as an Investor in People. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

17. Senior management provide clear strategic direction for the company. There are appropriate development plans and business plans, which focus on learners' progress. There is an annual staff meeting used by the company to develop a comprehensive action plan for its business in the following year.

18. Internal communication is satisfactory. All staff meet weekly to discuss progress made by learners, and to share information about changes within the organisation. There are also formal staff meetings held every month, which are minuted and plans are put into action. These meetings allow senior managers to inform all staff about key developments in the organisation.

19. There are four basic skills tutors who have appropriate experience, but only one has a qualification to teach literacy and numeracy. The other three tutors are working towards an appropriate qualification in the teaching of basic skills. There are three specialist IT tutors and two tutors who teach in the workshop. All are occupationally qualified and currently working towards a recognised teaching qualification.

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20. Arrangements are satisfactory for additional support in literacy, numeracy and language. For learners identified during routine screening as potentially needing dyslexia support, a further diagnostic tool is used to identify specific needs. A specialist tutor is available to provide support during one afternoon every week.

21. There is poor use of data to improve performance. The company is not able to produce reliable data on retention and achievement rates. Data on job outcomes for clients are poor and generally inaccurate. Senior staff have an appropriate understanding of how data can be used to improve performance, but tutors do not understand retention and achievement rates. Staff do not understand the importance of job outcome data for clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

22. Bridge Training Limited takes very effective action to promote social inclusion for learners and staff. Learners are recruited from a wide and ethnically diverse range of backgrounds. The company has an open-door recruitment policy and learners are accepted irrespective of their background or other issues. Some learners have a history of offending and substance misuse and for some of these, there is often no alternative to accepting training other than a form of detention. Staff are very approachable to learners and cultivate a friendly, relaxed environment which encourages learners to work well together, respect each other's views and create an atmosphere that supports learning.

23. Staff provide learners with additional support to help them manage personal issues. For example, tutors assist them by referring them to external agencies which provide support for drugs misuse, finding accommodation with agencies who provide support for the homeless, and support with family planning and health clinics. There are good links with Connexions.

24. Learners receive very good support from staff in helping them to find work placements and employment. Many learners have been unemployed for a long time and do not possess adequate jobsearch skills. Many learners have basic language and literacy needs. Bridge Training Limited works with learners and clients to write job applications and arrange interviews. Staff also find work placements for learners to ensure that they are placed with an employer able to meet their needs. Work placements are arranged with local employers where possible. Some learners who have been unemployed for a long time, are reluctant to attend work placements and require additional support from staff to accept a placement. Some learners progress from the work placement to a full-time job with their employer.

25. Some former learners have progressed into employment at Bridge Training Limited, either as tutors or tutor support workers. Several learners have also returned as unpaid volunteers to provide support for other learners from similar backgrounds. Some learners are engaged in successful projects to develop self-esteem and team building skills. Almost one-third of the staff were recruited from learners progressing into full-time jobs. Many of these staff have experienced personally the issues faced by current

learners and are able to provide appropriate support.

26. Equal opportunities are clearly explained to employers as part of the initial workplace induction for learners. Bridge Training Limited has adequate procedures in place to monitor equal opportunities in the workplace and these are explained to employers. Where employers have inadequate equal opportunities or health and safety procedures in place, staff provide templates to help the employer develop its own procedures. One learner, who was placed at a local employer, was removed from the work placement by Bridge Training Limited's staff because the employer refused to comply with equality of opportunity procedures. The provider does not collect equal opportunities data from employers and equal opportunities policies are not routinely collected and evaluated.

27. Learners receive an information handbook, which covers a range of topics relevant to their training. The handbook also contains a specific section on equal opportunities, harassment procedures, appeals procedures and a summary of relevant legislation that could impact on learners. Disciplinary and grievance procedures are clearly explained to learners and written in appropriate language.

28. Staff are aware of equal opportunities procedures within the organisation and are committed to meeting the needs of all learners. Bridge Training Limited only uses employers who support equal opportunities in the workplace.

29. There are some inadequate facilities for learners with restricted mobility. The workshop is not easily accessible for learners and toilet facilities are not adequate. There are not enough positive images displayed in the workshop to promote equal opportunities, and in particular, to promote training to women. Most learners are men.

30. Health and safety are introduced to learners at induction and their understanding is routinely discussed during progress reviews. Work-placement providers are audited annually, to ensure compliance using the standard funding body assessment criteria. Learners understand their health and safety responsibilities, both in the training centre and in the workplace. They also have a separate health and safety induction when they go out on work placements. However, there are inadequate health and safety practices in the workshop area. Risk assessments have been prepared, but these do not adequately assess the potential risks or appropriate measures to control risks. General housekeeping in the workshop is poor. There are loose cables on the floor. Although learners wear protective footwear, some do not wear appropriate personal protective equipment when using cutting and abrasive equipment. Dust extraction is inadequate and learners do not routinely wear dust masks. Learners do not use portable power tools for long periods of time. The workshop heating system is poor and staff have not been formally trained in the use of firefighting equipment. A record is maintained for fire drills. An accident book is maintained, but there is no evaluation of causes of accidents leading to improvements. The workshop has adequate storage arrangements for hazardous substances.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

31. Bridge Training Limited has comprehensive quality assurance documents and procedures which are applied and monitored by managers. New Deal 25+ clients have a progress review every week for the first month of their programme and monthly reviews afterwards. There is good use of learners' feedback to improve training. Feedback is collected using a questionnaire that is presented in an easy-to-understand format adapted to meet learners' needs. If learners have literacy needs, tutors will ask questions verbally, and complete the questionnaire with them. The progress review enables learners to develop new targets and to make progress. Learners often require prompts to help them choose the most appropriate option on the questionnaire. E2E learners' views are sought formally as part of the learners' review process. There is an informal process for collecting feedback from learners. Managers have weekly meetings with different groups of learners and record their views. This process is varied by time and day to ensure as many learners' views as possible are gathered. The feedback is evaluated by the management team and appropriate changes are introduced. Any actions taken by the company in response to the feedback is communicated to learners. Learners' views are discussed by staff at a client support meeting, and any learners at risk of leaving the programme early are clearly identified and appropriate actions taken.

32. Bridge Training Limited takes positive action to improve retention rates. An incentive scheme has been introduced where learners can earn a voucher by meeting punctuality and retention targets. The voucher can be used to make purchases at a range of retail stores. Many learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds and live alone. The provider introduced a breakfast scheme to encourage learners to arrive on time. Learners value this, as some would otherwise start the day without breakfast.

33. Staff contribute to the self-assessment process by completing a questionnaire based on the seven key questions in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. The company's self-assessment does not sufficiently cover key weaknesses. Inspectors found many of the strengths to be overstated and others are no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

34. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. There are currently no learners doing qualifications requiring internal verification.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Entry to Employment	43	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	18	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good progress towards qualifications for clients
- good learner and client support
- thorough initial assessment

Weaknesses

- poor learning environment
- insufficient focus on targets for learners
- inadequate focus on job outcomes for clients

Achievement and standards

35. Retention rates are satisfactory. The E2E programme started in August 2003 and recruited 64 learners and 43 are still in learning. Nine left the programme early to take up employment or further education. Thirteen learners left the programme early without achieving any qualifications. Learners currently on programme are making satisfactory progress towards their targets. At the time of the inspection, there were no achievements for E2E learners. Between 2001 and 2003, 60 per cent of New Deal 25+ clients completed their programme. In the same period, 60 per cent of clients achieved a qualification and/or gained jobs.

36. Clients make good progress towards their qualifications. Staff set clearly defined manageable literacy and numeracy targets for all learners. Targets are reviewed and revised on a weekly basis. All learners make effective progress in acquiring the essential skills needed to progress onto courses leading to accreditation. They produce work of a good standard and many gain in self-confidence and self-esteem.

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The following tables show 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.	%
Number of starts	64															
Progression ¹	8															
Achieved objectives ²	8															
Still in learning	43															

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

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	32		32		52											
Retained*	20		21	66	25	48										
Planned learning completed	2		16	50	27	52										
Gained job	2		15	47	4	8										
Still in training	18		0	0	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

37. There is good support for all learners. Working relationships between staff and learners are good. Regular learning support is provided by a personal tutor and a guidance counsellor. All learners are confident in approaching staff for help and guidance about all aspects of their learning programme. Tutors respond quickly and appropriately to concerns raised by learners. This is particularly important for those who have poor self-confidence and whose targets relate to personal and social development. Staff deal effectively and sensitively with the diverse needs of learners. Staff praise learners for their successes and ensure that they make good use of their time at the learning centre.

38. Many learners have significant barriers to learning. Tutors place considerable emphasis on classroom activities which help build self-esteem and create a good learning environment. This is particularly evident in learning sessions where learners are confident and able to voice their opinions confidently.

39. There is a thorough and comprehensive initial assessment, which is used to clearly identify learning and support needs. All learners complete a widely used initial assessment in literacy and numeracy, followed by more detailed diagnostic assessments in literacy, numeracy and IT developed by the provider. In addition, those who have been identified as requiring additional help undertake further screening for dyslexia. Initial assessment of preferred learning styles also takes place.

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons learning activities are tailored to individual needs and tutors help all learners to work independently and develop a range of literacy skills. In the less-effective lessons, activities are insufficiently varied. There is too much use of repetitive worksheets. Staff do not effectively meet the wide range of learners' abilities and individual needs. They set learners the same task without regard to their individual needs. Questioning techniques are poor.

41. Resources are satisfactory. A range of games and activities are available to develop literacy and language skills. A wide range of interactive CD-ROMS are available for independent study. There is a small range of dyslexia support software. Resources to help with job applications are satisfactory. A telephone in the staff office is available for all learners to use. There are sufficient reference books, including dictionaries and an atlas. Recently purchased books supporting the core curriculum are good. However, some books are unsuitable for adults.

42. The learning environment is poor. The open-plan rooms used for teaching are noisy and lessons are subjected to frequent interruptions as other people walk through the rooms to reach offices and other classrooms. Some rooms are too small for their designated use. Some classrooms are poorly maintained. Storage facilities are not adequate. Health and safety is poor in the workshop.

43. E2E learners are not set targets or appropriate action-planning. Some targets set by learners and tutors are not adequately specific, measurable, achievable or time-constrained. The action plans of some E2E learners are poor.

44. Jobsearch programmes for clients do not focus effectively on job outcomes. Clients do not receive individualised targets for job applications. Most clients have applied for only one or two jobs since they started the programme. Some clients have not applied for any jobs and this is not followed up by staff. Tutors do not fully understand their role in helping clients find jobs. Jobsearch activities are carried out one day a week and some clients regard this as the only day they look for jobs. Data on job outcomes are not shared with staff or used to monitor employment trends or set targets.

Leadership and management

45. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is clear direction from managers, particularly the training manager, on the implementation of the E2E programme, which satisfactorily meets learners' individual needs. There are, however, not enough external qualifications for learners to work towards.

46. Some E2E teaching staff do not have a teaching qualification. These staff have been recently appointed, and are being supported by an ongoing programme of learning observations and staff development. Some of these tutors are currently taking relevant qualifications in supporting learners. Some workshop tutors have completed a qualification in craft skills that is being considered as an appropriate qualification for the vocational strand of the E2E programme.

47. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. However, qualifications currently taken by E2E learners are externally assessed, and do not require internal verification.