

INSPECTION REPORT

Lifetime Health and Fitness

10 June 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Arlygliaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales

LIFETIME HEALTH AND FITNESS

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

Lifetime Health and Fitness

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Lifetime Health and Fitness Limited (Lifetime) is a private training company, which provides modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programmes in the exercise and fitness sector of the sport and leisure industry. The organisation was established in 1995 as a consultancy business and has been offering work-based learning since 1997. Lifetime operates across most of England and Wales. The company has a training centre in Bristol and also uses leisure centres in London, East Anglia and the Northwest for off-the-job training.
2. Lifetime has a recently formed board of directors, which comprises the managing director, an external sports and fitness specialist, the operations director and corporate business director. The company's strategic aims are agreed by the board and implemented by the managing director. A management team has specific responsibility for managing different aspects of the company, including financial management, administration, business development and training and learning. Lifetime currently employs 26 full-time and three part-time staff. Additionally, six freelance tutors are used for specialist training courses. Assessors and internal verifiers are organised in teams to support the three largest employers and groups of individual leisure organisations.
3. Lifetime's training of modern apprentices is funded by the national contract service of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The company operates in areas of high and low unemployment and with varying proportions of the population from minority ethnic groups.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

4. Lifetime offers modern apprenticeship training at foundation and advanced level and NVQ training programmes at levels 2 and 3 in exercise and fitness, and operational services. At the time of the inspection, there were 291 foundation modern apprentices, 125 advanced modern apprentices and 16 learners on NVQ programmes. All learners are employed when they start their training with Lifetime. They work in public and private sector leisure centres and gyms in sports centres, hotels, schools and golf clubs. Before starting with Lifetime, learners complete a pre-sign-up activity that shows them what to expect from their course. They attend an induction that includes the content of the training programme, equality of opportunity, health and safety, a vocational skill scan and a brief initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. Learners are visited each month at work for assessment and every three months for progress reviews. Employers and Lifetime's staff carry out training and assessment at employers' premises. Lifetime has a planned programme of off-the-job training that takes place at venues across England and Wales.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	45
Number of staff interviews	16
Number of employer interviews	17
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	22

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, and leadership and management are good, as is the approach to equality of opportunity. The arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Work-based learning for young people	432	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Achievement rates by learners on the NVQ programme are good.** They have risen to 60 per cent in 2003-04, and some learners are still in learning. There are unsatisfactory, but improving achievement rates for the modern apprentices. Only 13 per cent of foundation modern apprentices and 4 per cent of advanced modern apprentices completed the framework in 2001-02. This has increased for 2002-03, but achievement rates are still low. Achievement of NVQs by foundation modern apprentices is satisfactory. Learners pass the instructor qualifications at level 2 and 3 and pass rates are good. Retention rates are satisfactory and improving on all programmes.

7. **Learners make good progress towards the achievement of their NVQ and at work.** They develop good industry skills and are competent and confident in the use of a wide range of equipment and the teaching of fitness training sessions. Learners take many additional qualifications which are relevant to their work and future careers. Several learners have been promoted or been given wider responsibilities since training with Lifetime.

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
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	4
Total	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	4

8. **On- and off-the-job training are very good.** Training is well structured and well planned. Trainers have good presentation styles and engage learners' interest through a range of activities. They use good practical examples to illustrate background knowledge and technical subjects. A variety of methods are used to reinforce and check learning. Learners take a wide range of additional courses to enhance their skills. They have good on-the-job training at work, including shadowing more experienced colleagues and being supported by experienced staff.

9. **Learners use good learning packs,** including CD-ROMs, to support the off-the-job training and as distance learning materials. Learners are motivated to learn through the very professionally produced resources which are used well to develop their knowledge and understanding.

10. **Learners work in modern venues which facilitate their on-the-job learning.** There are good opportunities for learners to gather evidence for assessment and demonstrate competence at work. Learners develop coaching skills in a wide range of contexts.

11. **Lifetime's trainers and assessors are very well qualified, with up-to-date and relevant industry experience.** They make good use of this experience when giving advice and

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guidance to learners about how to improve their performance.

12. **Some assessments are well planned**, and assessors use a variety of methods. However, some assessment practice is poor, with insufficient observations at work. Many learners complete written activities and simulations rather than using tasks at work. In a small number of portfolios there is insufficient evidence to meet the full requirements of the qualification. Internal verification does not always pick up these problems with assessment.

13. **Initial assessment is not used effectively to agree individual learning plans.** A number of learners are unclear about what they need to do to complete the modern apprenticeship framework.

14. **Progress reviews include learners, assessors and employers and are used effectively to monitor the learners' progress.** Learners use short-term action plans well when planning their work between each assessor visit.

15. **On- and off-the-job training is well co-ordinated.** In-company training has been carefully matched to the requirements of the NVQ to provide a coherent programme for learners. Accreditation of prior learning is applied effectively. Learners' and employers' current and future needs are considered thoroughly by staff when identifying qualifications and courses of study.

16. **Learners complete a well-devised, pre-course activity** that gives them a good insight into the training programme. They receive a brief, yet comprehensive, induction to their programme.

17. **Learners have good personal support from their assessors and employers.** They are visited very regularly by assessors. Lifetime's staff respond very positively and promptly to requests for additional help. Learners receive good, practical support from assessors with the NVQ, technical certificates and instructor qualifications through additional tutorials, visits and learning activities.

Leadership and management

18. **Lifetime's staff have developed very good links with employers.** Regular and productive meetings are held with employers to review training programmes and achievement rates and to discuss operational issues. Employer training has been matched to the training at Lifetime to ensure a well-managed programme is delivered. Internal communication is very regular and effective, but the minutes of meetings are not always recorded.

19. **Managers inspire staff to meet the values and standards of their organisations.** Staff were fully involved in agreeing Lifetime's values, which are monitored well through appraisal and quarterly reviews. There are well-established appraisal and staff development processes. Business planning is effective and sets a clear direction for the organisation.

20. **New staff have a particularly thorough and well-planned introduction into their job role.** They observe experienced staff and receive good support from mentors and managers. Staff quickly gain an understanding of Lifetime's expectations.

21. **Management information is used particularly effectively for a wide range of activities.** Most aspects of the assessors, trainers and administrators' work are monitored thoroughly. Staff have clear targets and performance indicators. Achievement rates are analysed and discussed regularly with staff and employers. A range of strategies for improving retention and achievement rates have been introduced. These are having an impact on the proportion of learners completing the full framework, but have not yet reflected on historical data. Data is collected on learners from minority ethnic groups and their gender and is used well to monitor trends.

22. **Lifetime has only recently introduced a formally recognised initial assessment,** and many of the learners have used this very late in their programme. If learners have additional needs with literacy and numeracy, the arrangements for supporting them are weak. None of the staff are qualified to support learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

23. **Lifetime has introduced positive and effective strategies to attract learners from minority and disadvantaged groups.** When learners from these groups participate in learning programmes, they achieve well. Promotional and learning materials are non-stereotypical and visually attractive to appeal to a wide audience. Materials promote a diverse image of the sport, exercise and fitness industry.

24. **Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively at induction and through learning activities.** Assessors routinely question learners' understanding of equality and diversity and when concerns are raised, they are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

25. **Lifetime makes good use of learners' and employers' feedback to develop training programmes.** Learners' views are collected regularly and are used to evaluate staff performance against targets. Results of learners' and employers' feedback show a good level of satisfaction with Lifetime.

26. **Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process.** The process effectively identified strengths, but did not recognise some of the weaknesses sufficiently. The development plan has been used to improve the training, and is regularly monitored.

27. **The approach to the implementation and planning of the quality assurance arrangements is unsystematic.** There is insufficient co-ordination of the results and paperwork connected with quality assurance activities. Aspects of the learners' programme are not always applied or followed consistently by staff.

28. **New assessors are internally verified and observed on a very regular basis.** Generally, internal verification is not well planned. Some of the more experienced assessors have had very little internal verification, while others have had a considerable

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amount. Too much internal verification takes place at the end of the learners' programme. There are insufficient opportunities for assessors and internal verifiers to meet to standardise decisions.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very good links and contact with employers
- excellent initial staff training and induction
- good promotion of values and standards
- good use of evaluations to develop programmes and staff
- wide range and use of management information
- positive approach to attracting learners from disadvantaged groups

Weaknesses

- weak arrangements for supporting learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs
- unsystematic quality assurance of many aspects of learners' programmes

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good development of learners' practical skills, knowledge and confidence
- good achievement for learners on NVQ training programme
- good learning resources
- well-targeted qualifications for individual learners' needs
- very good training
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- low completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- some poor assessment practice
- poor use of individual learning plans

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LIFETIME HEALTH AND FITNESS:

- good support from the assessors
- courses are good
- flexibility of the whole process
- they make you reflect on your job and what you do
- very knowledgeable and experienced instructors
- the tutors' good interpersonal skills give learners confidence and make them feel welcome

WHAT LEARNERS THINK LIFETIME HEALTH AND FITNESS COULD IMPROVE:

- more clarity about the NVQ programme and evidence gathering
- reduce the repetition of written evidence
- more chances to practise before assessment
- try to ensure work provides time off for study

KEY CHALLENGES FOR LIFETIME HEALTH AND FITNESS:

- maintain the good training as the company grows
- improve the assessment methodology
- sustain the recent improvements in modern apprenticeship completion
- effectively implement the quality assurance strategy and procedures

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- very good links and contact with employers
- excellent initial staff training and induction
- good promotion of values and standards
- good use of evaluations to develop programmes and staff
- wide range and use of management information
- positive approach to attracting learners from disadvantaged groups

Weaknesses

- weak arrangements for supporting learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs
- unsystematic quality assurance of many aspects of learners' programmes

29. Lifetime has matched the employers training with their own to provide a cohesive programme. Managers at Lifetime have worked well with employers to help them achieve their own company strategies for training and the registration of fitness instructors. Employers value the training programme and have found it impacts positively on staff retention. There are regular and productive monthly meetings between Lifetime and the major employers to review training programmes and achievement rates and to discuss operational issues. Assessors develop very effective links with general managers of smaller organisations and have helped them develop training materials. Good support is given to major employers to help them set up their own contract with the LSC and with the handover stages. They are helped to develop their own budgets, policies and procedures. Employers are invited to Lifetime's head office for corporate days, which include speakers from industry and social events. All employers have a brief, but adequate, contract with Lifetime that clearly sets out the expectations and requirements of both organisations.

30. All new staff have a well-planned induction which incorporates a range of company, assessment and social aspects. Good training materials and sample portfolios are used to develop staff confidence and expertise. Employers from the major contracts are involved in staff recruitment and the induction process. There are excellent opportunities for new staff to observe experienced assessors before they assess their own learners. They quickly gain an understanding of Lifetime's expectations for all aspects of their job role.

31. Lifetime has a very good database which has been developed to meet the organisation's needs. Management information is used for a wide range of activities. There is regular monitoring of the frequency of assessor's visits, learners starting programmes, health and safety monitoring, reviews, retention and achievement rates.

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When achievement rates vary, sensible comparisons are made between Lifetime's data and the employer's own profile. Major employers find the monthly reports from Lifetime particularly useful in managing their own leisure centres. Some have found that concerns about learners' progress or learners not being signed onto programmes have been an early warning about general management problems, in particular in leisure centres. The accounting and sharing of information about budgets with the major employers is very transparent.

32. Managers inspire staff to meet the values and standards of the organisation. They give clear and consistent messages about their expectations and throughout staff training, these values are constantly referred to. Staff are fully involved in devising the company's values and mission statement. Lifetime has clear and comprehensive quality assurance standards for their trainers and assessors, which cover appearance, communication, subject knowledge, the assessor/learner relationship and assessment. Employers are clear about the values of Lifetime and for some employers, these are aligned very closely with their own mission statements.

33. The business plan sets a clear direction for the organisation. Data is used effectively including industry trends, starts and occupancy on courses. There is good identification of short-, medium- and long-term goals and targets that have a clear impact on the quality of training.

34. A range of strategies for improving retention and achievement rates have been introduced, including a pre-course activity to assess the likelihood of learners succeeding, working more closely with employers, the online testing of key skills, an assessor rewards scheme and setting achievable targets for staff. There are indications of improvements in retention and achievement rates. In particular, the achievement rates for modern apprentices have risen from zero in 2002-03 to 34 per cent in 2003-04. NVQ achievement for leavers has risen considerably from 12 per cent to 52 per cent in the past year. Although staff have been set low rates for achievement in the current year, many have exceeded their targets considerably.

35. Lifetime has a well-established process for staff appraisal and development that has been strengthened this year by the introduction of quarterly formal reviews and 360 degree feedback for managers. Staff are well monitored to identify how they meet the values and job role against clearly set criteria. Staff development is discussed as part of the appraisal, but is not formally recorded or evaluated. There is no overall staff development plan. The quarterly review process was recently introduced and it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness. The development of staff through assessor and internal verifier awards is effective, but there are insufficient training or qualifications offered to support learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

36. There is regular communication with all staff but the minutes of meetings are not always recorded. Staff regularly have information on updating, training and sharing of good practice at these meetings, but there are insufficient opportunities to standardise assessment decisions. The minutes of management meetings have improved over the past nine months and discussions, agreed actions and monitoring are clearly recorded.

Administrators ensure that lone workers are not isolated by frequent telephone contact.

37. Lifetime has only recently introduced a formally recognised initial assessment test. Many learners have been training for some time before they take the test to identify their individual levels of literacy and numeracy needs. Staff have been trained very recently in how to recognise literacy and numeracy needs and they make appropriate arrangements to adapt the NVQ assessments and arrange for extra time and readers in tests. However no-one has the appropriate skills, training or qualifications to teach literacy and numeracy. A planned arrangement with an organisation to support this has not yet started. A support agreement which is designed to outline learners' needs and support arrangements, does not clearly identify specific literacy and numeracy needs or how they will be dealt with.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

38. Lifetime has a number of effective management strategies to promote equal opportunities. The company recruits assessors from minority ethnic groups and this has attracted learners from some severely disadvantaged areas of London. Over the past two years, 25 per cent of learners have come from widening participation post codes. There has been considerable success by these learners, with 60 per cent achieving a fitness instructor qualification and all gained employment. Fifty per cent of these learners have completed the modern apprenticeship framework. The company encourages access to training for all learners through its recruitment process. For example, one learner who uses a wheelchair completed a gym instructor qualification and subsequently gained employment in the sector.

39. A range of data on equal opportunities is collected and used, including the number of learners, retention and achievement rates by minority ethnic groups and gender. Managers set their own impact targets for starts and achievement by gender and ethnicity, and monitor progress well through monthly meetings. Lifetime has increased the proportion of women starting programmes from 33 per cent in 2002-03 to 44 per cent in 2004. Learners from minority ethnic groups have also increased to 10 per cent. Lifetime has targeted Asian women and recruited them to a personal fitness taster programme. Achievement rates have also improved for learners from minority ethnic groups and women.

40. Lifetime promotes equality and fairness well in their working practices. Staff have recently been trained to support learners with dyslexia and to use varied approaches to dealing with stereotypes. Equal opportunities is introduced to learners at a pre-sign-up meeting and is reinforced during induction and through the technical certificate. Although equal opportunities worksheets are issued to learners, they are not always completed or checked by assessors. All publicity material is non-gender specific and promotes the diverse image of the sport and recreation industry. The company's equal opportunities policy statement is reviewed each year by the managing director who has overall responsibility for equal opportunities and diversity. In addition, there is an effective complaints and appeals procedure and an absence monitoring policy. The company does not have a written policy for harassment or bullying. Learners

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demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity in their roles as fitness instructors, including how to deal with bullying and harassment in the workplace. Staff respond positively and promptly to concerns involving employers.

41. Lifetime has worked closely with employers to develop and improve their equal opportunities policies and procedures. The arrangements for equal opportunities at employers' premises are reviewed each year, although the results of this are rarely recorded. The employer contract does not include specific requirements for equal opportunities. Assessors routinely question learners about equal opportunities although the depth of questioning varies. When staff are observed delivering training and assessment, feedback is provided on how effectively they meet individual needs. Learners are questioned by internal verifiers about their understanding of equality of opportunity, but this is rarely recorded. The training centres in Bristol and London are inaccessible for learners with restricted mobility. Lifetime has made alternative arrangements to provide alternative accommodation when the need arises. One training room at the head office has a poster which highlights diversity in the fitness industry.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

42. Managers and staff make good use of learners' and employers' feedback to develop training programmes. Learners' views are collected regularly through questionnaires and interviews. The results are analysed by individual staff member or course. Learners evaluate and rate various stages of their programme, which are then scored, reviewed and used to monitor trainers, assessors and administrators. These are reviewed as part of the quarterly review process for staff. There are many examples of changes being made to resources, assessment records and course content after evaluations. When specific issues are identified about tutors, they are followed up effectively by managers through additional telephone interviews with learners. Lifetime has a well-managed system for collecting, collating and evaluating employers' feedback. Managers discuss the results of feedback at meetings and swift responses are made. Results of feedback show a high level of satisfaction by learners and employers.

43. Lifetime has clearly written procedures and detailed quality assurance standards for all aspects of their work. These are communicated well to staff and monitored thoroughly in the appraisal process and quarterly reviews. There is good use of data by managers to quality assure the learners' programmes, including reviews, registration and certification. LSC paperwork is audited very regularly and effectively. There is a clear complaints procedure. However, there are no formally recorded complaints.

44. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process, which is linked into the annual conference. The process has identified strengths and some weaknesses. However, weaknesses in assessment, internal verification and quality assurance have not been identified through self-assessment. There is regular monitoring of the development plan through meetings. Actions to deal with problems relating to initial assessment and support for literacy, language and numeracy have been introduced late.

45. There is no systematic approach to the implementation of the quality assurance

arrangements, which Lifetime has closely aligned to the internal verification system. Teaching is observed regularly and staff receive supportive and helpful feedback, including areas for development. Although some internal verifiers have quality assured the induction, initial assessment and reviews, it has been applied inconsistently. The planning of quality assurance activities is ineffective and does not ensure systematic sampling across staff and activities. There is insufficient co-ordination of the results and paperwork connected with quality assurance activities.

46. There is a clear policy and plan for internal verification. New assessors are internally verified and observed on a regular basis. New staff are monitored effectively and are given suggestions for improvement and development. Despite a thorough sampling strategy for the proportion of work that will be verified for each assessor, some assessors have had very little internal verification, while others have had a considerable amount. Some of the planned observations of assessor practice and discussions with learners have not taken place. Too much internal verification takes place at the end of the learners' programme. There is insufficient moderation of key skills. Internal verifiers and assessors have few opportunities to meet to standardise decisions. The internal verification has not identified problems with assessment practice.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Work-based learning for young people	432	2

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good development of learners' practical skills, knowledge and confidence
- good achievement for learners on NVQ training programme
- good learning resources
- well-targeted qualifications for individual learners' needs
- very good training
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- low completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- some poor assessment practice
- poor use of individual learning plans

Achievement and standards

47. Achievement rates by learners on the NVQ training programme are good. In 2002-03, achievement rates were 56 per cent and in 2003-04 they have risen to 60 per cent, with eight learners still in learning. There are low achievement rates for the modern apprenticeship programme and this was recognised in the self-assessment report. Only 13 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved all the targets on their individual learning plans in 2001-02. This has risen to 19 per cent for 2002-03 with 29 per cent of learners still in learning. For the advanced modern apprentices, 4 per cent of learners who started in 2001-02 completed the full framework. Achievement of NVQs by modern apprentices is much higher, at 40 per cent for foundation modern apprentices and 16 per cent for advanced modern apprentices in 2001-02. There are good pass rates for instructor qualifications: 89 per cent for level 2 and 73 per cent for level 3. For many learners, the achievement of the instructor qualification is essential for working in the exercise and fitness industry. Lifetime has introduced a number of strategies to rectify this low achievement. Assessors now introduce key skills and technical certificates earlier in the programme. There are good indications that this has increased the proportion of leavers who have completed the full modern apprenticeship framework.

48. Retention rates on all programmes are satisfactory. Between 2001 and 2003, the average retention rate is 41 per cent, and many of the learners are still in learning. Retention rates are higher for foundation modern apprentices at 55 per cent for 2001-02 and 45 per cent for 2002-03, with 29 per cent of learners still in learning.

49. Learners develop a good working knowledge of current industry practice in the use of exercise equipment, planning and teaching of fitness training sessions, safe and effective exercise techniques and fitness development. They deliver thorough client inductions for leisure activities at work. Learners make good progress at work and with their qualifications. Learners are deployed across a wide range of tasks at work, and are valuable and flexible employees. Learners take many additional qualifications which are relevant to their work and future careers. Several learners have been promoted or have been given greater responsibilities since their training with Lifetime.

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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	77		107		25											
Retained*	0		2		7												
Successfully completed	0		2		1												
Still in learning	74		48		3												

*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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	203		378		77											
Retained*	3		171		42	55											
Successfully completed	3		73		10	13											
Still in learning	182		109		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

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LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2003-04		2002-03													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	33		81													
Retained*	20		49													
Successfully completed	19		45													
Still in learning	8		8													

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

Quality of education and training

50. On- and off-the-job training is very good. Three of the four training sessions observed during the inspection were very good or outstanding. Training is well structured and well planned. Trainers adapt their sessions well to meet individual needs and ensure a positive learning experience. Trainers use good presentation styles and engage learners' interest through a range of activities, audiovisual aids and resources. In particularly difficult subjects, trainers use very appropriate, practical examples to explain principles. Trainers establish a good rapport with the learners through strong interpersonal skills. A variety of methods are used to reinforce and check learning. Learners are more competent and confident instructors from using the skills and knowledge they develop in off-the-job training. Learners take a wide range of additional courses in first aid, health and safety, manual handling, customer care and a national pool lifeguard qualification. Learners receive good on-the-job training at work, including shadowing more experienced colleagues and being supported by experienced staff.

51. Lifetime has produced good resources to support the off-the-job training. Learners are motivated to learn through the very professional and attractive learning resources. Most learners are using these effectively as distance learning materials to increase their knowledge and understanding. Materials are comprehensive and presented in a range of formats including CD-ROM. There are links to websites and external sources to encourage independent learning. Vocationally relevant distance learning activities for key skills are used effectively by learners. All learners work in modern venues which are very well equipped. Many learners develop coaching skills in a range of contexts, helped by the wide range of facilities at work. Lifetime's staff are very well qualified with relevant and current industry experience. Learners benefit from constructive advice and guidance to improve their performance.

52. Learners' current and future career aims are considered thoroughly by Lifetime's staff when identifying appropriate qualifications and courses of study. There is good discussion between Lifetime's staff and employers about meeting the future staffing requirements of their organisations. The staff have thoroughly matched the in-company training and courses against the modern apprenticeship and NVQ requirements.

Accreditation of prior achievement is applied effectively. There is good collaboration and discussion with employers to identify appropriate industry skills for the learners. On- and off-the-job training is well co-ordinated.

53. There is good support for learners from employers and assessors. Many employers alter shift patterns to provide opportunities for learners to attend training or allocate study time for learners. Employers are involved in all parts of the learning process and work with assessors to monitor learners' performance and progress. Assessors have regular contact with learners, with visits every four to six weeks. Learners and assessors also maintain telephone contact between visits. The staff respond positively and promptly to requests for additional help. Learners have good, practical support from assessors with their NVQ, technical certificates and instructor qualifications through additional tutorials, visits and learning activities. Assessors use appropriate methods for alternative assessment when learners have specific needs, including recording evidence by audio and video tape. Additional time and readers in exams have been organised. Assessors provide good practical support, including screens for computer monitors and giving learners access to laptop computers.

54. Reviews include learners, assessors and employers and effectively monitor the learners' progress. All parties are clear about whether the learner is on schedule to achieve their qualification aims. Assessors and learners devise short-term action plans to help learners focus their work.

55. Learners complete a pre-course activity in the month before they start their programme, which gives an effective insight into the work they will be expected to complete each month. They have a brief induction to their programme in the workplace which adequately prepares them to start their programme.

56. Individual learning plans are used effectively. They are regularly updated by assessors, but many learners do not have the most current version of their learning plan. A number of learners are unclear about the content of their modern apprenticeship or how the different aspects of the programme fit together. Individual learning plans are not based on the results of the initial assessment. Very often initial assessment takes place late and the details of the support arrangements are not always recorded. The staff are not qualified to offer effective support in developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills.

57. Some assessments are well planned and include a variety of methods. Assessors make very accurate assessments of learners' competence. However, there is insufficient observation of learners at work. Some learners complete written tasks unnecessarily, and are not encouraged by assessors to use evidence from their routine working activities. For example, they have to write up the procedure for emergency evacuations, when they regularly participate in practical exercises at work. In a small number of portfolios, there is insufficient evidence to meet the full requirements of the NVQ; in particular to demonstrate consistent performance by the learner. Some learners' portfolios do not adequately show how the full range and evidence requirements have been achieved. Assessors do not always check with employers whether the learners' answers follow correct company procedures.

Leadership and management

58. The management of training is good. Communication between Lifetime, learners and employers is very effective. Employers are well briefed about the training process and work closely with assessors to modify or enhance the learners' programmes. There are regular assessor meetings where staff development takes place. Staff are set realistic targets for retention, achievement and quality of training and assessment. Learners' feedback and data is used well to monitor targets. Learner evaluations and teaching observations are routinely used to maintain and improve the quality of training provided. The self-assessment report is comprehensive, well structured and mostly accurate. However, self-assessment did not identify the weakness in assessment practice. Internal verification of the assessment process is unsatisfactory and has not identified a number of the concerns with assessment. Staff are very good role models for learners, and demonstrate fairness and equality of opportunity in all aspects of their job. The learning packs about employee rights and responsibilities have been particularly effective in increasing learners' awareness. Learners have good appreciation about equality and diversity in the exercise and fitness environment.