

INSPECTION REPORT

ProCo

03 March 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

PROCO

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.

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. ProCo is a limited company based in Wigan. It was established in October 2003 and formed from the merger of two local training providers, Metropolitan Training and Vocation Station. ProCo is owned by Wigan Council and by the Wigan Economic Partnership. It has a main training centre in Wigan and one in Leigh. It provides work-based learning for young people in construction, engineering, business administration, hairdressing, and retailing. ProCo has a contract with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council for its work-based learning.
2. ProCo also provides an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme for young people and an employer training pilot (ETP) programme for adults who have no previous qualifications at level 2. ProCo contracts with Jobcentre Plus to provide full-time education and training in many occupational areas and also in literacy, numeracy and language skills. Parts of this training are subcontracted to another training provider.
3. The company employs 96 staff and a management team that includes a chief executive and four senior managers. Each of these managers is responsible for a key area of the company's business and includes a development manager, programme manager, vocational manager and the human resources manager. The chief executive reports to a board of directors, which has been restructured recently to meet the needs of the company.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Construction

4. There are 312 learners on construction programmes. Construction craft courses include trowel occupations, wood occupations, scaffolding, roofing, and painting and decorating. Building services programmes include plumbing and heating, and electrical installation. Most learners attend off-the-job training on day-release, which is carried out for most learners at 15 local colleges. Fifty learners receive off-the-job training at the provider's training centre. There are 166 apprentices, 134 advanced apprentices, and 12 national vocational qualification (NVQ) only learners. Training is managed by a vocational manager, who is supported by six training consultants doing training and assessments and seven training consultants carrying out reviews and co-ordinating work-placement opportunities. Progress reviews are carried out at least every six weeks. All learners are employed in a range of construction companies from local sole traders to large national building companies.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

5. ProCo has 239 learners on work-based learning programmes in engineering. Of these, 153 are working towards advanced apprenticeships and 72 are working towards apprenticeships. Three learners are working towards an NVQ. There are 11 learners on ETPs. There are 112 learners in mechanical engineering and 18 in electrical or electro-mechanical engineering and 79 are in motor vehicle. Twenty learners are on engineering design or services programmes, 50 are on production and manufacturing programmes, 31 are on engineering maintenance and the remainder are on other engineering programmes. ProCo recruits learners through Connexions, employers and its own recruitment team. All learners are employed. Most learners receive initial off-the-job training in working towards an NVQ at level 2. Most learners achieve NVQs at level 2 in the workplace. Training and assessment for the NVQ at level 3 and key skills is provided in the workplace, with some key skills training and assessment carried out at ProCo. Off-the-job training towards technical certificates is provided by subcontractor local further education colleges and by ProCo.

6. There are two engineering learners from minority ethnic groups. There are five female engineering learners and 13 learners who have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities.

7. Learners receive an initial assessment at the start of their programme. Learners who are identified as having additional learning needs are supported by their training consultant and ProCo's support staff. Induction to ProCo's programmes takes place both in the training centre and in the workplace. Learners' skills and knowledge are assessed during regular work-based visits by ProCo's training consultants.

Business administration, management & professional

8. ProCo offers apprenticeships in business administration. There are 82 apprentices and 36 advanced apprentices in business administration. In addition, there are five apprentices and 13 advanced apprentices in accounting with two apprentices working towards the NVQ at level 4 accounting technician qualification. The accounting programme is delivered through subcontracting arrangements with local colleges of further education. All learners are employed and some of them work in various departments of the local council. Others work in a variety of organisations, including accounting practices, housing associations, solicitors and estate agents. ProCo also offers New Deal self-employment route. There are 21 learners in the test trading Stage Three. A further five learners are on ETP. Some training programmes are delivered with another organisation.

9. Learners are able to join the apprenticeship programme at any time of the year. Recruitment is through referrals from Connexions, schools and direct contacts from employers. All learners attend a one-day induction programme at the training centre. Learners have the opportunity to attend day-release at the training centre for work towards the technical certificate. A team of eight training consultants visit the learners every two to three weeks to carry out work-based assessment and to provide support for portfolio-building and key skills development. Learners' progress reviews are completed every six weeks with the assessor and the workplace supervisor. Learners have a planned programme of off-the-job training at the training centre to complete the technical certificate. Learners on the New Deal self-employment programme are recruited through Jobcentre Plus.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

10. There are 50 learners in this occupational area. Eight learners are in customer service, five are in warehousing, and three are in call handling. Thirty-four learners are on an ETP programme. Two learners are working towards an advanced apprenticeship and five learners are working towards an apprenticeship in customer service. In warehousing, the five learners are working towards an apprenticeship. The three learners in call handling are on an NVQ at level 2 programme. All learners are employed. Training consultants visit the learners in the workplaces every two or three weeks. Learners regularly attend the training centre for their key skills training, and carry out on-the-job occupational training. The ETP provision is delivered in two parts and the warehousing programme is delivered by ProCo's engineering training consultants. The second part of customer service is carried out by the customer service and business administration ProCo training consultants. All ETP training is delivered on the job.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

11. ProCo provides hairdressing training for learners in 15 salons. Of the 25 learners, seven are advanced apprentices and 18 are apprentices. All learners are employed in salons within the Bolton and Wigan area. Learners attend off-the-job training at local subcontractor colleges of further education. The remainder of training occurs in the employing salon. The ProCo training consultant visits learners' workplaces to carry out learners' progress reviews and assessments. Key skills and the technical certificate are integral to the training. Apprentice and advanced apprentice programmes are planned to take two years. ProCo recruits learners by direct contact with employers, after referral by Connexions and by promoting work-based learning in schools.

Foundation programmes

12. There are 51 learners on E2E, which is a programme designed for young people aged 16-18 who are not yet ready to enter mainstream training education and/or employment. Learners have many barriers to progress, which may include poor literacy or numeracy skills, attendance problems, low self-esteem and challenging behaviour. Ninety-four per cent are male learners.

13. Learners are referred to the programme by Connexions and can join the programme each month. They follow a range of programme options including personal, social and basic skills development, with vocational options in motor vehicle, engineering, joinery, brickwork, plastering and hairdressing. Attendance on the programme is for between 16 and 24 hours each week.

14. All new learners receive a six-week induction to the programme, during which their needs are assessed and objectives developed to set individual programmes of learning and support. Most of the learners have additional needs, with 83 per cent having been assessed as at entry level 3 or below for literacy and 86 per cent at entry level 3 or below for numeracy.

15. Learners' progress is measured every four weeks. Added value activities such as visits and outdoor activities take place every two weeks. There are five and a half members of staff responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the programme. They report directly to the E2E manager.

16. There are 18 learners on New Deal for Young People in literacy, numeracy and language skills option for up to 26 weeks. These learners work towards accredited literacy and numeracy qualifications. Eleven learners are subcontracted to another provider and five are in-house. The in-house provision has been in operation since December 2004. All four leavers from subcontracted provision gained employment.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of inspectors | 14 |
| Number of inspection days | 56 |
| Number of learners interviewed | 110 |
| Number of staff interviewed | 119 |
| Number of employers interviewed | 73 |
| Number of subcontractors interviewed | 5 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 1 |
| Number of partners/external agencies interviewed | 2 |
| Number of visits | 73 |

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

17. The overall quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the leadership and management of ProCo are unsatisfactory. Its equality of opportunity arrangements are good, but its quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in business administration, management and professional, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and foundation programmes are satisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in construction, engineering, technology and manufacturing, and retailing, customer service and transportation is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

| Construction | | 4 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| Construction crafts | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 268 | 4 |
| Building services | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 44 | 4 |

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| Engineering, technology & manufacturing | | 4 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 82 | 4 |
| <i>Mechanical engineering</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 116 | 4 |
| <i>Electrical engineering</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 20 | 4 |
| <i>Manufacturing</i> - Work-based learning for adults | 10 | 4 |
| <i>Other contributory areas</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 11 | None |

| Business administration, management & professional | | 3 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Business administration</i> - Apprenticeships for young people - New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults - Other government-funded provision | 118 21 5 | 3 3 None |
| <i>Accounting and economics</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 20 | 3 |

| Retailing, customer service & transportation | | 4 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Customer service</i> - Employer training pilot - Apprenticeships for young people | 34 8 | 4 4 |
| <i>Warehousing and distribution</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 5 | 4 |
| <i>Call centre operations</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 3 | 4 |

| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | | 3 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Hairdressing</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 25 | 3 |

| Foundation programmes | | 3 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Employability/employment training</i> - Entry to Employment | 51 | 3 |
| - New Deal for young people | 18 | 3 |

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

18. **Learners gain good occupational skills.** In particular, on the engineering programme learners develop good practical skills quickly in a supportive and safe environment. Some learners are encouraged by their employer to strip down an electrical generator, measure its component parts and draw these for their work logbook. In foundation programmes there is a good range of occupational skills development. These include a wide range of trades in construction, engineering and hairdressing in which E2E learners can develop appropriate skills.

19. **Learners achieved good, planned learning outcomes for New Deal literacy, numeracy and language skills, and full-time education and training provision in 2002-03 and in 2003-04.**

20. Learners' progress from foundation programmes into further education, training or into employment is satisfactory.

21. Learners' portfolios of evidence are satisfactory in business administration. The better ones are clear, well organised and contain a good range of work-based information. Key skills assignments are well researched and demonstrate satisfactory learner progress in hairdressing. Learners' practical skills are at the required standard appropriate to their training.

22. **There is slow progress for some engineering learners.** Of the 407 advanced apprentices who started in the period 1997-98 to 2000-01, only 259 successfully completed and 38 are still in learning. Of the 58 apprentices who started in the period 2001-02 to 2003-04, only 16 successfully completed and 18 are still in learning.

23. **Achievement rates are poor on most apprenticeship programmes.** They are

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particularly poor in construction, engineering, and retailing. In construction, less than 30 per cent of learners have achieved an apprenticeship in a three-year period. In retailing, of the eight learners who started the apprenticeship in 2003, none completed the framework. Achievement rates on the advanced apprenticeship are poor in business administration and hairdressing.

Quality of education and training

24. Of the learning sessions observed, over 87 per cent were satisfactory or better.
25. **Support for learners is good in all occupational areas.** It is particularly effective in construction, engineering, and in foundation programmes. In all occupational areas learners are visited frequently. Training consultants respond very promptly to requests for help or extra visits to learners and provide good individual support. Learners are able to contact training consultants at most times during the week or in some cases on weekends. In engineering, training consultants work effectively with employers to support learners to overcome personal problems and barriers to their learning. In foundation programmes, learners benefit from the positive and supportive working environment where staff skilfully raise their learners' aspirations and self-esteem.
26. **There is good promotion of diversity, especially in construction.** In line with the provider's own strategic planning for widening participation, employers have actively and successfully recruited higher-than-expected numbers of female learners into a male-dominated occupational area.
27. **Links with employers who provide training are particularly good in business administration.** The wide range of employer links enables the provider to identify suitable job roles which meet the individual needs of their learners.
28. **On- and off-the-job resources in hairdressing are good.** On-the-job salons offer learners particularly effective opportunities to develop sales and hairdressing techniques in a commercial setting. Off-the-job salons are equipped to high industry standards and provide the learners with a stimulating learning environment.
29. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory in all the occupational areas.
30. **There are insufficient learning materials for customer service learners.** Each training consultant has just one textbook that they can loan to learners.
31. **Learners' progress reviews are weak in retailing and in foundation New Deal programmes.** They do not provide learners with a clear understanding of their progress. Targets that are set are neither appropriate nor challenging for the learner to achieve before the next review. In the case of New Deal programmes they are not routinely monitored to measure learners' progress and achievement.

32. Assessment arrangements for construction and engineering are insufficient.

Construction has awarding body restrictions in place which prevent the provider from claiming learners' NVQs. In engineering, assessment is poorly planned, lacks appropriate target-setting for evidence gathering and timely monitoring of learners' achievements.

33. The scaffolding programme in construction is poorly managed. Learners on the programme have not been initially assessed of their abilities nor have an individual learning plan. Learners are uncertain of the requirements of NVQ programme and of their progress on it to date.

34. There is weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in hairdressing. Employers receive details of the college training and copies of learners' progress reviews but this has little influence on the direction of salon training to allow learners to practise and reinforce learning they gain off the job.

35. Arrangements for technical certificates in retailing are inadequate. Training consultants have a poor understanding of the technical certificate requirements. A consultancy service is assisting the provider in identifying the training requirement for this award.

36. The literacy, numeracy and language skills provision in foundation programmes is incomplete. Extended diagnostic assessment is not carried out to further identify learners' needs. No meaningful targets are set for learners' needs. Progress reviews in this area are ineffective and there is insufficient action-planning.

37. Insufficient time or supervision is allocated to learning in New Deal for Young People in literacy, numeracy and language skills. The in-house provision is providing insufficient hours to cater for learners' individual needs or contractual requirements.

Leadership and management

38. There are particularly clear strategic direction, goals and values in the company. The board has given good strategic direction since the merger. It works closely with senior management to monitor ProCo's strategic direction and goals. The company's vision and mission is successfully communicated to staff and they have a good understanding of company strategy and priorities, including the value it places on connections with the local community and industry. There has been a thorough appraisal of systems and constructive assessment of the strengths and expertise of the new organisation. Staff have been encouraged to contribute to the development of the new organisation and they identify closely with their new organisation.

39. There are good links with external agencies. ProCo is one of two companies associated with the local economic regeneration partnership for the borough. ProCo uses this partnership for the benefit of its learners. ProCo is an active member of the local training provider network group that has established a good practice network for local training companies. Learners, businesses and the local community benefit from these close working relationships. There are many other productive links which benefit

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their learners, and possible potential learners, that includes a partnership with a group of schools and colleges in Wigan that aims to raise the profile of work-based learning.

40. There is good staff training and development. The well-developed bi-annual staff performance development review system assesses performance against job description and progress towards identified objectives and targets. Training needs analyses are carried out for staff and this is used effectively at their performance development review with their line manager, where individual development and training plans are agreed. Staff find regular development opportunities both helpful and supportive. Training is clearly linked to business objectives.

41. There is poor operational management of varying levels in all occupational areas. These include poor achievement in construction, engineering, and retailing and, to a lesser extent, in business administration and hairdressing. In construction, there are insufficient arrangements for on-site assessment, inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace and poor management of the scaffolding programme. Insufficient time or supervision is allocated to learning on foundation programmes and weak co-ordination is a feature of on- and off-the-job training in hairdressing. Learners in retailing have incomplete arrangements for technical certificates and insufficient learning resources and in engineering, learners have late implementation of key skills training. In foundation programmes there is incomplete monitoring of subcontractors.

42. The quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently developed. Quality assurance procedures cover the essential training processes and staff have access to them through the company's intranet. These procedures are currently receiving a major change in format. The new format identifies individual responsibilities for parts of the process and relevant documents needed to complete the process. Inspection found weaknesses in quality assurance practice and in the use of some assessment practice and documents. It is too early to judge whether the quality assurance system will produce continuous improvements.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly clear strategic direction, goals and values
- good staff training and development
- good links with external agencies
- particularly effective equality of opportunity arrangements

Weaknesses

- poor operational management
- insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements

Construction

Construction crafts

Strengths

- particularly good learner support
- good action to widen learner participation

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient arrangements for on-site assessment
- poor management of the scaffolding programme
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace

Building services

Strengths

- particularly good learner support
- good action to widen learner participation

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient arrangements for on-site assessment
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Motor vehicle/cycle

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

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Mechanical engineering

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

Electrical engineering

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

Manufacturing

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration

Strengths

- good individual support for learners
- good links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates in advanced apprenticeships

Accounting and economics

Strengths

- good individual support for learners
- good links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates in advanced apprenticeships

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Customer service

Strengths

- good assessment practice
- good individual support

Weaknesses

- poor apprentice achievement rates
- ineffective learners' progress reviews
- inadequate arrangements for technical certificates
- incomplete internal verification system in customer service
- insufficient learning resources in customer service

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Warehousing and distribution

Strengths

- good assessment practice
- good individual support

Weaknesses

- poor apprentice achievement rates
- ineffective learners' progress reviews

Call centre operations

Strengths

- good assessment practice
- good individual support

Weaknesses

- poor apprentice achievement rates
- ineffective learners' progress reviews

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good on- and off-the-job resources
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- poor advanced apprenticeships achievement rates
- weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Foundation programmes

Employability/employment training

Strengths

- good outcomes for New Deal for Young People in literacy, numeracy and language skills
- additional qualifications available for New Deal clients
- particularly effective support for learners
- strong effective partnerships
- good range of vocational skills development

Weaknesses

- incomplete provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills
- weak co-ordination of E2E core strands
- weak New Deal client reviews
- incomplete monitoring of the subcontractor
- insufficient time or supervision allocated to learning

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WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT PROCO:

- the support provided by training consultants
- the good support from employers for training
- the gaining of vocational experience and a qualification
- the standard of practical training sessions
- the helpful tutors at college

WHAT LEARNERS THINK PROCO COULD IMPROVE:

- the training facilities at ProCo
- the standard of key skills training sessions
- better planning in the use of their time and timetabling at college

KEY CHALLENGES FOR PROCO:

- improve achievement rates for modern apprentices
- develop quality assurance systems to cover all aspects of training
- develop operational areas of management
- improve assessment practice

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- particularly clear strategic direction, goals and values
- good staff training and development
- good links with external agencies
- particularly effective equality of opportunity arrangements

Weaknesses

- poor operational management
- insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements

43. The board has provided good strategic direction since the merger. It has recently been restructured to provide a better focus on business strategy and works closely with senior management to monitor ProCo's strategic direction and goals. The company's vision and mission is successfully communicated to staff through briefing sessions held off site. Staff have a good understanding of the company's strategy and priorities, including the value it places on connections with the local community and industry. There has been a thorough appraisal of systems and constructive assessment of the strengths and expertise of the new organisation. Staff have been encouraged to contribute to the development of the new organisation. They have a strong commitment to learners. Staff speak positively of the open style of management that has enabled them to be involved in the formation of the new company. ProCo has an active staff consultative committee that has been instrumental in harmonising the company's new terms and conditions of employment for staff from two formerly diverse organisations. Staff identify closely with their new organisation.

44. ProCo has a well-developed bi-annual staff performance development review system that assesses performance against job description and progress towards identified objectives and targets. This was recognised in the company's most recent self-assessment report. Training needs analyses are carried out for staff and this is used effectively at their performance development review with their line manager, where individual development and training plans are agreed. This includes equal opportunities and key skills training and many staff have achieved or are working towards a wide range of relevant qualifications. Staff find regular development opportunities both helpful and supportive. A comprehensive learning plan is produced from the performance development process and the human resources department provides managers with useful monthly training reports. Training is clearly linked to business objectives. This includes ProCo's skills for life strategic priority, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, from which key staff have recently started relevant training. ProCo is working towards the Investors in People award, which is a

nationally recognised standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

45. ProCo has good links with a variety of agencies. It is one of two companies associated with the local economic regeneration partnership for the borough. ProCo uses this partnership for the benefit of its learners. ProCo is an active member of the local training provider network group, which has established a good practice network for local training companies. Learners, businesses and the local community benefit from these close working relationships. ProCo also has good links with another training provider network of which has enabled the sharing of good practice. ProCo has representation on the equal opportunities, quality assurance and skills for life groups of the Learning and Skills Development Agency and also the local learning partnership. ProCo is a member of a local E2E partnership that successfully bid for a pre-E2E programme funded by the European Social Fund that is now being delivered by the partnership. ProCo recently hosted a Construction Industry Training Board/Jobcentre Plus open day for construction workers claiming incapacity benefit to inform them how they could become much-needed assessors in construction. ProCo is involved in a partnership group of schools and colleges in Wigan that aims to raise the profile of work-based learning.

46. ProCo has merged two teams of administrators and staff into a useful management information team. A wide variety of monthly reports are sent to managers, training consultants, board members and internal verifiers. These include a profile report that lists each training consultant's learners, details from learners' progress review reports, and lists review dates and comprehensive performance information, including starters and achiever information. ProCo has identified a number of useful targets that managers review regularly. However, ProCo makes inadequate use of management information to monitor trend analysis and quality assurance data against the business plan. There are no adequate strategies to drive improvements in learners' retention and achievement rates and improve operational management.

47. The strategy and implementation for literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory. However, there is weak basic skills provision in the in-house New Deal provision. The company has started working on a skills for life plan, but it is too early to judge its impact on learners.

48. Communications are satisfactory. There is a system of regular, structured meetings that have standard agenda items. Comprehensive minutes are taken and circulated to all relevant staff. Well-detailed action points are dealt with effectively. Staff use meetings to exchange information and often share good practice. ProCo's intranet is widely used by staff as an essential communications system to access and store information. Staff have access to many policies and procedures that include quality assurance policies and procedures, the development plan and business plan through the intranet.

49. Financial management is generally satisfactory. ProCo is financially sound and has achieved a surplus since its formation.

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50. The monitoring of subcontractors is a weakness that the company identifies in its most recent self-assessment report and it is still weak in foundation programmes. A new service level agreement has recently been introduced to its subcontractor colleges. This has resulted in some improved communications and a closer working relationship. A new questionnaire has been introduced to obtain feedback from subcontractors to identify areas for improvement.

51. There is some inadequate monitoring of health and safety, especially in the hazardous area of construction. The health and safety manager is responsible for work placements. Employers have an adequate initial assessment visit, which includes a health and safety audit, review of the employers' insurance policies and a risk assessment. Equal opportunities policies are also checked. The visits are recorded and reviewed according to their risk banding.

52. There is poor operational management in dealing with key areas of occupational weakness. These include poor achievement in construction, engineering, and retailing and to a lesser extent in business administration and hairdressing. In construction there are insufficient arrangements for on-site assessment, inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace, and poor management of the scaffolding programme. Insufficient time or supervision is allocated to learning on foundation programmes and weak co-ordination is a feature of on- and off-the-job training in hairdressing. Learners in retailing have incomplete arrangements for delivery of the technical certificates and insufficient learning resources, and in engineering, learners have late implementation of key skills training.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

53. Senior management and staff are fully committed to equality of opportunity and implement actions to improve equality of opportunity in the company and to its learners. The chief executive provides strong direction on equality of opportunity. ProCo has achieved several national and regional awards for its work in promoting equality of opportunity. The clearly written and recently updated equality of opportunity policy defines well what equality of opportunity and diversity means in the organisation and to its learners. Further supplementary policies are in place that extend the main policy and include a disability and work-life balance and working time regulations. This allows staff to have flexible work arrangements and to meet their family commitments. There are also good procedures for protecting learners and staff from harassment and bullying in the workplace. Equality of opportunity is a set agenda item at most staff and management meetings. A team drawn from most areas of ProCo meets monthly to look at developments and concerns in equality of opportunity. All these details are contained in ProCo's equality of opportunity staff files, which includes details of how to make complaints. To date, few learners have made formal complaints.

54. Recruitment and selection of staff and learners are fair, transparent and consistent in application. They include actions to counter any existing stereotyping with an area of learning. There is use of management information to set challenging targets in areas of learning that have led to improvements in widening participation of under-represented

groups of learners. Notable successes have been achieved in construction, with the recruitment of higher-than-expected numbers of female learners and, in foundation programmes, lone parents and learners from minority ethnic groups. Minority ethnic groups only form about 1 per cent of the local population but ProCo is working to increase learner numbers from these groups and its present numbers exceed that found in the local population. The company is assisting recent asylum seekers who have relocated to Wigan to find training. In business administration, staff provide good support to learners with profound physical impairments as part of their diversity procedures.

55. Learners' attendance and punctuality are monitored carefully to identify those at risk of leaving their programme. There is use of appropriate learning styles in training to meet the varying needs of learners. Effective use is made of training and support staff to aid those learners who require additional help in their training or in coping with personal problems. ProCo has useful partnerships with various support and careers agencies that benefit the learners, including specialist staff for counselling learners.

56. Equality of opportunity is reinforced to learners by training consultants using what is called a 'toolbox' review, which examines six themes related to this area. During the inspection, the theme was racism. Training consultants are observed and monitored in their delivery of equality of opportunity information and the company applies procedures to ensure appropriate and consistent standards. Most learners have a clear understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity.

57. Promotional materials are clearly written in plain English but they do not contain a statement by ProCo on its commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity. They are produced for the different areas of learning but none is produced in Braille or in local community languages. ProCo has recognised these weaknesses and has recently appointed a communications manager to rectify these weaknesses.

58. Managers recognise that there is insufficient monitoring and analysis of different learner groups that measures performance and leads to action-planning and improvements in the training provision. The company is developing plans to improve monitoring.

59. Most accommodation has been adapted to allow easy access for all, including wheelchair users. Modifications to facilitate good access to one building are well advanced.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

60. ProCo's most recent self-assessment report is satisfactory. Staff, learners and employers contribute to the self-assessment process. Strengths and weaknesses identified within the self-assessment report are included with a comprehensive development plan. The development plan is used effectively to monitor progress against actions and to identify additional strengths and weaknesses. The development plan is updated monthly and is available on the company's intranet. The development plan is

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used to update the self-assessment report and to keep developments in line with the business plan. It provides staff with a clear focus on the company's strategy and goals. The development plan is an agenda item for meetings and is included on internal verification, key skills, management and quality group meetings. ProCo has produced one self-assessment report since its formation and was drafting a second self-assessment report at time of the inspection.

61. ProCo has recently developed a quality assurance schedule that contains some detailed quality assurance activities for the company. The quality assurance manager circulates monthly activity sheets that identify tasks, responsibilities and completion dates. This includes observations of key processes, from recruitment to exit guidance, reviews of schemes of work and lesson plans, and the impact on the company of quality assurance by the senior management team. This includes a review of budgets, service level agreements and the business plan. Quality assurance procedures are also reviewed across the range of learning programmes and their activities. In-depth file audits and file spot-checks are adequately planned.

62. ProCo has satisfactory arrangements for collecting and analysing feedback. These include bi-annual feedback from learners and employers, and interviews with learners who train in subcontracted colleges. Staff, learners' and employers' feedback are also obtained by questionnaires and by telephone. Information gained is analysed systematically and used by the quality group for improvements. The quality assurance officer is responsible for quality assuring the learning processes and obtaining feedback from learners and employers. The quality assurance team are aware of the importance of feedback and it has recently engaged the services of a consultant to improve the otherwise poor response to quality questionnaires. The quality assurance group receives regular analysis from course evaluations that have led to improvements. This includes feedback from a staff training programme that led to a course being extended and made more widely available.

63. The arrangements for internal verification are unsatisfactory. In engineering there is weak assessment practice that centres mainly on answers to background knowledge questions. Target-setting and monitoring in engineering assessment are also weak. In retailing, internal verification is incomplete, as no occupational specialist is a qualified internal verifier. The lead verifier is responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment and internal verification process. A standardised assessment filing system has been established in each occupational area which contains appropriate information. The lead verifier conducts bi-annual audits. Internal verifiers have relevant qualifications. The internal verification policy is clear and the internal verifier works to a plan which covers all programme units and assessors. Written summaries of internal verification are produced and copies are given to the relevant assessor. Most awarding body requirements are fulfilled adequately.

64. ProCo has insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements. The quality assurance manager has responsibility for the quality assurance system and is supported by a quality assurance officer and a lead internal verifier. Quality assurance procedures cover the essential training processes and staff have access to them through the

company's intranet. These procedures are currently going through a major change in format. The new format identifies individual responsibilities for parts of the process and relevant documents needed to complete the process. Monthly quality group meetings have representation from all parts of the company and are a forum for sharing good practice. However, the inspection team found weaknesses in quality assurance practice and in the use of some assessment practice and documentation. At the time of inspection there had been one quality audit cycle carried out by the quality assurance team that had identified some improvements. It is too early to judge whether the quality assurance system will produce continuous improvements.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

| Construction | | 4 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| Construction crafts - Apprenticeships for young people | 268 | 4 |
| Building services - Apprenticeships for young people | 44 | 4 |

Construction crafts

Strengths

- particularly good learner support
- good action to widen learner participation

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient arrangements for on-site assessment
- poor management of the scaffolding programme
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace

Building services

Strengths

- particularly good learner support
- good action to widen learner participation

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient arrangements for on-site assessment
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace

Achievement and standards

65. Achievement rates are poor, with many learners not completing the apprenticeship frameworks. For the three years from 1999-2002, 77 learners completed their advanced apprenticeship framework from a total of 279 starts, which represents some 28 per cent. In the same period, 62 learners completed their apprenticeship from a total of 207 starts, which represents some 30 per cent, and of 146 NVQ enrolments, 57 or 39 per cent achieved. Current learners develop good practical skills in the workplace and many produce good-quality work that meets industry standards. They are set demanding

targets by their employers, which closely reflect those within the target NVQ. Learners work closely with qualified tradespeople and quickly develop skills that allow active participation in the workplace. This motivates learners and promotes confidence and self-esteem. Retention is satisfactory and shows an improving trend.

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|-----------|----|-----|---|-----|---|
| Advanced apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 49 | | 43 | | 65 | | 77 | | 102 | | 110 | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 9 | | 10 | | 40 | | 45 | 44 | 42 | 38 | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 3 | | 8 | | 28 | | 26 | 25 | 23 | 21 | | | | |
| Still in learning | 48 | | 32 | | 28 | | 11 | | 11 | 11 | 4 | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 49 | | 93 | | 110 | | 82 | | 49 | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 4 | | 58 | | 51 | 62 | 26 | 53 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 0 | | 11 | | 22 | 27 | 14 | 29 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 42 | | 71 | | 43 | | 8 | 10 | 2 | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| NVQ Training | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | | | 10 | | 38 | | 75 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | | | 0 | 0 | 13 | 34 | 21 | 28 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | | | 0 | 0 | 6 | 16 | 17 | 23 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | | | 6 | 60 | 5 | 13 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |

*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

66. There is satisfactory initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills and, where necessary, learners are provided with appropriate support. The results

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of initial assessment are clearly recorded on individual learning plans. Learners have a good awareness of the initial assessment process.

67. Learners have a good level of support from training consultants for both pastoral and learning needs. Regular visits are made to learners from training consultants who are readily available to assist learners with their training and any personal problems. Part of this effective support includes the close liaison between the training consultant and employers. Success is celebrated by the provider and employers. For example, one employer holds an apprentice of the year award. Training programmes are well co-ordinated with input from employers, college, provider staff, and the learner. Learners are given a comprehensive review that records achievement, progress, key equal opportunities issues such as racism, and short-term targets linked to the workplace. Many employers have worked with the provider for a number of years and have developed together excellent working relationships and learning opportunities. Provider staff and employers collaborate to move the learners to different employers to ensure the development of competence across the range of skills.

68. There is good action to widen participation from under-represented groups of learners in education and training. In line with ProCo's own strategic planning for widening participation, employers have encouraged the recruitment of female learners into a male-dominated area. ProCo has effectively developed a construction programme to meet the needs of the local community by offering a programme for 33 women to train as kitchen fitters.

69. There is a wide range of construction programmes offered, from entry level through to level 3. Learners are able to progress between these levels. There is also a provision for 14-16 school pupils. ProCo promotes the construction industry to these learners.

70. The overall standard of teaching and learning in construction is satisfactory. Practical sessions are good, and learners work closely with qualified tradespeople and develop skills that enable their active participation in the workplace to industry standards. Background knowledge sessions are disadvantaged by classrooms that lack teaching resources such as whiteboards or overhead projectors. Sessions are predominantly tutor led, and there is an over-reliance on text-based resources which do not deal with differing learners' needs. The arrangements to develop the learners' key skills are satisfactory.

71. Although learners are gathering evidence in the workplace, there are too few visits by assessors to observe them at work. This slows progress towards achievement and fails to maximise the opportunity for assessment. Most site assessment is carried out by witness testimony and the use of photographs. Employers and workplace supervisors are acting as work-based recorders for the learners, but few have had training or guidance to enhance this role. Most employers are unaware of the requirements or importance of evidence from the workplace.

72. The scaffolding programme is poorly managed. Learners have started on the scaffold programme without an initial assessment of their abilities or the completion of an individual learning plan. Learners are unable to describe the requirements of the NVQ

and are unsure of progress that they may have made on the programme. ProCo is unaware of how and when site assessment will take place. Interim targets that could help to measure learners' progress have not been set.

73. Some poor assessment and internal verification practice by the previous assessment team have resulted in the awarding body applying restrictions on the centre's ability to claim NVQ certificates directly. This weakness was not identified by the provider's quality assurance procedures until a claim for certificates was rejected by the awarding body. However, the quality assurance manager has produced and implemented a development plan that has greatly improved the situation. These improvements include additional internal verification and support for new assessors. The centre has developed a good relationship with the external verifier to ensure that NVQ certificates can be claimed through this person.

74. Arrangements for monitoring health and safety in the workplace are insufficient. Inspectors visited one work placement that had not been formally monitored for more than a year. Documents show that this employer had been incorrectly appraised for health and safety. Inspectors found that the learner with this employer was involved in some unsafe working practices. Neither the employer nor the learner were aware of any tools or machinery that the learner was prohibited to use. Although the learners' progress review is used to discuss issues of health and safety, this is restricted to the recording of accidents and the use of protective equipment. The review is used ineffectively to monitor or appraise the working environment.

Leadership and management

75. Operational management is weak. Achievement rates are poor, on-site assessment is inadequate, management of the scaffolding programme is poor and monitoring of health and safety is inadequate. There are regular team meetings run by the programme manager. Minutes of the meetings are produced with action points, which identify who is responsible for the actions. These meetings are used to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the construction provision and to build on these to develop an inclusive self-assessment report and development plan. There have been many initiatives to deal with the issues facing the new organisation. All the processes and procedures have been rewritten in the past 12 months and are currently being reviewed and updated. The quality assurance arrangements have highlighted many areas for development, but the arrangements are insufficiently developed. There has been a high turnover of staff. There is some good staff training and development. However, there is insufficient attention to teacher training for the new tutors/assessors. The management information system produces a wide range of data but it is not well used by the team. Some of the data is not complete, such as the lack of progress achieved by the learners towards their qualifications.

76. The monitoring of subcontractors is adequate. Seventy per cent of the learners attend three local colleges for their off-the-job training. There is adequate attention to the quality of the teaching and learning. The provider receives regular internal and external verification reports and summative lesson observation reports. The attention to equality

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of opportunity is good. It is well covered at induction and reinforced well at each progress review. A different topic is chosen at each review to generate a discussion with the learner. However, the employer is not present at these discussions and there is little reinforcement of equality of opportunity to employers.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

| Engineering, technology & manufacturing | | 4 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 82 | 4 |
| <i>Mechanical engineering</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 116 | 4 |
| <i>Electrical engineering</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 20 | 4 |
| <i>Manufacturing</i> - Work-based learning for adults | 10 | 4 |
| <i>Other contributory areas</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 11 | None |

Motor vehicle/cycle

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

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Mechanical engineering

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

Electrical engineering

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

Manufacturing

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- some weak assessment practice
- late implementation of key skills

Achievement and standards

77. There are poor achievement rates for apprentices. The framework achievements for advanced apprentices over a five-year period are consistently below 50 per cent, while for apprentices over a three-year period the achievements are around 50 per cent.

78. There is slow progress for some learners. Of the 407 advanced apprentices who started in the period 1997-98 to 2000-01, only 259 successfully completed and 38 are still in learning. Of the 58 apprentices who started in the period 2001-02 to 2003-04, only 16 successfully completed and 18 are still in learning.

79. There is good on-the-job training in engineering. Employers provide a wide range of learning opportunities for learners to achieve their NVQs at level 2 and 3. Learners develop good practical skills quickly and effectively in a supportive and safe environment. Some employers have structured training programmes that greatly enhance safe and effective training opportunities. One company encourages learners to strip down a stand-by electrical generator, measure its component parts and draw these for their work logbooks. Some employers have mentors nominated to carry out training and provide individual support for learners.

80. Learners produce good-quality portfolios that are well presented and contain a range of suitable evidence. Tutors encourage learners to ensure that their portfolios are well structured and contain much of their own work completed during off-the-job training sessions. There is a regular review and evidence is checked for accuracy and authenticity.

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|-----------|----|---------|----|---------|----|
| Advanced apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | | 1997-98 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 18 | | 54 | | 67 | | 52 | | 76 | | 104 | | 120 | | 109 | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 0 | | 16 | | 12 | | 39 | 51 | 56 | 54 | 74 | 62 | 57 | 52 |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 0 | | 6 | | 7 | | 19 | 25 | 33 | 32 | 69 | 57 | 46 | 42 |
| Still in learning | 18 | | 40 | | 42 | | 17 | | 18 | 24 | 14 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 26 | | 43 | | 25 | | 33 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 3 | | 12 | | 22 | 67 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 3 | | 4 | | 13 | 39 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 24 | | 31 | | 11 | | 6 | 18 | | | | | | | | |

*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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 1 | | 2 | | 18 | | 15 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 2 | 100 | 10 | 56 | 10 | 67 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 2 | 100 | 9 | 50 | 10 | 67 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 1 | | 1 | 50 | 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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Employer training pilot | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 5 | | 14 | | 26 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 11 | 79 | 18 | 69 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 6 | 43 | 18 | 69 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 5 | | 6 | 43 | 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

81. ProCo has effective links with a range of good-quality employers who are interested in training young people to become skilled members of their workforce. Employers offer learners the opportunity to acquire a wide range of skills while working with modern tools, machinery and up-to-date technology. Employers involve learners in all aspects of the company and ensure that they are treated equally with other members of staff. One learner has been appointed as the company's apprentice representative and has also been invited to be a member of the management health and safety committee. Some employers offer learners the opportunity to take part in their own training programmes to enhance their studies and increase their knowledge and skills. In one company the college day-release programme was not dealing with the immediate needs of the company for the development of hand skills and basic machine safety knowledge. ProCo negotiated an extra day at the college to provide learners with this additional training. The employers are paying for the extra training, and ProCo is currently negotiating with the college to change the learners' programme in year two to a more appropriate level which meets the learners' and employers' needs.

82. There is very good support for learners. Tutors and assessors make many visits to employers' premises, in addition to those made for formal assessment and progress review. They have excellent relationships with employers and have been working with some for many years. Training consultants and employers work well together to support

learners to overcome personal problems and barriers to their learning. Learners feel valued within their company. Tutors effectively use external agencies to refer learners where specialist support is needed. One learner had a poor working relationship with his workplace supervisor and the company was able to move the learner to a different car body repair shop in another location. Another learner who had completed his NVQ at level 2 in vehicle body repair and paint received a custodial sentence but was supported by the provider at this time to gain his key skills at level 2.

83. Learners identified through the initial assessment process, or identified by tutors as needing additional learning support, take part in a diagnostic assessment which leads to a detailed personal profile and provides the basis for a detailed individual learning/action plan. The support given is appropriate. The tutor focuses on areas of weakness and accurately records learners' progress to agreed targets. Good use is made of learning materials that are industry related and use is made of some effective learning materials for learners who cannot attend training sessions. The additional learning support facility is extended for some learners that need special assistance, when working at NVQ levels 2 and 3. There are 13 learners attending literacy and/or numeracy classes.

84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors make the aims and objectives clear to learners at the start of training sessions. They are planned and adequate learning materials are available. Tutors give clear explanations of topics and make good use of practical examples and analogies to ensure learners' understanding. In one lesson, the effect of resistors in electrical circuits was likened to a narrowing water pipe that reduced the flow. Tutors make good use of worksheets, transparencies and television and video-recorder facilities for learning. There is some effective team teaching. In the less effective sessions, there is insufficient questioning of learners to test their understanding of topics, and learners are allowed to adopt a passive role and do not contribute to the learning experience. In one session, the delivery of the subject was dull and most uninspiring. There was overuse of closed questions, and insufficient time given for learners to respond adequately to questions posed. There are insufficient opportunities to check for previous learning. Lesson planning is vague and does not apportion times to key areas of the session. The learner outcomes are general and the content is too tutor-centred.

85. Resources are satisfactory. Tutors are qualified and have many years' industrial experience. An effective professional development programme is in place and tutors routinely update their skills to meet awarding body requirements. Classrooms are adequate and contain suitable furniture and teaching aids for the size of learner groups. A small canteen for learners is available for their use. Workshop equipment is old and at the end of its useful working life. The awarding body has identified the need to modernise the mechanical engineering workshop and to meet their requirements for a centre approved to deliver this training. ProCo has recognised this and plans are in place to resolve this weakness. An engineer has the responsibility and the time to implement the necessary improvements to the workshop.

86. Learning plans are incomplete and do not contain all the details of the learners' training. Mandatory units of NVQs are recorded but not the optional units. Learning plans are not kept up to date and fail to record accurately unit achievement dates or key

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skills progress. Targets for completion of NVQ units are unrealistic. Learners' progress reviews fail to set realistic and measurable targets with many stating only, 'carry on collecting evidence'. Tutors use assessment documents to record progress and targets. This leads to confusion and a lack of understanding of the learners' progress review process and its importance in ensuring that learners achieve their learning goals within a realistic time period.

87. Some assessment practices are weak. Assessment planning focuses on the generation of responses to background knowledge questions. Targets are not specific or time related. Few specific targets are set for the generation of performance evidence. Monitoring focuses on which units of competence the learners are working towards but lacks details of actual learner achievement and areas of attained competence until the end of the planned programme. Completed assessments are not recorded until full NVQ requirements are met. Internal verification is satisfactory. The procedures are to awarding body standards, they are well documented, and when correctly used they are effective. The procedures and monitoring of internal verification practice are improving. However, previous internal verification procedures has not identified poor assessment practice.

Leadership and management

88. Since the merger of the two providers just over a year ago, the management team has tried to improve the quality of the provision and introduce new quality assurance procedures. A new internal verification system has been introduced and is beginning to show some improvements but there is still some weak assessment practice. However, there is no initiative to improve the poor achievement rates and the slow progress of many learners. Tutors work well within their teams but there is little sharing of good practice between teams.

89. There is late implementation of key skills in the training programmes. Key skills are normally delivered at the end of learners' programmes by most subcontractor colleges. Achievements of key skills are poor and are a contributory factor in learners' slow framework achievements. To improve the key skills achievement, ProCo has recently transferred the delivery of this training to its training centre. This has proved a positive initiative to improve learners' achievement of their key skills requirements.

Business administration, management & professional

| Business administration, management & professional | | 3 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Business administration</i> | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 118 | 3 |
| - New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults | 21 | 3 |
| - Other government-funded provision | 5 | None |
| <i>Accounting and economics</i> | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 20 | 3 |

Business administration

Strengths

- good individual support for learners
- good links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates in advanced apprenticeships

Accounting and economics

Strengths

- good individual support for learners
- good links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates in advanced apprenticeships

Achievement and standards

90. Achievement rates of advanced apprentices are poor. However, since the implementation of the strategy to improve achievement, there are signs that learners are making better progress through their qualifications. Achievement of apprentices has improved and is satisfactory. Retention rates have increased gradually on both apprenticeship programmes and are satisfactory. Of the 114 learners recruited since 2003-04, 104 remain on the programme. Most learners make good progress against learning targets. On the New Deal self-employment route, progression into self-employment is good. The Jobcentre Plus achievement rate target of 30 per cent has been exceeded and is currently 75 per cent. Fifty per cent of the current Stage Three learners have successfully completed the test trading stage, which is satisfactory.

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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 apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 19 | | 35 | | 32 | | 32 | | 67 | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 9 | | 17 | | 11 | 34 | 18 | 27 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 3 | | 3 | | 1 | 3 | 9 | 13 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 19 | | 19 | | 8 | | 2 | 6 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | |

*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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 41 | | 70 | | 97 | | 87 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 34 | | 63 | 65 | 52 | 60 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 14 | | 42 | 43 | 44 | 51 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 38 | | 36 | | 13 | 13 | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 2 | | 2 | | 12 | | 30 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 2 | 100 | 10 | 83 | 26 | 87 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 2 | 100 | 8 | 67 | 23 | 77 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 2 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | |

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|-----|---------|-----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Employer training pilot | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 5 | | 2 | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 2 | 100 | 3 | 100 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 1 | 50 | 3 | 100 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 5 | | 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

Quality of education and training

91. Learners have access to good individual support from a well-qualified and experienced team of training consultants. Learners are visited every two to three weeks to plan and assess NVQ competence. At each visit a useful assessment action plan is completed, setting clear targets for the learners to achieve. Training consultants are effectively able to offer training on key skills and technical certificates for learners who do not attend off-the-job training sessions. Good learning materials have been developed to support this activity. Learners who are unable to complete coursework in the workplace value the opportunity to use laptop computers in the training centre. This facility aids progression and enhances learners' use of information technology (IT). Learners on accounting programmes at a local subcontractor college benefit from good links between the provider and the subcontractor. Monthly meetings take place between the training consultant and college staff. There is effective monitoring of attendance through weekly reports provided by the college. With the support of experienced staff, a New Deal self-employed learner reached the final stage of the Trading Places awards organised by the Prince's Trust.

92. Staff have developed good links with employers. They have a wide range of employer links which enable them to identify suitable job roles which meet the individual needs of the learners. The good working relationships that have been developed enhance the learners' experience and contribute towards their achievement. Employers and training consultants work together to create opportunities for learners to achieve their potential. Some employers have appointed useful mentors to further support learners in the workplace. Training consultants work with employers to identify appropriate additional qualifications to enhance the career progression of learners. Two learners are working towards a nationally recognised qualification in occupational safety and health. The training consultants use their extensive local contacts to arrange alternative employment should a training problem arise with an existing employer. For example, a learner recently made redundant has been ably supported to find suitable employment.

93. The work in learners' portfolios of evidence is satisfactory. The portfolios are clear and well organised with a good range of work-based information. However, some portfolios show an over-reliance on narrative evidence with very little product evidence. Training consultants provide evidence of work-based observations for accounting learners to add to college-based portfolios. Learners have a clear understanding of assessment procedures and the appeal process. The review of learners' progress is satisfactory. Training consultants visit learners every six weeks to complete progress reviews. A detailed record of the review outcomes is completed. This includes evidence of actions completed, employers' and learners' feedback, and sets realistic and challenging targets for learners to complete. This document also records any concerns on health and safety and equal opportunities. Employers contribute to the review process by providing an update on learners' progress. Some employers are present at the review meeting. Some learners attend off-the-job training sessions at the training

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centre. The training sessions are well planned to provide learners with the opportunity to complete the technical certificate.

94. The support offered to learners with additional learning needs is satisfactory. The learners' needs are identified through initial assessment and are referred to appropriately qualified staff for support. The support programme is flexible to ensure learners can access additional support sessions based on individual needs. Learners are given a range of support options and allowed to select their preferred option. For example, learners can choose from individual tuition, a small group session or access relevant electronic workbooks held on computers.

Leadership and management

95. Each member of the training team has a monthly meeting with their manager to monitor learners' progress and set targets. Monthly meetings are also held to review current provision and plan new developments. Internal verification is satisfactory. Adequate standardisation meetings take place frequently between assessors and internal verifiers. Assessors and internal verifiers are well supported through regular staff development training. Equality of opportunity is delivered well and is a regular agenda item. Staff in this area provide good support to learners with profound physical impairments as part of their diversity procedures. Staff have access to new IT resources to support and develop equality and diversity within all their programmes.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

| Retailing, customer service & transportation | | 4 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| Customer service | | |
| - Employer training pilot | 34 | 4 |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 8 | 4 |
| Warehousing and distribution | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 5 | 4 |
| Call centre operations | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 3 | 4 |

Customer service

Strengths

- good assessment practice
- good individual support

Weaknesses

- poor apprentice achievement rates
- ineffective learners' progress reviews
- inadequate arrangements for technical certificates
- incomplete internal verification system in customer service
- insufficient learning resources in customer service

Warehousing and distribution

Strengths

- good assessment practice
- good individual support

Weaknesses

- poor apprentice achievement rates
- ineffective learners' progress reviews

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Call centre operations

Strengths

- good assessment practice
- good individual support

Weaknesses

- poor apprentice achievement rates
- ineffective learners' progress reviews

Achievement and standards

96. Apprentice achievement rates are poor. The achievement rate for apprentices in 2002-03 is especially poor. Of the 17 learners starting the framework, only three achieved the framework and one remains in learning. In 2003-04, eight learners started the framework, none completed the framework and two are still in learning. In 2004-05, six learners started the programme and five remain in learning. The achievement of other learners is satisfactory. The achievement rate of advanced apprentices in 2002-03 was good. While the number of learners achieving their framework in 2003-04 reduced significantly, with 60 per cent of learners still remaining in learning. In 2004-05, two learners started an advanced apprenticeship and both remain in learning.

97. In 2002-03, one learner started an NVQ at level 2 in call handling but did not achieve the qualification. In 2003-04, ProCo was requested by the local LSC to take over a call handling NVQ at level 2 programme for six learners from another training provider. Just one learner has achieved the qualification and three still remain in learning. ProCo has no plans to recruit further learners to this programme.

98. The achievement of adult learners on the ETP is very good in 2002-03. Only four learners started the programme in 2003-04, and only one achieved the qualification with one still in learning. In 2004-05, 35 adult learners started and 33 remain in learning.

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Advanced apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 2 | | 5 | | 3 | | 8 | | 23 | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | 38 | 11 | 48 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 1 | | 2 | | 0 | 0 | 6 | 26 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 2 | | 3 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | |

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 6 | | 8 | | 17 | | 13 | | 17 | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 1 | | 4 | | 5 | 38 | 9 | 53 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 0 | | 3 | | 3 | 23 | 8 | 47 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 5 | | 2 | | 1 | | 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 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 6 | | 1 | | 3 | | 24 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 1 | | 0 | 0 | 2 | 67 | 13 | 54 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 1 | | 0 | 0 | 2 | 67 | 7 | 29 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 3 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | |

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Employer training pilot | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 35 | | 4 | | 28 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 1 | 25 | 24 | 86 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 1 | 25 | 23 | 82 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 33 | | 1 | 25 | 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

99. Effective planning takes place between the learners and assessors before the assessment process starts. An individual assessment strategy is agreed which reflects the outcome of initial assessment. In one case, an apprentice is assessed for a key skills unit first to develop the learner's literacy skills before assessment of other components of the learner's programme, where literacy skills will greatly influence progress. Learners are prepared well for assessment by their assessors through an in-depth discussion of the purpose and nature of the assessment. This approach is particularly effective with adult learners who have no recent experience of training and assessment. Assessment of learners' knowledge and understanding is carried out well through written and oral

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questioning. Where learners are identified as having gaps in their knowledge, assessors provide very good coaching which provides them with an understanding of vocational good practice and this is related directly to the learners' own working environment and experience. Good use is made of on-the-job training to support assessment. Learners are able to submit evidence by e-mail and receive prompt and effective feedback from their assessors.

100. Learners feel well supported and that they receive support that meets their individual needs. They value highly the occupational knowledge and expertise of training consultants, who respond promptly to requests for help or extra visits and provide their telephone and e-mail address details to learners. Training consultants differentiate well between the support needs of each learner. Good support is provided to learners who prefer a structured and professional approach within the workplace. Training consultants are equally effective in providing support of a more pastoral nature to learners who prefer to receive support at the training centre rather than in the workplace. Training consultants visit the learners in the workplaces frequently, seeing them in the workplace every two or three weeks. They respond positively to requests from learners for weekly assessment visits. Training consultants are held in very high regard by learners and their employers for being professional, supportive and dependable.

101. Learners who experience a job change that affects their ability to complete a qualification are well supported. Training consultants carry out an analysis of the new job role and identify suitable alternative qualifications. Employers are generally supportive of learners and provide them with time in working hours to attend training and meet with their training consultants. Some employers rely heavily on ProCo for the recruitment of young staff and value the support that ProCo provides. Employers recognise the positive influence that training has on learners' performance in the workplace.

102. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are assessed effectively at induction and learners are well supported in developing their skills in these areas.

103. Learners' progress reviews are ineffective in providing them with a clear understanding of the progress that they are making towards achieving their NVQ or framework. Review sheets are completed by the training consultants and learners record a wide range of activities that they have carried out since the last review. This includes on- and off-the-job training that has been completed. Reviews do not provide the learners with a clear set of realistic and challenging targets to be completed between reviews. Targets set are often related to short-term assessment tasks and are more appropriate to an assessment plan. Learners' progress reviews are not effective in providing them with a clear overview of the qualification requirements they are working towards. Each learner has an individual learning plan that provides this overview but this is not used as a working document or referred to in most reviews. Training consultants hold a similar but more detailed document, which is updated and revised appropriately. This document is not available to the learner and the updating and revisions are not transferred to the learners' individual learning plan. Most learners do not understand the purpose of reviews and do not recognise their relevance to them.

104. ProCo does not have adequate arrangements for the delivery of the technical certificate programme to learners. Training consultants have a poor understanding of the technical certificate requirements. The awarding body is providing a consultancy service to assist ProCo in developing its provision to meet the training requirement of this award. ProCo is identifying what experience and learning resources it can use from other occupational areas to aid the effective delivery of the technical certificate. No clear target date for the effective implementation of the technical certificate programme has been identified. Some minor parts of the technical certificate are being delivered to the appropriate standard.

105. The internal verification arrangements for customer service are incomplete. There is no occupational specialist qualified as an internal verifier. Internal verification is carried out by the company's lead internal verifier and an internal verifier from another occupational area with awarding body approval. The lead internal verifier also carries out standardisation meetings. These arrangements are unsatisfactory. ProCo recognises this and is training two occupational specialists as internal verifiers. An internal verification strategy is yet to be implemented. Internal verification takes place ineffectively while learners are in the process of completing their qualification. Learners and assessors do not receive timely feedback on the quality of evidence submitted and on the assessment methods used to enable them to benefit from the advice and guidance of an internal verifier. The internal verification arrangements for warehousing are satisfactory. Units are internally verified promptly and the internal verifier provides helpful advice and guidance to assessors and learners.

106. The learning resources for the customer service programme are insufficient. Each training consultant has just one reference book that they loan to the learners. There is inappropriate reliance on employers purchasing the reference book for learners to use to overcome the lack of learning materials provided by ProCo. There is unsuitable reliance on a single reference textbook as the only learning material resource. A bank of learning material is being developed but as yet learners cannot access it. Learners are advised of helpful internet sites to find some learning materials.

Leadership and management

107. The management of the implementation of technical certificates and the development of learning materials for customer service are poor. Staff development needs are identified and actions put in place to ensure staff receive training relevant to their needs. There are regular team meetings with detailed minutes.

108. Equality of opportunity is promoted and well delivered by staff. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is good. At reviews, learners and technical consultants have discussions about a wide variety of equal opportunity issues such as bullying and harassment. Learners enjoy and welcome these debates. Learners have a very good understanding of the appeals and complaints procedures.

109. The self-assessment report accurately identified two significant weaknesses and one significant strength. The self-assessment report did not identify the good assessment

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practice that takes place or the weaknesses relating to resources and learners' progress reviews. Staff involvement in the self-assessment process is good. They have a good understanding of the quality assurance system and receive regular information on the implementation of new procedures. However, the quality assurance system has been ineffective in identifying the inadequacies of learners' progress reviews. The internal verification system in customer service does not promote the progress of learners or support assessors effectively.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | | 3 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Hairdressing</i> - Apprenticeships for young people | 25 | 3 |

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good on- and off-the-job resources
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- poor advanced apprenticeships achievement rates
- weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

110. The learners' practical skills are satisfactory and at the required level for their period of time in training. Assignments are well organised and presented. In 2002-03 only one learner achieved an advanced apprenticeship and no learner achieved the award in 2003-04. Achievement rates on the apprenticeship programme are satisfactory in 2001-02 and 2002-03. The apprentice retention rate has improved well between 2003 and 2005. Most learners on both programmes progress well in their qualifications and are on target to achieve. Some learners are working very well and are on course to achieve the award before the expected end date.

111. Learners' key skills assignments are well researched, often well presented and word processed and they demonstrate above-average learner progress.

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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 apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 6 | | 6 | | 7 | | 6 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 4 | 67 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 3 | 50 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 5 | | 1 | 17 | 1 | 14 | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Apprenticeships | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 13 | | 7 | | 17 | | 17 | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 8 | 47 | 11 | 65 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 8 | 47 | 8 | 47 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 10 | | 6 | 86 | 2 | 12 | 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

112. All the observations of training and assessment during the inspection were judged to be satisfactory. Lessons are planned adequately but learning outcomes are not always clear. In the better lessons, there is a variety of good learning activities to encourage learner participation and better understanding. Learners report that some practical lessons do not have sufficient clients as models. This has been recognised by ProCo and the subcontractors and appropriate action has been taken to increase the number and variety of client types as models to resolve this weakness. Learners have a good understanding and awareness of health and safety issues when working in practical training sessions.

113. Learners are employed in good commercial salons. Employers are committed and enthusiastic about training that benefits the learners. The salons offer a good range of hairdressing services, products and retail lines from which learners have the opportunity to develop appropriate sales and hairdressing techniques in a good industrial setting. Most employers arrange weekly on-the-job training sessions to ensure learners are appropriately skilled to perform many hairdressing tasks. However, on-the-job training is not well co-ordinated with off-the-job training that learners receive at college. Employers receive details of the college training and copies of learners' progress reviews but this has

little influence on the direction of salon training to allow learners to practise and reinforce learning they gain off the job.

114. The subcontractor college salons are equipped to a high industrial standard and provide a stimulating learning environment. Learners can access well-appointed subcontractor computer suites to produce word-processed assignments and use of the internet for learning materials and supplementary evidence for their portfolios.

115. There is good support for learners. Good use is made of initial assessment to identify the correct level of individual learner support needs. There are good arrangements for learners to receive additional literacy and numeracy support where necessary. Learners are kept fully informed about language and numeracy assessment outcomes and are involved in the decision how it will be delivered. For example, learners can decide on whether to have a support worker in lessons or in discreet individual training. One learner chose to delay the support but instead receives regular feedback on her work during progress reviews. Learners who have visual impairment, dyslexia or experienced difficulties with literacy and numeracy receive good support from the subcontractors to enable them to stay in training and achieve their qualification. One learner received support over an extended period of time, achieved the apprenticeship early and is now doing well on the advanced apprentice programme. A learner receiving literacy support is allowed extra time during examinations. During lessons the tutors and support workers provide good individual support. The ProCo training consultant regularly visits lessons to monitor attendance, learners' progress and take action to remedy poor behaviour or performance by learners. The training consultant has a particularly good working relationship with employers, college tutors and learners. This enables the consultant to effectively bring together many interested parties including tutors to resolve learners' problems.

116. Assessment is appropriately planned and learners understand the process well. Learners have the opportunity to be assessed at work but most assessment takes place at college. Assessors carefully complete assessment records at the time of the learners' task. Verification practice is satisfactory. Few internal verifier signatures were found in candidate assessment logbooks in one college. However, the subcontractor is verifying assessments and keeping detailed records. The means of sharing this information between the college and the training consultant is not working effectively.

117. Learners' progress reviews are frequently carried out in the on-the-job salons and employers are fully involved in agreeing new targets for the learners. The new targets often lack sufficient detail to guide the learner about the level of performance required for successful completion of the set task. Learners value progress reviews and the process they go through in setting challenging targets.

118. The key skills assignments are a challenging mix of communication and application of number activities. Learners were observed participating enthusiastically in a communication exercise where they worked in pairs in a game called 'guess the celebrity'.

Leadership and management

119. Management of the area of learning is satisfactory. There is adequate provision of hairdressing work-based programmes to meet the training needs of learners. ProCo has developed a network of good employers where learners are well supported in their training and make good progress.

120. Staff are well qualified and have relevant hairdressing experience. However, ProCo does not have a qualified internal verifier for hairdressing and is reliant on college staff for this task. The training consultant is the only ProCo hairdressing assessor and many learners have insufficient opportunities for assessment especially during evening workplace training. Tutors are knowledgeable about current commercial hairdressing and work to a good industrial standard.

121. Communications are satisfactory. Frequent salon visits ensure communications with employers and staff are effective. Senior managers from ProCo and the subcontractors meet regularly. The company's self-assessment arrangements for hairdressing are satisfactory. Tutors are consulted about the self-assessment report. However, college middle-managers in hairdressing are not consulted, so are unaware of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. The training consultant meets with her line manager monthly to discuss all aspects of training delivery. This includes monitoring, using management information on the frequency of salon visits and on learners' progress, and achievement against target completion dates.

122. Equality of opportunity is reinforced effectively in learners' progress reviews. Questions are asked of learners that promote a wider understanding of equality of opportunity. For example, within two observed reviews, the topics of racism and discrimination were discussed. Brief notes are kept on the review record.

Foundation programmes

| Foundation programmes | | 3 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Employability/employment training</i> | | |
| - Entry to Employment | 51 | 3 |
| - New Deal for young people | 18 | 3 |

Employability/employment training

Strengths

- good outcomes for New Deal for Young People in literacy, numeracy and language skills
- additional qualifications available for New Deal clients
- particularly effective support for learners
- strong effective partnerships
- good range of vocational skills development

Weaknesses

- incomplete provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills
- weak co-ordination of E2E core strands
- weak New Deal client reviews
- incomplete monitoring of the subcontractor
- insufficient time or supervision allocated to learning

Achievement and standards

123. Learners achieved good, planned learning outcomes for New Deal for Young People in literacy, numeracy and language skills in 2002-03 and in 2003-04. New Deal clients have useful access through the subcontractor to added value qualifications such as wider key skills, basic food hygiene and first aid. Ten clients so far this year have done well in achieving between them 28 of these useful qualifications. Learners' progression into further education, training or jobs is satisfactory, and 10 per cent more E2E learners have progressed this year than last. Twenty-five E2E learners have achieved 31 literacy, numeracy and language skills qualifications this contract year, which is satisfactory.

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Entry to Employment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 64 | | 70 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Progression ¹ | 7 | | 20 | 29 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Achieved objectives ² | 0 | | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 46 | | 5 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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

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

| Jobcentre Plus funded programmes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| New Deal for Young People | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2004-05 | | 2003-04 | | 2002-03 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | 20 | | 34 | | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 19 | 56 | 12 | 71 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Planned learning completed | 0 | | 15 | 44 | 10 | 59 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gained job | 4 | | 11 | 32 | 4 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in training | 16 | | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | |

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

Quality of education and training

124. There is particularly effective support for learners. All learners interviewed speak highly of the support received from ProCo. When learners have personal difficulties they receive effective support. Tutors and key workers act as good role models for learners. Tutors have a good rapport with learners and are trusted by them. The programme is effective in providing a positive learning experience in which learners acquire personal, social and vocational skills in the framework of work-based learning.

125. Tutors and key workers are effective in engaging the interests of learners and introduce a variety of activities to encourage and sustain meaningful involvement. They have developed close working relationships based on mutual trust which promote positive attitudes in learners as well as the desire to succeed. Learners gain good occupational and personal skills. There is a strong emphasis on the development of personal and social skills to prepare them for work.

126. Learners note the high levels of support and guidance as a major strength for ProCo

and a reason for their satisfaction with the programme. Learners benefit from the positive and supportive working environment. Staff are skilled at raising learners' aspirations and self-esteem. Added value educational activities to engage learners include visits to museums, the law courts, bowling allies and outdoor activities. ProCo supports learners financially to buy necessary equipment and clothing, and pay non-essential course fees to achieve their learning objectives.

127. There are strong effective partnerships. ProCo has strong links with Connexions and other agencies that support learners. ProCo has developed contacts with a local factory who supply them with clothing to support learners who may be in need. They have an arrangement with a national department store chain that provides packed lunches for learners when they go on outdoor activities. There are strong relationships with housing groups to support learners with housing difficulties. ProCo has helped to provide household furniture for learners who are in need.

128. A wide range of supportive employer work-experience placements is available for E2E learners. Currently, 42 per cent of learners who have completed the initial assessment period are in work-experience opportunities.

129. There is a good range of vocational skills development. ProCo provides a wide range of occupational areas such as motor vehicle, bricklaying, joinery, plastering and hairdressing which are available for E2E learners. There are insufficient opportunities to accredit skills that learners develop. ProCo has explored additional external certification but none have been introduced.

130. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners participate well in a relaxed but productive learning environment. Adequate learning resources are available and are generally used effectively by tutors. Classrooms are clean, tidy and comfortable. There are sufficient staff for the number of learners.

131. The provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills is incomplete. Learners carry out a literacy, numeracy and language skills assessment and a diagnostic test and, from this, literacy and numeracy needs are accurately identified. Information from these tests is used to identify any learning needs. Individual learning styles are assessed and taken into account when lesson plans are developed. Diagnostic assessment to further identify specific learning targets is widely used in E2E and with the subcontractor, but is not used in the in-house New Deal provision. However, following diagnostic assessment, ProCo sets no meaningful precise targets or references them to the core curriculum or the learners' individual needs. Reviews of progress are ineffective and lack detail. Action-planning is insufficient. Schemes of work are in place that are referenced to the core curriculum but they do not refer to learners' needs in those sessions. There is insufficient differentiated learning.

132. Tutors have made some progress implementing literacy, numeracy and language skills into vocational and other learning, with schemes of work currently available for bricklaying, joinery, motor vehicle and engineering. More development is planned.

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133. There are insufficient other activities to provide evidence of literacy, numeracy and language learning. Tutors do not routinely set tasks which could be used by learners to collect evidence or practise skills leading to basic skills qualifications.

134. The co-ordination of the three core strands of E2E is weak. Each element of the programme is a separate entity and no developed links exist between the strands. Staff do not use the information gained from these activities to create an overall approach to target-setting to help the learners reach their main learning objectives. Information gathered during progress reviews is not recorded in sufficient detail to support ongoing action-planning. Reviews lack details from all relevant tutors to make them more meaningful and accurate. Many actions recorded following progress reviews are insufficiently specific or challenging to the learner. They are not referenced to the main objectives in the programme plan and how they lead to achievement of the objectives is unclear. Activity plans lack detail. 'Moving on' plans for learners are used with the actions being monitored to sustain progression routes.

135. New Deal clients' reviews are weak. They are broad and general with no challenging time-bound targets. Targets set are not routinely followed up.

Leadership and management

136. Communications are appropriate. Team meetings are regular and minuted. Learner monitoring systems are in place. There is incomplete monitoring of the subcontractor for New Deal full-time education and training basic skills provision. There are regular meetings between the two providers which are minuted, but no formal procedure has been established to ensure essential activities have been carried out satisfactorily.

137. Insufficient time or supervision is allocated to learning. The in-house New Deal for Young People in literacy, numeracy and language skills is providing insufficient hours to cater for learners' individual needs or contractual requirements. Many learners are timetabled for home study or jobsearch for up to three days each week at the start of their programme. Many learners on this programme have significant social and literacy, numeracy and language needs. The self-assessment report is generally accurate and satisfactory.