

INSPECTION REPORT

Training Direct (London) Limited

08 July 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

Training Direct (London) Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Training Direct (London) Limited (Training Direct) is a private limited company with a single shareholder and director that was established in 1999. Training Direct has recently relocated to newly refurbished premises at Whitechapel, in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.
2. Training Direct contracts for work-based learning with the London East Learning and Skills Council. The company offers modern apprenticeships in business administration, information and communications technology (ICT), and early years care and education. Most of its learners are referred from the local offices of Connexions. According to the department of the environment, transport and regions index of multiple deprivation, Tower Hamlets is the second most deprived authority in England and Wales.
3. The training programme is managed by the director, who reports to a management board. The director is supported by a quality assurance manager, a learning co-ordinator, eight tutors and assessors, a health and safety adviser, and other administrative staff.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

4. At the time of the inspection there are 12 learners, including two advanced modern apprentices and 10 foundation modern apprentices. Two learners are employed, one by Training Direct. Six learners are placed in local organisations and four are based at Training Direct on internal placements while waiting for a work placement with an employer. Four learners are men and eight are women. All learners take part in off-the-job training at Training Direct and complete an induction programme. Most of them also complete a 10-week, off-the-job preparatory training programme before starting their work placement. Learners in the workplace are assessed by visiting assessors.

Information & communications technology

5. There are 38 learners on modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in ICT, 10 of whom are women and 13 have work placements. Thirty-two learners are on the foundation programme and one is on the advanced modern apprenticeship in using information technology (IT). Learners follow a four- to six-week preparatory training programme and then continue to attend the centre each week. The remaining three days are spent at work placements. Reviews take place every eight weeks. Training Direct's assessors carry out assessments of the learners' practical skills in the workplace.

6. In June 2003, 15 learners transferred to Training Direct from another training provider to continue their NVQ programmes in installing and supporting IT systems. Four of these learners are still in learning, two of whom are studying towards NVQs at level 2 and two towards NVQs at level 3. Another learner was recruited directly by Training Direct. All these learners have placements or are in employment.

Health, social care & public services

7. There are 26 learners working towards an early years childcare and education qualification, of whom 21 are foundation modern apprentices, four are advanced modern apprentices and there is one NVQ learner. All modern apprentices are working towards an NVQ in childcare and education, technical certificates and key skills. Foundation modern apprentices receive off-the-job training on one day each week and advanced modern apprentices receive it on one day each fortnight. All off-the-job training is held at Training Direct's premises. The company's own assessors carry out assessment in the workplace. Foundation modern apprentices spend four days each week in work placements at local day nurseries, playgroups and the early years departments of primary schools. Advanced modern apprentices are in employment. There is one male learner.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	19
Number of learner interviews	49
Number of staff interviews	23
Number of employer interviews	14
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of partner/external agency interviews	3

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, training in ICT is good. Training is satisfactory in business administration, management and professional, and health, social care and public services. The leadership and management of Training Direct are satisfactory. The approach to equality of opportunity is good but its arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business administration</i> - Work-based learning for young people	12	3

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Developing IT systems</i> - Work-based learning for young people	5	2
<i>Using IT</i> - Work-based learning for young people	33	2

Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Care</i> - Work-based learning for young people	26	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. **Learners in business administration achieve good skills.** They make good use of their learning, develop confidence and progress well in the workplace. Retention is satisfactory overall. Of the current learners in training, most are progressing satisfactorily.

10. **In ICT, there is good retention and achievement rates of learners on the Using IT programme.** Current learners are making good progress. The retention and achievement rates on the one-year NVQ at level 2 in Using IT are very good at 90 per cent and 80 per cent for the years 2001-02 and 2002-03 respectively.

11. **In early years childcare and education, there is good development of practical skills.** Learners speak confidently about their work with children and write informed reflective accounts of the many ways in which they have contributed to the care and learning of the children at their nurseries. Retention of modern apprentices is good. The standard of work in the learners' portfolios 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
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Information & communications technology	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	5

12. Of the five off-the-job training sessions observed and graded during the inspection, four were satisfactory and one was good.

13. **Good staff and training resources in business administration support the learners' progress in off-the-job training.** Staff use their expertise effectively to motivate and develop their skills.

14. **Learners have a good range of learning opportunities in their business administration placements.** They work alongside and learn from experienced and qualified workers in appropriate administrative settings.

15. **Resources are good and effective in supporting ICT learning.** The company has recently installed new computers with a high specification and a good range of

commercial packages. The training materials produced by Training Direct help learners to progress at their own rate.

16. **ICT learners have a very good understanding of the NVQ and the modern apprenticeship framework.** Learners are clear as to how they collect evidence and cross-reference the evidence to the elements of the NVQ and key skills.
17. **ICT learners are particularly well supported.** They have a thorough initial assessment and induction and are appropriately matched to the level of the training programme. They receive good individual coaching in IT when attending the training centre.
18. **There is good work experience for early years learners.** Many of the workplace supervisors offer the learners opportunities to extend their understanding of the early years curriculum beyond the requirements of the NVQ.
19. **The process for gathering evidence for early years learners is particularly effective.** Observations are followed by detailed feedback and by action-planning to generate further evidence. Learners play an active role in collecting evidence of their individual competencies.
20. **There is insufficient recording of learners' progress during business administration preparatory training.** Individual learning plans do not formally record individual learners' needs and their learning activities in sufficient detail.
21. **There is poor target-setting in business administration reviews.** The progress made in the development of skills, knowledge gained and personal effectiveness is not adequately covered in the record of review.
22. **Opportunities for learners to gain external work experience in ICT are insufficient.** Of the 33 foundation modern apprentices in Using IT, only 13 are in external work placements. In some cases, the lack of work experience affects learners' preparedness for a permanent job.
23. **There is insufficient co-ordination of on-and off-the-job training for ICT learners.** Reviews are not linked to the personal action plans and workplace supervisors are not always involved. Learners make insufficient use of the opportunities for gathering specific evidence.
24. **There is insufficiently detailed recording of early years learners' progress.** Some individual learning plans do not contain details of the learners' prior achievement. Review records do not contain details of the current action plan and dates for planned achievement.
25. **The plans for the delivery of the early years care and education technical certificate are insufficiently developed.** Learners do not clearly understand the requirements of the technical certificate.

Leadership and management

26. **The strategic management of Training Direct is good.** The company uses partnerships and community links effectively to improve the learners' experience. Business plans are detailed and well informed. The management style is open and consultative.
27. **The company manages its resources well.** Good security ensures that the environment is conducive to learning and up-to-date equipment is available to the learners. Well-qualified and enthusiastic tutors work closely as a team and managers support them well.
28. **Training Direct is particularly effective in recruiting non-traditional learners.** Currently, 89 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, a proportion significantly above that in the local population. There are productive working relations with local offices of Connexions and other agencies to support young people in Tower Hamlets.
29. **There is good leadership in providing support for learners.** Training Direct has a very well-established company ethos to support individuals in overcoming obstacles to their participation in learning.
30. Staff development is satisfactory. All staff have an annual appraisal. The appraisal focuses on performance and development needs, but does not link the individual staff goals to the company's objectives.
31. The management of the support for literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. Particular needs are clearly identified and recorded during initial assessment but they are not always reflected in individual learning plans.
32. **There is insufficient direction given to the planning and recording of learning.** On-the-job training is not systematically planned to co-ordinate with off-the-job activity and the requirements of the qualification.
33. **There is insufficient monitoring of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity.** It is dealt with thoroughly at induction, but there is insufficient emphasis at the review stage on recording learners' understanding of equality of opportunity in specific vocational contexts.
34. **There is insufficient co-ordination of quality assurance processes.** There is no quality assurance policy, or set of quality assurance procedures. The company does not share good practice or use data routinely to analyse trends in the learners' performance. The self-assessment report is limited in its scope and insufficiently evaluative. It does not identify many of the strengths and weaknesses found at inspection.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic management
- good management of resources
- effective recruitment of learners from under-represented groups
- good leadership in providing support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient direction in the planning and recording of learning
- insufficient monitoring of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity
- insufficient co-ordination of quality assurance processes

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration

Strengths

- good skills are achieved by learners
- good staff and training resources support learners' progress in off-the-job training
- good learning opportunities in work placements

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress during the preparatory training period
- poor target-setting at reviews

Information & communications technology

Developing IT systems

Strengths

- good and effective use of resources
- very good understanding of frameworks by learners
- particularly well-supported learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Using IT

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- good and effective use of resources
- very good understanding of frameworks by learners
- particularly well-supported learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities for learners to gain workplace experience
- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Health, social care & public services

Early years

Strengths

- good development of practical early years skills
- good work experience for learners
- particularly effective process for gathering evidence

Weaknesses

- insufficiently detailed recording of learners' progress
- insufficiently developed plans for the introduction of the technical certificate

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT TRAINING DIRECT (LONDON) LIMITED:

- the new welcoming and friendly training centre
- support and encouragement from staff
- help with finding a work placement
- well-organised training sessions
- clear explanations by tutors and assessors
- help with preparing evidence for portfolios
- getting paid while training
- good preparation for work
- the location of the training centre - 'it is close to home'
- using the training centre for jobsearch

WHAT LEARNERS THINK TRAINING DIRECT (LONDON) LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of staff visits to learners in the workplace to observe and give feedback
- the opportunities for work placements
- target-setting and recording progress

KEY CHALLENGES FOR TRAINING DIRECT (LONDON) LIMITED:

- continue to develop the good partnerships and community links
- maintain and develop current operational strengths in the new premises
- give clearer direction and guidance for the planning, reviewing and recording of learning
- establish a clear and effective framework for quality assurance processes
- extend opportunities for workplace experience for ICT learners
- plan and implement appropriate support for technical certificates

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic management
- good management of resources
- effective recruitment of learners from under-represented groups
- good leadership in providing support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient direction in the planning and recording of learning
- insufficient monitoring of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity
- insufficient co-ordination of quality assurance processes

35. Training Direct's strategic management is good. The company uses partnerships and community links effectively to improve the learners' experience. All staff understand the strategy for the development of the company and the curriculum choices that it offers. The strategy is closely linked to local priorities within the community. The board meets regularly and performs a useful advisory role. Its members offer valuable experience and expertise to the company. Business plans are detailed and well informed, and include targets for the recruitment, achievement and progression of learners as well as for business development. The company has already met many of the targets in its one-year development plan. The management style is open and consultative. For example, all staff were consulted about the selection and layout of the new premises. The management acted promptly to ensure that its staff and learners were moved from its previous threatening environment to a safe and suitable alternative that remains close to the learners' homes.

36. The company's management of resources is good. The training centre is secure, spacious and welcoming. The company has successfully planned and carried out its phased move to new premises with minimum disruption to learning. Tutors are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic. They work closely as a team and are well supported by responsive and approachable managers, who act quickly to deal with any problems they may have. The company uses staff efficiently. There are frequent, well-resourced training sessions. Good security ensures that up-to-date equipment is available to learners. Financial management is satisfactory. There are regular and purposeful staff meetings and recorded discussions. However, minutes and notes of meetings rarely assign responsibility for tasks and, in some cases, deadlines are not set for actions. There is good, regular communication with employers, funding bodies and partners. Training Direct has an effective agreement with Connexions to assess potential learners' suitability for the modern apprenticeships. The company tests all referred candidates and provides them with full feedback.

37. Staff development is satisfactory. All staff have an annual appraisal. The appraisal focuses on performance and development needs, but does not link the individual staff goals to the company's objectives. The company has trained its own staff in generic issues such as equal opportunities. Development is mainly linked to teaching qualifications and not to occupational skills. However, the company has supported some staff for external courses, such as first aid, and health and safety, as well as longer programmes of study. Staff policies are satisfactory and include recruitment, induction, remuneration and terms of employment. All staff have concise job descriptions for the roles they perform.

38. The management of support for literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. Particular needs are clearly identified and recorded during initial assessment but not always reflected in individual learning plans. Literacy, numeracy, and language elements effectively form a part of key skills sessions. Classes are small and some have two tutors for a single group. However, attendance at these sessions is sometimes low. In some cases there is insufficient focus on learners' identified individual difficulties, although the company provides coaching sessions for some learners who need extra help.

39. Training Direct's arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. The director of training is responsible for health and safety and receives specialist advice from an external health and safety adviser. The company's health and safety policy is comprehensive. All learners receive a health and safety briefing at induction. Work placements and learners' places of employment are subject to a thorough initial assessment process.

40. Methods to plan, review and record learning are insufficiently directed and not standardised. There are procedures for each stage of the learning process, but there is insufficient detailed guidance on what recording is required. Learners' skills and achievements are carefully measured before they are accepted onto the training programmes, but their learning plans do not reflect this. Crucial details are omitted and specific learning is not planned to match their identified needs. Records of reviews are vague and ineffective in driving progress, and the resulting action plans are insufficiently focused and often have no deadlines. On-the-job training is not systematically planned to co-ordinate with off-the-job activity and the requirements of the qualification. Lesson plans for off-the-job training are insufficiently detailed and do not focus on developing and assessing learners' skills. Assessment deadlines are vague and, in some cases, employers are not sufficiently involved in the planning of assessment.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

41. Training Direct's arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. The company is particularly effective in recruiting non-traditional learners. Of the learners currently in training, 89 per cent are learners from minority ethnic groups, a proportion significantly above that in the local population. Some 46 per cent of learners are young women from minority ethnic groups. A number of learners have had poor learning experiences at

school and come to Training Direct with a record of poor prior attainment. Eighty-three per cent of learners have identified additional learning needs. The company has recruited learners recently with physical disabilities, such as sight impairment, and those with behavioural difficulties. It closely monitors its learners' demographic profile and has set targets recently to recruit more male learners on to care training programmes and learners from other boroughs. At present the company has only one male learner on a care programme. The director of training is active in promoting work-based learning to non-traditional learners by attending events at local schools and at recruitment fairs organised by the borough of Tower Hamlets. The director is a member of the area-wide inspection action plan committee and an adviser to the borough's post-14 work-based learning awareness group. There are productive working relations with local offices of Connexions and links with other agencies to support young people in Tower Hamlets.

42. There is good leadership in providing support for learners. Training Direct has a very well-established company ethos to support individuals in overcoming obstacles to their participation in learning. The management team has put in place thorough procedures for the recruitment and selection of learners. All applicants complete an initial assessment and a detailed individual interview, which the company uses effectively to identify those most likely to benefit from work-based learning and to assign learners to appropriate training programmes. Learners have opportunities to attend taster sessions. Arrangements for learners' induction are thorough and effective. A learners' handbook gives clear information about the training programmes available.

43. The management team ensures that the learners receive appropriate support in the development of their employability skills before they begin work placements or seek permanent employment. The team places importance on punctuality and attendance, and provides the learners with support in building their confidence and motivation, and developing interview skills. Off-the-job training sessions are arranged at times to meet learners' and employers' needs. For example, sessions for care learners have taken place in the evenings and on Saturdays.

44. Staff speak a range of community languages and are able to converse with learners and their families in their first language. Training Direct's manager sets aside one afternoon each week as an open session for learners' parents to visit and welcomes contact with them at other times. Learners' absence is promptly followed up.

45. Learners who transferred to Training Direct from other providers during 2002-03 were particularly well supported. The company provided additional training sessions and found work placements for the learners who had previously had no work experience. The company has provided a visually impaired learner with specialist software, a designated computer at the training centre, and large print documents. Both during and after completion of their programmes, learners have access at the training centre to the internet, stationery, and use of the telephone to carry out jobsearch activities.

46. Training Direct has recently moved to new accommodation. The management team and teaching staff gave careful consideration to meeting learners' needs in choosing its location. As part of a programme of refurbishment of the building they now occupy, the

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management team were able to design the internal layout of the training centre to ensure accessibility for learners with restricted mobility and to create a secure environment conducive to learning.

47. Employers are required to have an up-to-date equality of opportunity policy or to adopt those of Training Direct. The company carefully assesses placement employers before assigning to them. Learners are well matched to placements.

48. The director of training responsible for equality of opportunity in the company. Training Direct's policies and procedures for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. These include a disability statement and grievance procedures. The procedures are subject to a process of annual review and meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Procedures do not refer to the most recent amendments to existing legislation. Copies of the procedures are included in the learner handbook. However, some procedures are not written in language that the learners can easily understand. A grievance procedure refers primarily to terms of employment and does not make sufficient reference to the key processes relating to teaching and learning. Learners receive a copy of a code of behaviour, which refers to a disciplinary procedure that does not appear in the current version of the learners' handbook. The handbook contains explanations of the assessment methods but not of the assessment appeals procedures.

49. Staff training in equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Staff receive in-house training in equality and disability awareness as part of their induction. There has been no regular programme of updating for staff, but an action plan for further staff training has been devised recently in consultation with external consultants. The demographic profile of Training Direct's staff is monitored.

50. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is dealt with thoroughly at induction and is a standard component of learners' progress reviews. However, there is insufficient emphasis at the review stage on exploring, extending and recording the learners' understanding of equality of opportunity in specific vocational contexts. Nonetheless, many learners demonstrate the good practical application of equality of opportunity through the professional standard of their dealings with workplace colleagues and the public.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

51. There is insufficient co-ordination of the company's quality assurance processes. There is no quality assurance policy or set of quality assurance procedures for the whole company. There are a number of individual procedures to check particular processes and some duplicate each other. Responsibility for quality is divided between the quality assurance manager and the lead internal verifier.

52. Training Direct checks learners' attendance and punctuality, collates the information systematically and challenges poor attendance. The company observes all tutors and

gives them feedback at least three times each year and formulates action plans to remedy any observed weaknesses. In places, there is good practice but this is not shared.

53. Although the quality of the learners' work is good in ICT and satisfactory in business administration and early years childcare and education, quality assurance procedures do not identify the ineffective target-setting, delays in the assessment of NVQ units and the slow progress by some modern apprentices in the completion of frameworks. The company does not use data routinely to analyse trends in learners' performance, and the reliance on separate spreadsheets makes this complicated. Unit or element achievement are not electronically recorded, and extracting data manually is time-consuming and makes it hard to monitor progress effectively.

54. The quality assurance manager audits a 10 per cent sample of the files each month, briefly logs omissions and errors and annotates them on a form which is given to the appropriate member of staff. However, in some cases, records of observations of learning are not sufficiently detailed and the follow-up actions cannot always be deduced from the record of the observation. Many files have missing dates or signatures, and essential information is omitted or incorrect. Some action plans show very clear outcomes, and deadlines that are met with resulting improvements. Others do not indicate when actions are due to be carried out, nor whether they have taken place. Some staff do not know how to record targets and outcomes. Preparation for technical certificates is not far enough advanced.

55. The company encourages learners to complete four brief questionnaires during their training programme. All candidates complete the initial assessment feedback, and successful candidates have three other opportunities to give their opinion anonymously. The company also routinely collects employers feedback, which it collates but does not analyse systematically. It does not use this information objectively to plan change.

56. The self-assessment report is limited in its scope. All staff were involved in the process of preparing the self-assessment report, which learners' and employers' feedback helped to develop. However, the report is insufficiently evaluative and makes no comment on learners' achievement. It does not identify many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Inspectors awarded the same grades as those in the report, except in the case of ICT, where they awarded a higher grade, and for quality assurance, where they awarded a lower contributory grade.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business administration</i> - Work-based learning for young people	12	3

Business administration

Strengths

- good skills are achieved by learners
- good staff and training resources support learners' progress in off-the-job training
- good learning opportunities in work placements

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' progress during the preparatory training period
- poor target-setting at reviews

Achievement and standards

57. Learners achieve good skills. They prepare reports using spreadsheets and practise the application of databases in administrative contexts to a good standard. Learners develop good communication skills and are able to present their work well. In their preparation programme at the training centre, learners develop key skills and practise administrative skills using realistic situations. They use telecommunications equipment and handle real enquiries at reception.

58. Learners make good use of their learning, develop confidence and progress well in the workplace. For instance, one learner observed working on placement at a busy health centre was able to deal confidently with patients' enquiries, responded well to telephone queries and communicated effectively with colleagues.

59. Only a small number of learners started business administration training during 2001-03. Retention is satisfactory overall. Six out of 10 foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000 completed their modern apprenticeship frameworks, which is satisfactory. However, since then, two more were retained but did not complete the full framework; only one NVQ learner has completed, and no advanced modern apprentices have completed the framework. In 2003-04, 18 foundation modern apprentices started and 10 remain in training. Most are progressing satisfactorily or better. Two advanced modern apprentices started in the current year and are making satisfactory progress.

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	2		1		2											
Retained*	0		1	100	2	100											
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0											
Still in learning	2		0	0	0	100											

*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										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	18				2		10									
Retained*	0				2	100	6	60									
Successfully completed	0				0	0	6	60									
Still in learning	10				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																	
NVQ Training	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts					3											
Retained*					3	100											
Successfully completed					1	33											
Still in learning					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

60. Good staff and training resources support the learners in their preparation for work. Staff are well qualified and use their experience well to prepare learners for work placements, and to motivate and develop learners' skills. They advise learners effectively about administration work practices and standards. Learners receive good learning support with frequent individual coaching. They benefit from using good training facilities, including well-equipped classrooms and workshops. Learners have good access to industry-standard IT equipment during off-the-job training. There is good technical and

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teaching support for developing relevant skills. Administration learners benefit from practising their skills in the training centre by carrying out practical administrative tasks, such as filing, photocopying and other relevant administrative tasks. For example, they learn how to effectively use administration systems for attendance, recording visitors and awareness of office security.

61. Learners have a good range of learning opportunities in their work placements. They are able to progress well and develop their skills working alongside experienced and qualified workers in appropriate administrative settings. Work placements provide the learners with good access to relevant and current administrative standards and work practices. For example, one learner was able to demonstrate effectively the way a call answering system was managed and the procedures involved in collecting and transferring messages for colleagues. Employers and workplace supervisors are informed about their responsibilities for training and contributing to assessment. Training Direct's staff visit learners and advise them frequently about the requirements for achieving the relevant standards of administration work.

62. Learners take part in an appropriate induction programme which includes a suitable introduction to equal opportunities and the qualification they are working towards. However, learners are not provided with the administration employees' rights and responsibilities workbook. Learners receive satisfactory inductions when entering work placements.

63. Training Direct carries out initial assessment effectively. Assessment is carried out satisfactorily in the workplace. Records of observations contain appropriate judgments about the standard and range of work. Employers' contributions and witness statements are appropriately included in learners' portfolios as supporting evidence for competence. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of the requirements for assessment. They keep appropriate records and have satisfactory, or in some cases good, examples of evidence in their portfolios. Internal verification is satisfactory.

64. Learners' training programmes meet their needs and respond well to local circumstances. Many learners have had poor experiences of education and training or had their education disrupted through a range of personal and social circumstances. Training Direct provides an appropriate and supportive training environment for learners who want to learn administration skills, work and gain qualifications. The arrangements for the identification and support for learners' additional needs in language, literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Support is provided as part of key skills classes. In some cases there is insufficient focus on rectifying individual learners' needs.

65. There is insufficient recording of learners' progress during their preparatory training. Individual learning plans for the preparatory training period are not specified. Individual learners' needs, the learning activities they are engaged in and the progress they make, are not formally recorded in any detail. Although learners cover a good range of activity during this period, little of what they do is recorded formally. Learners receive a lot of verbal feedback on their progress during this period but little is recorded and plans are not detailed. Worksheets and projects carried out during this period are not formally

assessed and have no written comments on them.

66. The company holds reviews periodically, usually every eight to 10 weeks. However, recording is poor and there is little target-setting. The record does not provide sufficient information about overall progress, skills developed, knowledge gained and personal effectiveness. Training Direct records insufficient information about what learners need to do next and by when they should achieve their targets. Employers are not formally involved in the reviews when learners are in their work placements. However, employers do discuss and review progress and plan training with Training Direct's staff, but it is not effectively recorded as part of the periodic progress review process.

Leadership and management

67. The monitoring of learners' attendance and performance is satisfactory. Information about equal opportunities is explained to learners when they start training. However, staff carry out insufficient reviews of what this means in the context of work. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities, communicate effectively and team meetings are purposeful. Staff are well motivated and managers supervise them. Staff take part in a range of relevant development activities. Induction for new staff is satisfactory. The self-assessment report was insufficiently evaluative. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weakness to those in the self-assessment report.

Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Developing IT systems</i> - Work-based learning for young people	5	2
<i>Using IT</i> - Work-based learning for young people	33	2

Developing IT systems

Strengths

- good and effective use of resources
- very good understanding of frameworks by learners
- particularly well-supported learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Using IT

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- good and effective use of resources
- very good understanding of frameworks by learners
- particularly well-supported learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities for learners to gain workplace experience
- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

68. Most of the learners are on the foundation modern apprenticeships in Using IT. In 2002-03, achievement and retention rates were good at 71 per cent. During the current year, recruitment increased from 34 to 43 learners and there are 31 learners still in learning. They are making good progress and some are near to completion of their NVQ.

69. The retention and achievement rates of learners on the one-year NVQ at level 2 in Using IT are very good at 90 per cent and 80 per cent for the years 2001-02 and 2002-03

respectively.

70. Of the 15 learners who transferred to Training Direct last year and who are following the installing and support IT systems programme, only four are still in learning and none have achieved their qualification. The leavers have gone on to employment or higher education. The five retained learners are making good progress and their skills are used effectively in work placements.

71. Learners' portfolios of evidence are well organised and show a very good standard of IT skills. Learners observed in the workplace were able to demonstrate that they had contributed well to the needs of the work placement. Learners gain in confidence. Learners interviewed were all articulate and communicated well.

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									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	1						6								
Retained*	0						0	0								
Successfully completed	0						6	100								
Still in learning	1						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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	43		34		1										
Retained*	0		24	71	1	100										
Successfully completed	0		24	71	0	0										
Still in learning	31		1	3	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																	
NVQ Training	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			152		128											
Retained*			114	75	115	90											
Successfully completed			109	80	115	90											
Still in learning			5	3	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

72. Resources are good and are effective in supporting learning. Staff are well qualified and experienced, and demonstrate good technical knowledge. All have higher education qualifications in IT-related subjects and recent and relevant experience in the IT industry. All have or are working towards teaching qualifications and assessors' awards. The company has recently located to more suitable and secure premises, which are clean, well maintained, welcoming and bright. The company has recently installed new computers with a high specification and a good range of commercial packages. There are ample computers for the number of learners attending. In most training sessions, two tutors are available to support the generally small training groups. The training materials produced by Training Direct help learners to progress at their own rate. A small library is available for learners as a reference source.

73. Learners have a very good understanding of the NVQ and the modern apprenticeship framework. They are able to discuss confidently the units they are taking, the key skills requirements and, where appropriate, the technical certificate required by the new frameworks. Learners are clear as to how they collect evidence and cross-reference the evidence to the elements of the NVQ and key skills. Learners complete daily task sheets and use this evidence fully. Task sheets are completed thoroughly and the learners accurately cross-reference to their elements to their NVQ. They are able to identify the stage they have reached on their programme and the work still outstanding. Learners often take the lead in identifying what they need to do next and search out appropriate evidence.

74. Learners are particularly well supported on the training programmes. They have a thorough initial assessment and induction, and are appropriately matched to the level of the programme. They receive good individual coaching in IT when attending the training centre and find staff accessible and very helpful. Learners also receive good personal support to overcome issues which might prevent them from progressing. The learners who transferred last year were well supported by Training Direct. Training Direct had not previously offered this qualification and responded quickly. The company assessed learners carefully and identified that several of them were sufficiently well qualified to

seek entry into higher education. Training Direct gave these learners assistance in finding appropriate courses of study or employment. One learner was given considerable help in setting up his own business. Those learners who continued with the training programme were found suitable work placements. Training Direct carefully checks that all work placements meet health and safety requirements and checks them again when new learners start. The company sets a personal action plan for each learner at least once every four weeks. The action plans are instrumental in guiding learners through the training programme and, although targets are not always sufficiently specific, learners find them very helpful. Training Direct gives all learners who leave the programme an exit interview and help them to apply for suitable jobs. They are given access to the company's resources even when they have completed their training.

75. The company's assessment of learners' work is satisfactory. It is carried out carefully and accurately and uses a good range of evidence. However, assessment often takes place without prior warning to learners and some of the feedback from assessment is insufficiently clear. Some learners have been in training for some time without achieving sufficient units. Sampling for internal verification is done systematically and takes place at appropriate intervals. Feedback to assessors is not sufficiently detailed in some cases.

76. Learners are developing their key skills and portfolios show evidence of some progress. Learners are able to draw on evidence collected for their NVQ as evidence for key skills and are aware of how to cross-reference it to the key skills logbook. However, for many learners key skills evidence gathering starts toward the end of NVQ rather than at the start.

77. All learners receive an initial assessment for their literacy and numeracy needs and the results of the tests. In some cases, the outcome of the tests is not fully recorded in learners' individual learning plans. Learners attend literacy and numeracy lessons related to key skills. In some cases, the support is not targeted to meet individual learners' needs.

78. Opportunities for learners to gain external work experience are insufficient. Of the 33 foundation modern apprentices, only 13 are in external work placements. The remainder are placed in the office at Training Direct. Although the company has made significant attempts to find suitable work placements in the local area, these have not been successful. Some learners find it difficult to settle in work placements and do not attend. Others find work placements through their own contacts. In some cases, the lack of work experience affects the learners' preparedness for a permanent job.

79. Where learners are in an external work placement, there is insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Employers are given an introductory booklet to the NVQ and the modern apprenticeship programme but are not fully aware of the detail involved. Reviews which take place every eight weeks are not linked to the learners' personal action plans and workplace supervisors are not always involved. Some reviews take place at the training centre and work-based supervisors are asked to add comments later. The target-setting from the reviews is poor and is ineffective in helping to ensure that work-placement providers are setting tasks directly related to learners' individual needs for their NVQ. Although learners are in placements for approximately eight weeks,

some of them make insufficient use of the opportunities for gathering specific evidence.

Leadership and management

80. The ICT staff meet regularly to discuss particular issues and produce minutes with action points. However, there are often no deadlines set for the completion of tasks and subsequent meetings do not check on the previous actions. Staff communicate well with each other and with the learners and employers. The company has helped staff to gain teaching qualifications, assessors' and internal verifiers' awards and degrees. Reviews of learners' progress do not check sufficiently on the learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. The self-assessment report failed to identify many of the strengths and weaknesses found by the inspectors.

Health, social care & public services

Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Care</i> - Work-based learning for young people	26	3

Early years

Strengths

- good development of practical early years skills
- good work experience for learners
- particularly effective process for gathering evidence

Weaknesses

- insufficiently detailed recording of learners' progress
- insufficiently developed plans for the introduction of the technical certificate

Achievement and standards

81. There is good development of practical early years skills. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of the professional context, speak confidently about their work with children and write informed reflective accounts of the many ways in which they have contributed to the care and learning of the children at their nurseries. Workplace supervisors speak positively about their learners' ability to work effectively with young children.

82. Retention of modern apprentices is good. The portfolios of these learners are satisfactory. Some learners have made slow progress in gaining their qualification. In 2001-02, half of the NVQ learners gained their qualification and, in 2002-03, a third of starters completed their NVQ training. The progression into employment of the NVQ learners who complete their qualification is good.

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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																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2003-04															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	4														
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	4															

*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													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	17		6												
Retained*	0		0	0												
Successfully completed	0		0	0												
Still in learning	15		6	100												

*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																
NVQ Training	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts			17		30										
Retained*			6	35	23	77										
Successfully completed			6	35	16	53										
Still in learning			1	6	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

83. There is good work experience for learners. The work placements and places of employment are very good. The premises are well resourced and the staff offer an early years programme that demonstrates good practice. The learners are working alongside good role models. The workplace supervisors are very supportive and take a keen interest in the vocational development of their modern apprentices. They are effective in promoting the learners' self-confidence. Learners are given useful formative feedback and are provided with a good range of opportunities to improve their work practices with

young children. Many of the workplace supervisors offer learners opportunities to extend their understanding of the early years' curriculum beyond the requirements of the NVQ. This gives learners the skills and experience that enhance their chances of employment after successful completion of their training. Some learners are given opportunities to attend continuing professional development courses, which the early years' providers offer to their permanent staff. This includes the teaching of reading, speaking and listening with bi-lingual children. However, in some cases, workplace supervisors do not receive sufficient information about learners' progress, details of off-the-job training and learners' immediate learning targets for them to maximize the learning opportunities that they provide.

84. There is a particularly effective process for gathering evidence. There are regular planned and unplanned observations of learners working with children. Observations are followed by detailed feedback and by action-planning to generate further evidence. Learners are given weekly activity tasks, which they plan and implement. They write useful reflective accounts of the activity and identify which performance criteria were met while carrying out specific tasks. The accuracy of this identification is confirmed and counter-signed by workplace supervisors and by assessors. Learners play an active role in collecting evidence of their individual competencies. Internal verification is appropriately established and practices meet the NVQ's code of practice.

85. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. It helps the learners to acquire new skills and knowledge. Learners apply this knowledge effectively in the workplace. Key skills training is integrated effectively with the NVQ teaching. The observed training sessions and the learning materials used were satisfactory or better.

86. Training Direct's accommodation is fit for its purpose. The classrooms are well lit, temperature controlled and sufficiently spacious to enable a range of teaching methods. Tutors and assessors are appropriately qualified and some of the staff are working towards the internal verifiers' award.

87. The diverse ethnic mix of the learners in training is making a direct contribution to the local community's need for trained early years workers who come from the broad range of cultures that make up the population of Tower Hamlets. Off-the-job training provides learners with opportunities to meet their knowledge and personal needs. Learners are given guidance and support when they seek employment.

88. The support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs forms part of the key skills sessions and is satisfactory. In some cases, there is no individual support plan for learners who have been assessed as in need of additional learning support.

89. The recording of learners' progress is insufficiently detailed. Some individual learning plans do not contain details of the learners' prior achievement and do not record evidence of key skills tests exemptions. Details of dated targets for unit achievement are missing. Review records do not contain details of the current action plan and dates for planned achievement. Frequently there is no comment from an employer and there is insufficient written record of the checking of the learners' knowledge of equal

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opportunities. Unit and element achievement are not systematically recorded and many learners do not have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the amount of progress they have made towards full achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework.

90. The plans for the delivery of the technical certificate are insufficiently developed. There is no scheme to relate the technical certificate to the teaching of the background knowledge for the NVQ. Accreditation for the certificate is not yet complete. Learners do not clearly understand the requirements of the technical certificate.

Leadership and management

91. Training Direct has established partnership links with a range of good-quality providers of early years care and education. Informal communication is maintained by assessors' regular visits to work placements and by telephone discussions. In some cases, the absence of formal communication limits the development of links between on- and off-the-job training. The process of selecting learners is successful and well managed. Learners enrolling on early years training are suitable candidates for this vocational area. Work placements are thoroughly assessed to ensure they are appropriate for Training Direct's learners. Careful consideration is given to matching learners to suitable workplaces. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses to those given in the self-assessment report.