

INSPECTION REPORT

KEY Training Services (Kent County Council)

09 September 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. KEY Training Services (KEY) is part of Kent County Council's youth and community service. It was set up in 1983 to offer government youth training initiatives. KEY is the largest work-based learning provider in Kent and is the leading provider for training for young people with additional learning or social needs. KEY has contracts with Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Jobcentre Plus. It also has European Social Fund (ESF) projects and work with local schools in the 14-plus age group. KEY offers advanced apprenticeships, apprenticeships, national vocational qualification (NVQ) training for young people, Entry to Employment (E2E), employer training pilots (ETP), New Deal for young people, ESF co-financed work and 14-plus Skills for Work in partnership with schools.
2. KEY provides training in early years, social care, youth work, information and communications technology (ICT), retailing and wholesaling, warehousing, hairdressing, hospitality and catering, preparation for life programmes, administration and customer service. Currently, it has 798 learners on work-based learning and ETPs and 155 participants on Jobcentre Plus programmes.
3. KEY has five training centres throughout Kent, with its central administration base in Maidstone. KEY is managed by the assistant head of youth and community, with a team of four senior managers and 145 staff

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** KEY's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. The provision in health, public services and care, and business administration and law are good as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity. KEY's provision in retail and commercial enterprise and preparation for life and work is satisfactory.
5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Staff, learners, employers and stakeholders are involved in the self-assessment process and it is part of the business development schedule. The report was detailed, but in some areas there was insufficient information to support the stated strengths and weaknesses, and there was little analysis of retention and achievement data. It did not recognise all the strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** KEY makes good use of external inspection and review to improve its provision. Senior managers are willing to take calculated risks to develop new strategies to improve the organisation's provision. The post-inspection development plan was comprehensive and set realistic targets. KEY monitors ongoing development and action-planning and meets most of its targets.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR KEY TRAINING SERVICES (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL):

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- update and formalise the skills for life strategy
- focus more on learning in the observation system
- improve target-setting with learners
- reinforce the learners' practical understanding of equality and diversity
- produce a more self-critical and evaluative self-assessment report
- improve the sharing of good practice

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Health, public services and care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Social care</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	43	2	
Employer training pilot	89	2	
NVQ training for young people	1	None	
<i>Public services</i>		2	
Employer training pilot	23	2	
<i>Early years</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	137	3	
Employer training pilot	21	2	

Retail and commercial enterprise			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Hairdressing</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	123	3	
NVQ training for young people	2	None	
<i>Hospitality and catering</i>		2	
Employer training pilot	24	2	

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		3
New Deal for young people	155	3
Other government-funded provision	31	3
Entry to Employment	68	3

Business administration and law		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Administration</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	70	2
Employer training pilot	13	2
NVQ training for young people	9	None
<i>Customer service</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. KEY received good grades at its reinspection in July 2003 and, under the resource allocation for cycle 2 inspections, not all areas were inspected at the inspection in September 2005. KEY has grown considerably since its reinspection and is delivering new programmes, especially in the preparation for life and work area. A main theme for the inspection was the new ETP, and this was inspected under social care, public services (youth work), early years, hospitality and catering, and administration. In some areas of learning, the apprenticeship programmes and NVQ training for young people were inspected but on a reduced sample. The preparation for life and work area has several new programmes in it and this was inspected in more depth. The introduction to each area of learning identifies which areas were included in the inspection. The area of ICT was not inspected.

8. KEY subcontracts all aspects of E2E in some areas of Kent to training providers who fall within the remit of inspection in their own right. North West Kent College, Thanet College, Allenvale, Kent Community Housing Trust (KCHT), Instant Muscle and Mid-Kent College were not included in the scope of this inspection. YMCA acts as a subcontractor to KEY and its provision is included in this inspection. KEY acts as a subcontractor to the national association for the care and resettlement of offenders (NACRO) for the vocational element of that organisation's E2E programme. The learners at NACRO have been included in this inspection but are not included in the overall number of E2E learners.

Number of inspectors	13
Number of inspection days	54
Number of learners interviewed	160
Number of staff interviewed	57
Number of employers interviewed	58
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	75
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **On ETPs in social care and early years, the learners' retention is good.** In all other areas it is satisfactory. In early years, the achievement rate for 2003-04 is 57 per cent, with 10 per cent still in training. In hospitality and catering, achievement is satisfactory, with some early completion. There is a good standard of work in early years and youth work. There is slow progress towards achievement of the NVQ in youth work.

10. On advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships, the learners' achievement of key skills and technical certificates is improving. In administration it is good, although there is slow progress towards achieving the NVQ.

11. On E2E, the learners' progress is satisfactory and has improved by 17 per cent between 2003-04 and 2004-05. Their achievement of qualifications is satisfactory. Of particular note is that 60 per cent of learners achieved a nationally recognised childcare course at level 1 in 2004-05. On the ESF-funded projects, learners have achieved well. On the Opportunities Plus course, which is a two-week motivational course for disengaged young people, 75 per cent of learners make significant progress in re-engaging with learning and working with external agencies that can support them in overcoming their barriers to learning.

12. The learners' progress into jobs on the New Deal voluntary sector option is satisfactory and ranges from 40 to 46 per cent over the past four years although the maximum progression rate for the 2004-05 start year shows a decline. Participants on New Deal Gateway achieve a wide range of short course qualifications, with pass rates ranging from 81 to 100 per cent.

13. **Some learners are making slow progress towards completing their programme.** In early years training, some learners are making slow progress towards achieving the full framework for advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships. Some hairdressing apprentices who attend the training centre are making slow progress in their first year of training.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	0	1	1	0	2
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	2	4	0	6
Preparation for life and work	1	5	8	2	16
Business administration and law	0	2	0	0	2
Total	1	10	13	2	26

14. Across the organisation, the teaching is satisfactory to good.

15. **KEY supports its learners very well.** For most learners, it uses initial assessment effectively and identifies the learners' individual support needs. Staff adapt to the learners' working hours and carry out training and assessment at times suitable for them and their employers. KEY carries out induction and training at the workplace if learners are unable to attend its training centres. Learners feel well supported by KEY's staff and are able to contact them easily.

16. **E2E learners benefit from additional funding used to enhance the E2E programme.** Specialist literacy and numeracy support are available through the essential skills project and, of the 365 learners who have accessed support from specialist staff on the E2E enhancement project, 61 per cent have achieved a positive outcome on their main programme.

17. **KEY's relationship with employers ensures that the learners have a wide range of employment and work-placement opportunities.** Its frequent communication with employers and regular visits to the workplace encourages employers to become involved in their learners' progress. KEY carefully matches unemployed learners to work and carefully places those with additional support needs. Many employers provide good additional training opportunities.

18. **In social care, administration, and customer service, learners receive good off-the-job training, with well-planned sessions and a good variety of activities.** On advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships, key skills is linked to the learners' work. In hairdressing, learners generally receive good training in the workplace. Opportunities vary between salons but include working with several stylists and additional training opportunities. The delivery of level 3 technical certificates is poor for some learners in early years.

19. **On preparing for life and work programmes, learners' individual needs are met by well-designed programmes.** A wide variety of work-placement opportunities is available and employers have a good understanding of the needs of the learners on both E2E and the New Deal voluntary sector option. Learners benefit from particularly productive relationships with external partners. Participants on New Deal Gateway are offered exceptionally good advice and support on the Access all Areas programme, which provides them with specialist, industry-specific advice and information in their chosen area of interest.

20. **Some learners benefit from a five-day induction programme that is varied and informative.** It was introduced as part of the retention and achievement strategy. Many of the employed learners cannot attend during the week and have an individual, much shorter induction in the workplace. This is not as effective in reinforcing areas such as equality of opportunity.

21. **Target-setting on individual learning plans and records of progress reviews is inconsistent.** Targets are not specific or measurable, and in hairdressing they are not broken down into easily achievable steps. In hospitality and catering ETPs, there is insufficient formal planning and recording of learners' progress.

22. **On E2E, links between on- and off-the-job training are insufficient.** The varied aspects of the individual learners' programme are not always linked together and employers are not sufficiently aware of what else the learner is covering. Monitoring of participants in the workplace on the New Deal voluntary sector option is inconsistent. Some participants have infrequent visits.

Leadership and management

23. **KEY's strategic planning is good.** Senior managers are able to identify areas that will improve the experience of the learners and potential learners and develop strategies to support them.

24. **The effective communication structure ensures that KEY keeps staff across the county informed and up to date on new developments and issues.** The good external liaison promotes KEY and ensures that the learners have good opportunities and support.

25. **Data collection and analysis are good and KEY uses reports well to set targets, monitor performance and make comparisons.** It uses data effectively as part of quality improvement.

26. **KEY has introduced effective strategies to increase the participation in training of learners from under-represented groups.** Work with schools has introduced young people to vocational training and has been successful in attracting a larger percentage of school leavers with low educational attainment. The proportion of learners at KEY who are from minority ethnic groups has risen every year.

27. **KEY makes good use of external inspection findings and review to improve its provision.** The post-inspection development plan was comprehensive and set realistic targets. The organisation monitors and updates an ongoing development plan and carried out most actions within the timescale. Senior managers are willing to take calculated risks to develop new strategies to improve the training provision.

28. **KEY does not sufficiently reinforce equality of opportunity with learners and employers.** Many learners were unclear about the practical application of equality of opportunity and there was little reinforcement during the reviews observed. There is inadequate recording of any discussion on equality of opportunity on the review form. The employers' pack has a table of the learners' and employers' roles and responsibilities that lists specific aspects of the training programme. Equality of opportunity is not included in the table. However, the responsibility for equality of opportunity is textualised in the

document.

29. The incomplete skills for life strategy has had a negative effect on the experience of some learners. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. In some literacy and numeracy sessions, there is a narrow range of teaching and learning strategies and an overdependence on handouts. Thirty-eight apprentices are receiving literacy and numeracy support, but some of the learners who have identified support needs are not receiving specialist support.

30. The organisation's implementation of procedures is inconsistent and the audit process does not always identify where this is happening. Target-setting, recording on individual learning plans and progress review forms, and involvement of employers in progress reviews are examples of where practice does not always meet the standards set by KEY. The audit process has not always identified this.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- effective internal communication
- good collection and analysis of data
- good engagement of under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities
- incomplete strategy for skills for life
- inconsistent implementation of procedures

Health, public services and care

Early years

Grade 3

Strengths

- good retention rates on ETP
- good pastoral support for learners
- good, productive relationships with employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of full frameworks for apprentices
- insufficient off-the-job training for the level 3 technical certificates
- poor understanding of equality of opportunity by some learners

Public services

Grade 2

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- good learning and work-related resources

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications

Social care

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention rates on ETP
- good off-the-job training
- well-integrated key skills and technical certificates
- good work settings
- good personal and training support for learners
- very effective leadership and management

Weaknesses

- inconsistent recording and target-setting

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Grade 3

Strengths

- flexible training that meets the employers' needs
- good training in the workplace

Weaknesses

- slow progress of learners participating in off-the-job training
- poor completion of learning plans and review paperwork

Hospitality and catering

Grade 2

Strengths

- good additional learning opportunities

- flexible work-based assessment
- effective relationships with employers
- very effective pastoral support

Weaknesses

- insufficient formal planning and recording of learners' programmes

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Grade 3

Strengths

- good learning environment
- well-designed programmes to meet individual learners' needs
- good use of additional funding to enhance the E2E programme
- particularly productive relationships with external partners
- particularly good specialist advice on New Deal Gateway

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching and learning strategies for literacy and numeracy
- insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training on the E2E programme
- inadequate target-setting
- inconsistent monitoring of participants in the workplace on New Deal voluntary sector option
- some inadequate quality assurance

Business administration and law

Customer service

Grade 3

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good additional learning support
- good pastoral support for learners

KEY TRAINING SERVICES (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL)

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of learning to meet individual learners' needs
- ineffective target-setting
- some poor assessment practice

Administration

Grade 2

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good vocational, pastoral and additional support for learners
- good target-setting

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of apprenticeship NVQs

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT KEY TRAINING SERVICES (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL):

- 'the friendly, very helpful tutors'
- 'good support'
- 'my very competent assessor'
- 'the chance to get qualifications at the same time as working'
- 'we enjoy our day at the training centre'
- 'the training in my salon is great'
- 'if you prefer a practical course - do it this way'
- 'the small teaching groups'
- 'getting help when you need it'
- 'the help to find a work placement'
- 'it's a good opportunity to get a job'
- 'meeting new people with different ideas'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK KEY TRAINING SERVICES (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL) COULD IMPROVE:

- 'not knowing when my next visit will take place'
- 'the number of visits by staff'
- 'the number of direct observations - more would help faster completion'
- 'completing worksheets - there is too much written work'
- 'the NVQ language - it could be simpler'
- 'the amount of help with cross-referencing portfolios'
- 'the log book - it is too confusing'
- 'the amount of time given to off-the-job training - more workshops on employers' premises'
- 'the training sessions - there are too many handouts'
- 'the size of the groups - they are too large'
- 'the time wasted during tutorial time when waiting to be seen'
- 'the frequency of tutorials'
- 'the number of hours spent in the workplace when trying to complete studies and working full time'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- effective internal communication
- good collection and analysis of data
- good engagement of under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities
- incomplete strategy for skills for life
- inconsistent implementation of procedures

31. KEY is good at strategic planning. The senior managers are able to identify areas that will improve the experience of the learners and potential learners and develop strategies to support them. It makes good use of the findings from external inspections and reviews. These include the ALI inspections, feedback from the funding bodies and a key skills health check. KEY has reorganised its management structure to ensure that teams of staff are able to take more responsibility for their areas of work and improve the service they give to the learners. The development of the placement liaison advisers' role has supported the development of good relationships with employers and a wide range of employment and work-placement opportunities for learners. KEY has developed individual management programmes for new managers to support them in their new role. The comprehensive human resources policy includes a six-weekly review process, with individual targets set and monitored. KEY also uses this effectively to support staff who are not performing satisfactorily. Small targets are set, sometimes weekly, and a senior manager monitors them. KEY implemented the retention and achievement strategy following its first ALI inspection in 2001. It has been successful in improving its overall performance but this improvement is slow and this is reflected in the area of learning findings. The introduction of the E2E programme and the use of subcontractors has resulted in a comprehensive and effective process for setting up and monitoring the E2E subcontractors.

32. KEY is involved in Kent County Council's strategic initiatives to promote vocational training. This is linked to the county council's strategy for skills development. KEY's experience of working closely with employers contributes to this area of work and it is developing its links with schools. Its provision in schools is varied and increasing, and there is good feedback from school staff and pupils. The work with schools promotes vocational training to young people. Some of those involved progress onto KEY's training provision, while others move to other training providers.

33. The effective internal communication ensures that KEY keeps staff across the county informed of new developments and issues. Senior managers attend each training centre for the weekly briefing. They have a generic briefing sheet for all of the training centres and specific information for each centre. Staff value this opportunity to meet with a senior manager and receive information, as well as being able to provide feedback. Senior

managers share and discuss the information from the centres. The good external liaison with Kent County Council, schools, community groups, external agencies, employers and national groups promotes KEY and ensures that the learners have good opportunities and support.

34. Data collection and analysis are good and KEY uses reports well to set targets, monitor performance and make comparisons. Regular reports are available for managers and the organisation produces team and specific reports. Staff use the reports at the weekly briefings and senior managers also use them to monitor the overall performance of the organisation.

35. KEY's skills for life strategy is incomplete and this has had a negative effect on some learners' experience. Of the apprentices in training at the time of inspection, 38 were receiving literacy and numeracy support, which is approximately 10 per cent of the intake. Some of the learners that KEY had identified as needing support are not receiving it.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

36. KEY has introduced a number of effective strategies to widen the participation in training of learners from under-represented groups. It is part of Kent County Council's Supporting Independence Programmes, which aims to help people achieve greater independence. KEY has been successful in attracting a larger percentage of school leavers with low educational attainment. It works closely with other organisations, such as Connexions, schools, and youth and community groups, to attract learners from under-represented groups into training. An outreach worker forges and maintains good links with local minority ethnic groups to promote KEY's services. A diversity officer has recently been appointed to work across both the youth and community service and KEY.

37. The organisation collates and analyses data on gender, ethnicity and disability, to target under-represented groups in specific geographical areas. For example, the proportion of learners at KEY who are from minority ethnic groups has risen every year. Similarly, the percentage of learners with a disability has increased significantly over this period to 25 per cent. To date, KEY has met the equality and diversity improvement targets set by the LSC. KEY is responsive in placing training centres in areas of greatest deprivation and recruits disaffected young learners. It uses ESF funding effectively to attract young people with significant barriers to learning from those not in education, employment or training.

38. KEY has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and procedures, which are used across Kent County Council. The organisation promotes these to staff and learners through its induction process. The learners' induction pack outlines equality of opportunity principles in accessible language. However, a significant number of the learners do not have a clear understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity. Access to the week-long induction programme is unequal, particularly for employed learners such as those in hairdressing and early years, when employers will not release their apprentices. These learners do not have the depth of induction to equal opportunities issues that is afforded to those learners who attend the week-long introduction. KEY's complaints procedures are satisfactory and the organisation has recently given them a higher profile with the learners at induction.

39. KEY's marketing materials reflect positive images of under-represented groups and display pictures of workers in non-stereotypical roles. It displays the 'positive about

disability' logo on marketing materials and in all of its training centres. The organisation has a good range of posters reflecting anti-discriminatory practices. Generally, learning resources reflect diversity. KEY clearly emphasises respect in the organisation, which it introduces to learners at induction through discussion of the code of conduct. KEY complies with the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and the organisation has made a good effort to adapt its training premises, making them more accessible to learners with mobility difficulties and sensory impairments.

40. KEY's vetting process is satisfactory and ensures that the employers and work-placement providers adhere to equal opportunities legislation. Employers receive a newly designed information pack, which promotes equality of opportunity. The pack includes a table of the roles and responsibilities of the learners, employers and work-placement providers, and lists specific aspects of the training programme. Equal opportunities is not included in the table. However, the responsibility for equality of opportunity is textualised in the document. Staff development on equality and diversity issues is satisfactory. There are regular training opportunities but these do not include how to extend or challenge learners' understanding of issues related to equality of opportunity.

41. KEY reinforces equal opportunities inadequately during the review process. Comments in the review box are superficial or incomplete. The organisation's staff do not use prompts to explore the learners' experience at work on harassment, rights and responsibilities, or fair treatment.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

42. KEY makes good use of external inspection and review to improve its training provision. The post-inspection development plan was comprehensive and set realistic targets. The organisation monitors and updates its ongoing development plan and carries out most actions within the timescale. Each team has its own action plan. Senior managers are willing to take calculated risks to develop new strategies to improve the provision. The retention and improvement strategy includes a number of different activities to support improvement, each of which has been piloted and evaluated. KEY has made changes to make the strategy more successful. It recognised that improvement has been slower than expected, and work in this area is ongoing.

43. KEY uses data effectively as part of quality improvement. It sets clear targets for staff, teams and projects. The organisation uses data as part of the monitoring of quality improvement and produces specific reports as part of ongoing evaluation.

44. Internal verification is satisfactory. KEY has created a new post of lead internal verifier and developed a new internal verification strategy. A key feature of this is the standardisation of assessment and internal verification across the whole organisation. KEY has introduced a revised observation system. In the past year, external verifiers' reports and grades have improved.

45. KEY's strategy for observing teaching and learning is satisfactory. It takes place three times every year with each tutor. KEY is developing this so that some tutors may have fewer observations while others may have more. A large percentage of the grades are high and the organisation is comparing average observation grades to standardise the process. KEY is extending the observation system to subcontractors and interviews carried out by the placement liaison advisers. Actions and targets are set following the observations and

these contribute in the staff reviews.

46. The organisation's self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is integrated with the annual business development timetable. It involves individual members of staff, staff teams, employers and learners. KEY analyses responses from the surveys from employers, work-placement providers, learners and stakeholder questionnaires, and uses them to help develop reports written by the senior managers. The senior management team verifies the final report, which is shared and endorsed by the appropriate director and county councillors in Kent County Council. The organisation's most recent self-assessment report does not recognise all the strengths and weaknesses and there was little analysis of retention and achievement data to support judgements. The report was detailed but in some areas there was insufficient information to support the stated strengths and weaknesses.

47. Implementation of procedures is inconsistent. In some cases, there is poor recording of initial assessment and ongoing support on the individual learning plans. Target-setting at reviews is poor, despite training on setting specific and measurable targets. There is little recording of discussion on equality of opportunity at progress reviews and the information for the audit of this area does not mention the equal opportunities recording box. Not all employers are involved in progress reviews or contribute to them. The audit process has not always identified these areas. However, the comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures cover all areas and include quality improvement. They are easy to follow and staff are familiar with them.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Social care</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	43	2
Employer training pilot	89	2
NVQ training for young people	1	None
<i>Public services</i>		2
Employer training pilot	23	2
<i>Early years</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	137	3
Employer training pilot	21	2

48. KEY offers training in social care, youth work and early years. Many apprentices, advanced apprentices and learners on NVQ training in social care and early years attend off-the-job training at one of KEY's training centres. Larger employers have off-the-job training sessions on their own premises and there is some individual training in the workplace. The tutors provide the training, tutorials, and assessment, and carry out progress reviews. There are four work-based assessors in social care.

49. There are 133 learners on the social care programme. These include 11 advanced apprentices and 32 apprentices. Seven per cent of the learners are men, 8 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 3.3 per cent have additional support needs. KEY works with over 60 employers in a range of settings, including domiciliary, day, residential and nursing care, and specialist provision for service users. Learners are either directly employed or trainees.

50. There are 183 learners on the early years programmes. These include 36 advanced apprentices and 101 apprentices. The 25 learners on NVQ training did not form part of the inspection sample. Thirty of the learners have a declared disability, with 15 accessing literacy and numeracy support. Six learners are men and four are from minority ethnic groups. All of the learners are in work placements at private and community nurseries and playgroups, either directly employed or as trainees.

51. The 23 learners on ETP are working towards NVQs in youth work at level 2, with one unit at level 3. Two of the learners are men and three of the learners have an additional learning need. None of the learners are from minority ethnic groups. All of the learners are in training for 12 months and are employed by local youth centres and other youth work settings in part-time posts. They are required to have been involved in youth work in either a voluntary or paid capacity for at least 18 months. Learners' line managers nominate them for participation in the training. Learners attend off-the-job training sessions at KEY's training centre in Gillingham on one day for each unit of the NVQ. They also receive a one-day induction programme. Assessors visit the learners at work whenever they request a visit. Tutors and assessors are qualified youth workers. KEY has two qualified internal verifiers and three qualified assessors. A further five assessors are working towards the

assessors' qualifications.

Early years

Grade 3

Strengths

- good retention rates on ETP
- good pastoral support for learners
- good, productive relationships with employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of full frameworks for apprentices
- insufficient off-the-job training for the level 3 technical certificates
- poor understanding of equality of opportunity by some learners

Achievement and standards

52. Retention rates on ETP are good. The achievement rate for 2003-04 is 57 per cent, with 10 per cent still in training. These learners are very experienced early years practitioners and are making good progress. The standard of learners' work is good and their portfolios of evidence are well organised and concise. There have been some improvements in achievement and retention rates across the remaining early years programmes and they are now satisfactory. Fifty-seven per cent of the current learners on advanced apprenticeships, apprenticeships and NVQ training have less than five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above and 5 per cent have no previous qualifications. The quality of apprentices' and advanced apprentices' work is satisfactory. Learners acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills. They develop in self-confidence, communication, social and employability skills. Many gain employment on completion of their programme.

53. There is slow progress for some learners towards the achievement of their full apprenticeship framework. One learner who started in March 2004 had no units of her NVQ completed. Another learner who started in June 2004 had only completed four units and is due to finish in September 2005. Fifteen learners are receiving specialist support for literacy, numeracy and/or social needs. Some learners with additional support needs are not receiving any specialist support. For some learners there is no recording or identification of additional support needs on the individual learning plans. Some learners are unclear about recording and cross-referencing evidence in their portfolio and find it confusing. There is an over-emphasis on the use of reflective accounts in many learners' portfolios. Some of these learners have literacy support needs and find this approach difficult. There is insufficient direct observation of learners' activities at work.

KEY TRAINING SERVICES (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL)

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

Inspection:

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		25		18		16	100	19	100						
Retained*	0		0		0		10	62	14	74						
Successfully completed	0		0		0		7	44	11	58						
Still in learning	1		20		15		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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		102		92		108	100	137	100						
Retained*	0		1		41		49	45	46	34						
Successfully completed	0		0		33		31	29	34	25						
Still in learning	7		76		18		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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	0		36		51											
Retained*	0		17		41											
Successfully completed	0		14		29											
Still in learning	0		16		5											

*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

The quality of provision

54. There is good pastoral support for learners. They have access to specialist support, for example, counselling, advice and guidance, and Connexions. KEY's staff provides individual training sessions at work for learners who are unable to attend off-the-job-training. KEY provides home-based support, when necessary, to learners with childcare difficulties. Learners are able to contact KEY's staff at any time. Placement liaison advisers work closely with employers to ensure that learners are in a suitable work placement. KEY's staff visit most learners regularly and, when necessary, find them alternative placements.

55. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. Session plans are well organised, with clear links to key skills. KEY's staff encourage the learners to ask questions and relate off-the-job training to their experiences at work. Tutors use a variety of teaching methods and they are aware of the learners' needs and provide them with support where necessary. Alternative training sessions are available to enable employers to meet their staff-to-child ratio requirements.

On-the-job-training is flexible in meeting the needs of learners. Progress reviews are satisfactory. They take place every 10 weeks and involve the tutor, learner and employer. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. KEY meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well.

56. Off-the-job training for the level 3 technical certificates for some learners is insufficient. Time available for training is insufficient and the training is insufficiently detailed. There is an over-reliance on handouts and few learning resources to cover this aspect of the programme or to aid self-directed study. A number of learners have withdrawn from this part of their programme.

Leadership and management

57. Relationships with employers are good and productive. KEY provides them with an informative employers' information pack. The frequent communication between KEY's staff and the employer ensures that employers are involved in the progress of their learners and enables a swift response to queries. Employers are involved in learners' progress reviews.

58. Internal communication is effective and there is good communication with external organisations.

59. KEY's quality assurance measures are appropriate. The organisation uses internal verification meetings to share information. It uses assessors' meetings to standardise practice and to highlight learners' progress and other issues. KEY seeks learners' and employers' views. Minutes of meetings and topics discussed appropriately reflect concerns over achievement and retention rates. Staff are focussed about improving KEY's provision and are willing to test out new approaches in supporting learners to stay in training. KEY prepared its most recent self-assessment report in consultation with its staff. The report successfully identified one strength found on inspection but none of the weaknesses. The report too closely resembled the previous reinspection report and did not accurately reflect more recent changes to the programme or the slow progress towards achieving full apprenticeship frameworks.

60. Some of the learners do not understand equality of opportunity. There is little or no extending of the learners' knowledge of equality and diversity or reinforcement of their induction training. In an off-the-job training session there was a poor explanation of cultural differences in child-rearing practices. Some learners are unable to explain the effect of anti-discriminatory practice in their work with young children and their families. Learners' review records do not show any questioning of the challenges the learners experience at work.

Public services

Grade 2

Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- good learning and work-related resources

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications

Achievement and standards

61. The standard of the learners' work is good. Their portfolios are well organised and thorough, and they contain strong evidence to demonstrate their competence at work. Reflective accounts and records of observations of learners' work show depth of thought and strong links to knowledge and understanding of the youth service's standards.

62. Learners develop good youth work skills and are improving the quality of their work with the young people with whom they engage. The learners have had a positive influence on other youth workers involved in their youth work settings. The managers in training centres and service managers report demonstrably better practice with young people. They are gathering useful examples of good practice through regular visits to youth work settings to internally verify assessors, and they are sharing these examples throughout their respective services.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	2004-05															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25															
Retained*	1															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	23															

*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

The quality of provision

63. KEY has good learning and work-related resources that the learners use well. The organisation uses the skills of the youth work staff very effectively. This contributes to good professional discussions and further reflection on youth work practice. Additional resources are available to develop projects and activities with young people. All training staff, other participants in the delivery of the training, and host employers, have access to appropriate resources, including professional articles, papers, policies and procedures, in addition to textbooks, government reports and local authority directives.

64. KEY meets the needs and interests of the learners and employers appropriately. The demands of the service to qualify youth workers, coupled with the award of a pay increment on completion of their course, are good motivating factors in maintaining retention rates.

65. The pastoral and learning support that KEY provides for the learners are satisfactory. The organisation has customised the NVQ at level 2 to include a group work unit from level 3 to meet the needs of the service in Kent and Medway, as most part-time youth workers are expected to work with groups as well as individuals. It is training new assessors and they are still developing experience and confidence in their role, but they visit the learners at work frequently. Helpful workplace supervisors and assessors help to explain the complex language in the NVQ standards.

66. Learners and assessors are learning the detail of NVQs and evidence-gathering to meet standards through experience. KEY is identifying those learners with additional learning needs and makes funding available for diagnostic testing. It has good links with the local dyslexia association. KEY provides voice recorders and adapted learning materials to those learners that need them. Alongside professional discussion topic packs, the organisation has developed a useful question bank to aid the learners' understanding of the background knowledge related to their practice. Each learner receives a trainee pack, which details their roles and responsibilities, the training process from recruitment to completion, the seven NVQ units appropriate to the local service, and an overview of each off-the-job training sessions linked to each unit with key dates.

67. Many of the learners are making slow progress towards achievement of their qualifications. Some learners experienced gaps in the changeover of assessors and were not visited at work for three months. Managers have been delayed in understanding the new qualification and have had difficulty in gauging the depth of knowledge required to fulfil the requirements of the standards. Awarding body paperwork was not made available to all of the learners at the start of the programme. Some assessors have taken a unit-by-unit approach due to their insufficient experience of assessment practice. Where more experienced assessors are cross-referencing evidence to all relevant elements of the NVQ, and gathering evidence of the learners' competences through their everyday work through observation, progress is faster.

Leadership and management

68. The youth work NVQ is a new programme delivered in partnership with Medway youth service, Kent youth and community service, and Kent Youth, a voluntary sector umbrella organisation. The NVQ has been piloted to enable local accredited basic training for part-time youth workers. As a new programme it is continuously evolving and being refined. Approaches are tested and improved as managers become more experienced in delivering the training and develop confidence in their assessment skills. KEY is now resolving some of the initial difficulties, and learners and assessors are beginning to complete the paperwork successfully. Good communication between partnership members and frequent meetings to evaluate the programme have been effective in establishing good practice.

69. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Equality and diversity are an integral part of the NVQ and all youth workers and managers are required to participate in relevant training as part of the service's requirements. KEY's equal opportunities policy and procedures are shared with learners at induction and they receive copies of them. The organisation reviews the learners' progress every 10 weeks and checks their understanding of their rights and responsibilities. All of the learners are aware of the complaints and appeal policies and procedures, and they are confident about using the processes. Many of the learners are experienced youth workers and are able to make connections between their practice with young people and their own rights and responsibilities.

70. The assessors and internal verifiers have good links with their counterparts in other areas of learning to share good practice and support the development of the NVQ. For consistency, KEY has standardised its paperwork.

71. The organisation records regular and useful assessors' and internal verifiers' meetings,

with good discussion points. It identifies effective actions to remedy inaccuracies and standardise assessment practice. All of the partners are willing to test new ideas and improve their assessment, teaching and learning techniques.

Social care

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention rates on ETP
- good off-the-job training
- well-integrated key skills and technical certificates
- good work settings
- good personal and training support for learners
- very effective leadership and management

Weaknesses

- inconsistent recording and target-setting

Achievement and standards

72. Retention on ETP is good and satisfactory on other programmes. Achievement of NVQs is satisfactory for apprentices and ETP learners, and completion of apprenticeship frameworks has improved. Thirty per cent of the current learners on advanced apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and NVQ training have less than five GCSEs at grade C or above and 17 per cent have no previous qualifications. Learners' portfolios are well organised and contain an appropriate range of evidence. Their written work is satisfactory and many of them are confident in using ICT. All of them demonstrate a sound understanding of their clients' rights.

73. Apprentices improve their confidence and competence in the workplace. Learners who have received literacy and/or numeracy support identify areas in which they have improved, including the everyday uses of numeracy in the workplace.

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	12		6		7		2	100								
Retained*	0		3		4		2	100								
Successfully completed	0		2		2		1	50								
Still in learning	8		2		1		0	0								

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		34		27		36	100	62	100						
Retained*	0		0		13		18	50	25	40						
Successfully completed	0		0		7		10	28	14	23						
Still in learning	2		25		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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		109		121											
Retained*	0		22		79											
Successfully completed	0		20		69											
Still in learning	8		75		6											

*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	1		1	100	5	100	6	100								
Retained*	0		0	0	2	40	3	50								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	1	20	1	17								
Still in learning	1		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

The quality of provision

74. Off-the-job training is good. Sessions are well planned and incorporate a good variety of activities. For example, learners found the session in which they had to feed each other memorable. It promoted greater insight into the needs and rights of their clients. Planning also takes account of individual learners' needs, including the use of different coloured materials to support learners with dyslexia. Tutors have good, supportive working relationships with learners, which promote confidence and effective learning. For apprentices, the key skills and technical certificates are an integral part of the training programme. Key skills work packages relate to care settings.

75. KEY provides its learners with good work settings, which provides them with good-quality training opportunities. It matches the learners carefully to their work placements and settings to ensure an appropriate match to their NVQ units. A wide variety of work settings is available and learners with additional support needs are carefully placed. Employers offer good additional training opportunities, including courses in dementia, funeral services, medication and recognition of abuse of the elderly. Key skills assignments

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are strongly related to care settings. The ETP programme is helping care workers to obtain qualifications and training that they may otherwise find difficult to obtain, particularly with smaller employers. Several of the learners are relatively new to care work and the training programme is helping them to establish new career routes.

76. KEY provides its learners with good personal and training support. Those learners who need additional support attend the training centres more frequently, and the tutors may visit them more frequently in the workplace. Learners may arrange individual tutorials in the training centres, or in the workplace, and they value these. Tutors have devised ways of helping the learners to use other forms of assessment if they are not confident in their written skills. KEY also has effective links with appropriate referral agencies. Tutors give freely of their time in providing support for the learners, including obtaining careers information for them when this is appropriate.

77. Induction and initial assessment for apprentices are satisfactory. They lead to the provision of additional learning support for key skills, literacy or numeracy. For ETP learners, initial assessment has been introduced more recently. However, some ETP learners have received additional literacy and/or numeracy support that has helped them to complete their NVQs successfully.

78. Internal verification and assessment are satisfactory. KEY monitors its learners' progress closely, and displays apprentices' progress on wallcharts. For most learners, assessment is timely, although a very small number are making slower progress because of delays in assessment.

79. The organisation's approaches to target-setting for learners are inconsistent, and some assessment plans contain insufficient detail. KEY does not always record details of additional support or changes to the training programme on the learners' individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

80. KEY has good links with other training providers and voluntary and community organisations. Its use of targets and effective teamwork contribute to a drive towards improvement. The organisation's appraisal system leads to good opportunities for staff training and development.

81. Three-monthly observations ensure the quality of direct training, along with the standardisation of workshops. The internal verification procedures are thorough and include observations of assessments. KEY's staff are appropriately qualified. Managers respond to problems promptly and deal with them quickly to benefit the learners. KEY's recent investment in ICT and other equipment means that most of its training centres have interactive whiteboards and are well resourced. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory.

82. The self-assessment process starts with staff contributions through appraisals and team meetings. Staff are aware of the organisation's progress against the identified actions. The self-assessment report accurately identifies four strengths, but fails to identify three others. It partly identified one weakness. The self-assessment report gave insufficient attention to data and trends.

Retail and commercial enterprise**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hairdressing</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	123	3
NVQ training for young people	2	None
<i>Hospitality and catering</i>		2
Employer training pilot	24	2

83. KEY provides training in retailing and wholesaling, warehousing and distribution, hairdressing, and hospitality and catering. The apprenticeship and NVQ training programmes were inspected in hairdressing and the ETP in hospitality and catering.

84. KEY delivers hairdressing training across Kent. Learners either attend the Gillingham training centre on day-release or receive visits at their salons for background knowledge, practical training and assessment. There is a commercial salon at the training centre for day-release learners. Two-thirds of learners receive their training at their salons. There are six tutors, three of whom are part time. The tutors' role includes responsibility for training, assessing and on-the-job progress reviews. Progress reviews are carried out every 10 weeks. There are 125 hairdressing learners. Of these, 16 are advanced apprentices, 107 are apprentices and two are following an NVQ programme. There are also five E2E learners on short courses taking units of the NVQ at level 1. Most learners are employed, but may be centre-based when they are between jobs. There are four active work-based assessors. KEY has learners in 59 salons. Ninety-one per cent of the learners are women and 3 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. All staff who assess, hold, or are working towards, relevant qualifications for the role. Most learners have poor previous educational attainment. Around 9 per cent of learners have additional learning needs.

85. There are 24 learners on ETPs in hospitality and catering. Seventeen learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in housekeeping and seven learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in food preparation and cooking. Training and assessment take place in the workplace. Many of the learners work part time and are employed in a variety of work settings, including small care homes, food outlets and an NHS Trust.

Hairdressing**Grade 3*****Strengths***

- flexible training that meets the employers' needs
- good training in the workplace

Weaknesses

- slow progress of learners participating in off-the-job training
- poor completion of learning plans and review paperwork

Achievement and standards

86. Retention rates are now satisfactory and have improved on the advanced apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes. Sixty-seven per cent of the current learners have less than five GCSEs at grade C or above and 3 per cent have no previous qualifications. All 16 advanced apprentices have achieved their technical certificate and apprentices are successful in achieving their key skills qualifications. The learners' hairdressing skills vary considerably. Some learners are not at all confident, while others at the same stage of training are very capable. Learners are able to communicate positively with their clients. During observation of practical training, staff paid good attention to hygiene practices, such as ensuring the sterilisation of dropped tools and the wearing of personal protective equipment.

87. There is some slow progress, especially in the completion of apprenticeship frameworks. For 2003-04 starters, only two frameworks have been achieved, with 31 still in learning. Learners who attend the training centre make slow progress in their first year of training, with few completing practical NVQ units. The shortage of models in the training centre affects skills development and progression through the hairdressing NVQ. First-year learners tend to practise on training heads to develop their practical skills. Second-year learners are prioritised for models and most of the assessment takes place in the second year.

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	14		14		7		3									
Retained*	0		0		2		3									
Successfully completed	0		0		0		1									
Still in learning	11		3		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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	10		80		67		82		53	100						
Retained*	0		1		4		31		19	36						
Successfully completed	0		0		2		25		14	26						
Still in learning	10		63		31		3		0	0						

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		1		15	100	25	100								
Retained*	0		0		2	13	3	12								
Successfully completed	0		0		2	13	1	4								
Still in learning	1		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

The quality of provision

88. The in-salon training programme offers flexible training that meets the employers' needs. Learners receive concentrated individual tuition and assessment every two weeks. This minimises disruption to employers and allows frequent communication between KEY's staff and the employer. Where possible, KEY's tutors respond to requests to make visits for particular assessment opportunities, especially for areas such as perming where there are few clients. Employers are positive about their relationships with KEY and are usually in the salon when visits occur. Employers are aware of the overall progress of their learners.

89. Training in the workplace is generally good. KEY has a range of good work placements. Opportunities vary between employers but include working with several stylists and making extra time available during work to complete background knowledge and additional training opportunities. One salon takes its learners to monthly hair shows run by a prestigious national organisation and the learners have also taken part. KEY encourages its learners to participate in its annual hairdressing competition. Any finalists have the opportunity to participate in external regional and national hairdressing competitions. There have been several successes in recent years in national competitions and one learner was selected as a member of the Junior World Cup squad. KEY also gives awards to learners for particular achievements or for overcoming difficulties during their training. Most learners complete manufacturers' product training sessions at their salon and some also attend technical skill development courses that the manufacturers and product suppliers run. Similar training events occur at the Gillingham training centre.

90. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. Background knowledge and practical training are delivered effectively at the Gillingham training centre. Some aspects of colour theory in learners' notes are incorrect, having been taken from externally produced learning packs.

91. Key skills training is satisfactory and is integral to the apprenticeship training programme, with examinations being taken in the first year of training. The introduction of online testing has helped learners to obtain their key skills examinations more easily.

92. There is satisfactory literacy and numeracy support for learners. Tutors give them extra individual support and specialist support from qualified basic skills tutors is available. Learners with dyslexia have written test questions read out for them. Learners feel well supported and there are good relationships between tutors and their learners. Progression opportunities are discussed with learners, and several apprentices interviewed want to progress to an advanced apprenticeship after taking a break from training in order to consolidate their practical skills. Several learners from the 2004-05 NVQ at level 1 school

link and E2E programmes have progressed to the apprenticeship framework.

93. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessment plans are completed before assessment, along with client consultation sheets. Tutors remain unobtrusive and give appropriate feedback to learners, detailing their strengths and any further actions required. Work-based assessors are being used more as employers' staff take assessors' qualifications. KEY records practical and written assessments accurately, in line with awarding body requirements. Learners are using witness testimonies for evidence in portfolios, particularly with advanced apprentices. Learners are aware of complaints and appeals procedures. They receive written feedback on assignments but some of them would benefit from closer marking of their work, such as for spelling mistakes of technical hairdressing terms.

94. Resources are adequate. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. KEY's commercial salon and reception area are suitable but dated in appearance. They do not reflect the current commercial standard of the salons in which most of the learners work. The use of information learning technology to enhance the training programmes is incomplete. KEY recognises this and it is included in future plans. Although used for key skills testing, it is not available in teaching rooms or at reception.

95. Completion of progress review paperwork is poor and does not always reflect the full discussions held with learners and employers around planning of training and target-setting. The targets set for learners are not specific enough or broken down into easily achievable steps. Some sections of the review paperwork are often left blank, particularly equal opportunities and health and safety. Where they are completed, comments are very general. Progress reviews generally include the employer as well as the learner and tutor. The individual learning plans for learners with additional learning needs are not fully completed to show results of initial assessment testing. The results are held elsewhere and are not carried forward. There is a log of learning support kept in the learners' files. Completion dates for completion of NVQ units are not individualised to reflect the learners' previous experience.

Leadership and management

96. KEY has had staffing problems but has minimised the disruption to learners and their employers. Staff analyse and discuss satisfaction surveys and training session evaluations and use them to make improvements. There is improved communication among the hairdressing team, with a scheduled series of one-hour or one-day meetings throughout the year. Standard agenda items include learners' progress reviews, evaluation of training, learner support, equality of opportunity, resources and training materials.

97. Internal verification is satisfactory. Group standardisation sessions are held for all tutors, and individual meetings are in place for those who are unable to attend. Tutors are observed and receive appropriate feedback. Staff development is freely available and staff receive regular and relevant professional and occupational development.

98. Learners only have a basic understanding of equality of opportunity, despite covering it during induction and in a unit of their NVQ. Most salons have adequate physical access but a few have staircases and no alternative method of entry. This is a barrier for clients rather than learners in the workplace. KEY's recruitment literature includes men and learners from minority ethnic groups. The number of learners adequately reflects the local population.

99. The organisation's most recent self-assessment report identified some areas as strengths, when they are normal practice. It did not make sufficiently analytical judgements on available data for retention and achievement.

Hospitality and catering

Grade 2

Strengths

- good additional learning opportunities
- flexible work-based assessment
- effective relationships with employers
- very effective pastoral support

Weaknesses

- insufficient formal planning and recording of learners' programmes

Achievement and standards

100. Retention and achievement are satisfactory, with some early completion in housekeeping, food processing and cooking. Most learners have the opportunity to take additional non-accredited training within their place of work, such as fire training, health and safety, manual handling and control of infectious diseases. These enhance the learners' confidence, future employability and job satisfaction. Learners demonstrate satisfactory occupational competence and are motivated and enthusiastic. Many learners have been working in their job roles for a number of years.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	2004-05		2003-04													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	30		36													
Retained*	8		25													
Successfully completed	3		19													
Still in learning	21		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

The quality of provision

101. There is good flexibility of assessment within the workplace. Most learners work part time. Tutors plan visits around the working operations of the shifts and try not to make demands on the learners' personal time. KEY makes good use of modifications to recipes and working practices, with supplementary questions to facilitate the learners' ability to demonstrate their competence. The flexible approach enables the use of unplanned evidence that is observed during the assessor's visit, such as assisting an elderly and infirm guest.

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102. KEY's placement liaison advisers and tutors promote and maintain good relationships with employers. There are regular and frequent visits, with telephone communication when needed. KEY has used many of the placements for a long time. Learners and employers value the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised qualifications wholly within the workplace with the minimum disruption to normal patterns of work.

103. The very effective personal support and guidance for learners is especially important in this area, where most learners are part time and the NVQ process is new to them. Learners have frequent visits and contact with staff from KEY. The good communication between the staff involved with the learners ensures that issues and concerns are resolved quickly and effectively. For example, additional study aids have been agreed for two learners with one employer.

104. Learners' portfolios of evidence are satisfactory and generally they are well organised and maintained. Work is suitably referenced and in housekeeping there is photographic evidence of completed assessments. However, there is no individual learner monitoring sheet to demonstrate overall progress towards the qualification outcome, and learners and employers are not always able to identify current achievement.

105. Until recently, there has been no initial assessment of, or support for, literacy and numeracy. New learners now receive this assistance.

106. KEY carries out insufficient formal planning and recording of the learners' programmes. Tutors plan learners' programmes using the results of a paper-based skill scan and discussion with the learners. However, KEY does not record this formally and often it does not include details of training provided by the employer on the individual learning plan. There is limited recording of learners' previous work experience and existing occupational competence. KEY shares assessment-planning documents with employers but frequently does not identify when assessments have been completed and signed off as competent. Employers and learners are not always aware of current achievement. This is especially important as some learners have had a number of managers. Employers' involvement in learners' reviews is limited and there are few employers' comments on the review form about the learners' progress in the workplace.

Leadership and management

107. Internal verification is satisfactory. It is systematic and effective. KEY has dealt with actions and recommendations from external verification visits. Standardisation meetings ensure consistent assessment practice. Development of assessment against the new standards for January 2006 is an agenda item at all staff meetings. The regular internal verification meetings ensure the team takes actions to improve assessment and verification.

108. KEY does not promote equality of opportunity sufficiently at induction, during assessment or in learners' progress reviews. Learners have a limited understanding of equality of opportunity.

109. Managers have a clear commitment to improving performance, but this has yet to fully affect the learners. The self-assessment report is satisfactory and reflects a number of findings identified by inspection, but it did not identify some weaknesses.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		3
New Deal for young people	155	3
Other government-funded provision	31	3
Entry to Employment	68	3

110. KEY has 254 learners on preparation for life and work programmes. There are 68 learners are on E2E, 72 on the New Deal voluntary sector option and 83 on New Deal Gateway. Thirty-one learners who are not on any other programmes access the ESF-funded provision. KEY is the core contract holder for E2E in northwest Kent, east Kent triangle and the mid Kent corridor. Within these areas, KEY subcontracts specific areas of E2E provision to seven other providers. North West Kent College, Thanet College, Allenvale, KCHT, Instant Muscle and Mid-Kent College are inspected in their own right and therefore are not included in the scope of this inspection. The YMCA, a Christian association for young men, acts as a subcontractor to KEY and its provision is included in this inspection. KEY also acts as a subcontractor to NACRO and these 28 additional learners are included in this inspection. Learners either refer themselves or are referred by Connexions or specialist agencies who work with the client group. Training for E2E learners is provided in the five main centres across the county, as well as two satellite centres. E2E is a flexible programme that provides options including personal and social development, literacy, numeracy and vocational training. Learners can gain units towards an NVQ at level 1 where appropriate. Attendance is usually for a minimum of 16 hours each week for approximately 17 weeks. Twenty-six E2E learners are currently on work placement. A full-time manager manages the provision with the support of three E2E co-ordinators. Nine staff provide training on the E2E programme.

111. The New Deal Gateway and New Deal voluntary sector options are funded by Jobcentre Plus. The New Deal Gateway can last for up to 16 weeks and the voluntary sector option for up to 13 weeks. On the New Deal Gateway, 13 participants are attending a customised motivation and confidence-building course and 70 participants are attending the Access for All option. A further 72 participants are on the New Deal voluntary sector option. A New Deal manager is responsible for the training funded by Jobcentre Plus. A newly appointed Gateway co-ordinator supports this work. Sixteen staff provide training across this provision.

112. KEY has secured additional funding through the ESF since April 2004. This provides for three discrete projects. The opportunities plus project is a two-week motivation and confidence-building course for young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in employment, education or training. Twenty-five learners are participating in this course. The essential skills project provides literacy, numeracy and language skills for young people aged 16 and 17. Six learners from the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) group are on this project. In addition, 36 E2E learners with literacy, numeracy and language levels at entry levels 1, 2 and 3 are accessing this course. The E2E enhancement project aims to improve the retention and achievement of learners. Qualified professional staff provide counselling, psychologist services and health guidance for young people. Sixty-five learners

are receiving this support.

113. Thirty-eight apprentices and 16 NVQ learners across the vocational areas are receiving support in either literacy and/or numeracy. This support is delivered by the learning support unit, as is the training for skills for life for E2E and essential skills learners. The unit is also providing jobsearch to 37 E2E and 54 New Deal voluntary sector participants. Fourteen staff are attached to the learning support unit.

Employability training

Grade 3

Strengths

- good learning environment
- well-designed programmes to meet individual learners' needs
- good use of additional funding to enhance the E2E programme
- particularly productive relationships with external partners
- particularly good specialist advice on New Deal Gateway

Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching and learning strategies for literacy and numeracy
- insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training on the E2E programme
- inadequate target-setting
- inconsistent monitoring of participants in the workplace on New Deal voluntary sector option
- some inadequate quality assurance

Achievement and standards

114. The qualification achievement rate on E2E is satisfactory. In 2004-05, the achievement rate on E2E for numeracy qualifications at entry levels was 57 per cent. Learners on E2E also have the opportunity to follow vocational qualifications at level 1. Of particular note is the level 1 achievement rate of a nationally recognised childcare course at 60 per cent in 2004-05.

115. Progression into work-based learning, further education and training is satisfactory on E2E. It has improved significantly between 2003-04 and 2004-05, by some 17 per cent. Learners' achievement of personal goals is satisfactory. It is difficult for KEY to measure non-qualification outcomes accurately because targets on E2E passports are not sufficiently detailed to measure progress. Many learners have a history of low attainment in formal education and a history of non-attendance, and others have a range of complex needs. Learners were able to articulate the difference the programme has made to their motivation and attitude to learning.

116. The rate of progress into jobs on the New Deal voluntary sector option is satisfactory and ranges from 40 to 46 per cent over the past four years, although the maximum progression rate for the 2004-05 start year shows a decline. Approximately a third of participants complete the goals on their individual development plan. Participants on New Deal Gateway achieve a wide range of short course qualifications. Pass rates in first aid, manual handling, basic food hygiene, and health and safety range from 81 to 100 per cent.

The progression rates into employment from the motiv8 and access to media intensive programmes currently stand at 20 per cent. The participants' evaluation of the motiv8 programme highlighted a significant increase in their confidence in relation to time management, personal appearance and social interaction. Participants on Jobcentre Plus programmes acquire appropriate job-related and employability skills across a wide range of occupational areas.

117. Learners benefiting from the three ESF-funded projects achieve well. Of the 26 learners on the essential skills project, six have gained a qualification in literacy and/or numeracy. From the Opportunities-Plus project nearly 75 per cent of learners make significant progress in re-engaging with learning and working with external agencies that can support them in overcoming their barriers to learning. Of the 365 learners who have accessed support from specialist staff on the E2E enhancement project, 61 per cent have achieved a positive outcome from their main programme.

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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	23		513		559	100	156	100	98	100						
Progression ¹	0		220		144	26	23	15	18	18						
Achieved objectives ²	0		123		90	16	35	22	0	0						
Still in learning	23		45		0	0	0	0	0	0						

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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25		348		270	100	240	100	159	100	94	100				
Retained*	1		158		110	41	111	46	68	43	38	40				
Planned learning completed	1		155		108	40	111	46	67	42	38	40				
Gained job	1		72		108	40	111	46	67	42	38	40				
Still in training	21		51		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				

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

The quality of provision

118. KEY's training centres provide environments conducive to learning. They are well located throughout Kent. Public transport links to them are good and the training centres attract learners from a wide geographical area. Classrooms are generally bright, well furnished and welcoming. Tutors make good use of wall space to provide information, display learners' work and celebrate their success. Many of the training centres have on-site café facilities that provide reasonably priced meals and snacks. KEY also makes

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effective use of additional venues situated at the heart of local communities, where learners have good access to a range of other agencies who share the premises.

119. KEY has effectively developed programmes to meet the needs of individual learners. Placement liaison advisers make good use of their links with local employers to maintain and develop a wide variety of work-placement opportunities to meet the learners' vocational and personal needs. Employers have a good understanding of the structure and requirements of the E2E programme and support the learners very well. Learners' time in work placements gradually increases as their training programme develops. This prepares them effectively for progress into employment or further training. KEY offers a wide range of vocational training at level 1, which includes retailing, childcare, catering, business administration, construction and hairdressing. Learners achieve additional qualifications in health and safety, first aid and a basic computer literacy course. KEY's personal and social development programmes are very effective in helping the learners to improve their confidence and motivation. The organisation makes very good use of the specialist skills of other providers to increase the variety of the E2E programme. It links activities effectively to the needs and interests of learners and provides them with good opportunities to practise and improve their employability and life skills. A good range of work placements are available to learners on the New Deal voluntary sector option. The New Deal Gateway provision offers a wide variety of courses and activities to meet participants' individual needs.

120. KEY has made good use of additional ESF funding to enhance the E2E programme. A health worker and two counsellors provide additional expertise during group training sessions, which effectively enhances the skills of the E2E tutors. Learners arrange individual sessions at the training centres to help them overcome their personal difficulties and barriers to progress. Communication between tutors and specialist workers is very good and helps the learners to access specialist advice. KEY promotes the service well during the learners' induction. In addition, it uses ESF funding to attract young people into learning to develop their literacy, numeracy and/or language skills. It offers this provision to learners on an individual basis. It also uses the funding to support the E2E programme. Learners at entry levels 1, 2 or 3 in literacy and numeracy receive training in smaller groups.

121. The timetable for the Opportunities Plus programme is good. It includes a wide range of mostly practical activities designed to encourage the learners to explore aspects of themselves, their aspirations and interests, and how they interact and work with other people. Learners have the opportunity to attend an outdoor activity during the two weeks, as well as the opportunity to participate in the training centre in individual and group tasks. A workbook, designed by KEY, accompanies the course. The workbook is colourful and represents much of the information in a visual format that is generally appropriate for people with literacy difficulties. Tutors agree an individual learning plan with each learner and review this at the end of each week. Learners benefit from a good level of support from their tutors during the sessions. Teaching and learning on the Opportunities Plus programme are satisfactory.

122. KEY's working relationships with external partners are particularly productive. The organisation has developed good links with subcontractors, colleges and external agencies to expand and offer a broad range of activities across the preparation for work and life programmes. Effective liaison with Jobcentre Plus staff has enabled KEY to work with a local employer to prepare participants for employment in the events security field. The

organisation works closely and effectively with the personal advisers from Connexions.

123. KEY offers participants on the New Deal Gateway exceptionally good advice and support. On the Access all Areas part of the programme, participants access specialist, industry-specific advice and information in their chosen area of interest. KEY has an extensive bank of people with particular industry knowledge and experience across a range of vocational areas. The programme has grown from an initial Access to Media programme to include a number of more diverse occupations, including zoo management, circus entertainer, image consultant, funeral director, and writer and poet. The particularly good advice ranges from business ideas to practical help. Individual goals are agreed between each adviser and the participants. Reviews are good and records are clear and detailed. Feedback about the programme from participants is good.

124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. KEY's tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. Learning resources for the various programmes are generally satisfactory. Jobsearch sessions are satisfactory. In the better sessions that the inspectors observed, KEY's tutors encouraged the learners to participate and the learners' standard of work is good. However, tutors in some sessions did not always involve all of the learners or challenge inappropriate comments and behaviour. In the weaker sessions, tutors did not plan sufficiently to take account of individual learners' needs within group sessions. Assessment and internal verification are adequate.

125. KEY uses a narrow range of teaching and learning strategies in literacy and numeracy sessions. It has some good teaching for learners who wish to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and who receive support from the ESF-funded Essential Skills programme. However, literacy and numeracy teaching is often limited to the completion of worksheets and workbooks. When learners work through worksheets individually, some learners lose interest and achieve little during the class.

126. The links between on- and off-the-job training on the E2E programme are insufficient. KEY does not yet sufficiently link together aspects of the learners' programmes and employers are not sufficiently aware of the content of learners' classes at the training centres. KEY does not link literacy and numeracy training sufficiently to work and life in general. In many cases, the learners are unaware of the relevance of their learning. However, a small number of learners are able to provide examples of how they have applied their learning to everyday tasks.

127. Target-setting across the provision is inadequate. Some review documents for participants on the New Deal voluntary sector option are poorly completed. They do not contain specific and measurable targets, and many of the comments are vague. Recording of the learning that has taken place is limited. Many records purely contain a description of activity, rather than any learning that has taken place. On the E2E programme, staff do not use initial assessment sufficiently to agree specific, measurable, achievable and realistic targets. Learning plans are often general and contain aims and objectives that are too broad. Reviews take place regularly, include the learners and, where relevant, the employers. However, KEY does not yet use reviews sufficiently to help the learners understand what improvements are required to help them progress. Most learners have a poor awareness and understanding of the targets agreed with them at their review. Tutors do not plan sufficiently for individual achievement in group learning sessions. Many learners are unaware of their own targets within group sessions. KEY does not yet use

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individual target-setting sufficiently to measure the learners' progress in improving their confidence, motivation, self-esteem and team-building skills.

128. On the New Deal voluntary sector, option the monitoring of participants in the workplace is inconsistent. Inspectors found examples of participants who had been in training for nine and 11 weeks and who had not received a visit from a member of staff. In many cases, KEY does not sufficiently evaluate the tasks and activities that participants are involved in at work to identify how they can transfer the skills which they learn to other tasks and activities.

Leadership and management

129. The management of the programmes is satisfactory. KEY holds regular and timely meetings for all of its training programmes and communication across the programmes and with its staff is effective. Staff experience and qualifications are adequate and the organisation has an appropriate programme of staff training and development. KEY celebrates its learners' success well. It uses effective central management information systems to monitor achievement by gender, ethnicity and disability.

130. Some quality assurance arrangements are inadequate. Although staff have regular team meetings, there is no systematic process for sharing good practice across the preparation for life and work provision. Staff carry out observations of teaching and learning systematically. However, the quality of feedback to tutors does not focus sufficiently on how and what learners have learnt, checks on learning and on how to meet individual needs. Effective systems are in place for the management of the subcontracted provision. The organisation's most recent self-assessment report is insufficiently self-evaluative. It did not cover, in enough depth, the Jobcentre Plus programmes or use data to support judgements. The report only identified two of the weaknesses found during the inspection.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		2
Apprenticeships for young people	70	2
Employer training pilot	13	2
NVQ training for young people	9	None
Customer service		3
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

131. KEY offers training programmes in business administration and customer service at levels 2 and 3. A training manager manages the programmes with two training co-ordinators, nine tutors and a team of placement liaison advisers. Business administration has three advanced apprentices, 67 apprentices, and nine learners on NVQ training. There are 13 learners on ETP. All of the learners on apprenticeship programmes and the NVQ training are unemployed when they join the programmes. Many of them gain employment with their work-placement provider during or following the training programme.

132. Customer service has six advanced modern apprentices and 16 apprentices. Fourteen of the learners are employed. There are eight learners on ETP but these were not part of the inspection. Learners work in a range of establishments, including national retail outlets, estate agents, offices, health clubs, and at KEY in customer-facing roles.

133. Induction for employed learners takes place in the workplace and for non-employed learners at the appropriate training centre. KEY provides off-the-job training at any one of its five training centres. In business administration, learners frequently receive individual off-the-job training from KEY's staff at their workplace. All assessments and reviews take place in the workplace. Tutors visit the learners every four to six weeks to provide assessment and every 10 weeks to review their progress.

Customer service**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good off-the-job training
- good additional learning support
- good pastoral support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of learning to meet individual learners' needs
- ineffective target-setting
- some poor assessment practice

Achievement and standards

134. The retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. Fifty-five per cent of the learners have less than five GCSEs at grades C or above and 5 per cent have no previous

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qualifications. Since 2002-03, 57 per cent of apprentices starting the programme have successfully completed it or are still in learning. Apprentices are making satisfactory progress in their work. Some advanced apprentices are making slow progress towards the completion of their framework and KEY is supporting them to finish beyond their planned completion date. Learners' work skills are satisfactory.

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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		6		2	100										
Retained*	0		1		2	100										
Successfully completed	0		0		1	50										
Still in learning	2		4		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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		18		9		10	100	16	100						
Retained*	0		0		6		4	40	2	12						
Successfully completed	0		0		4		4	40	2	12						
Still in learning	4		10		2		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

The quality of provision

135. Off-the-job training is good. Learners attend KEY's training centres for training for technical certificates, key skills, portfolio-building and tutorials. Training sessions are well planned and tutors motivate and encourage the learners to participate. The good learning environment includes displays of learners' work and celebrations of their achievements. Key skills training is linked to the learners' work. In one application of number session, the tutor encouraged the learners to identify how they use numbers in their customer service role. Learners enjoy the training sessions and look forward to attending.

136. KEY's arrangements for additional learning support are good. Twenty-five per cent of current learners receive additional learning or social needs support. The organisation uses the results of initial assessment to identify the precise support that is needed and plans an individual programme. Learners value the support that they receive and recognise the progress they make.

137. The good pastoral support includes personal support as well as additional training and coaching where needed. Tutors and learners enjoy a good working relationship and learners look forward to their visits. Support is also available outside normal working hours. Learners can contact tutors by mobile telephone. Those who require specialist advice are

referred to external agencies with ongoing support if needed. Placement liaison advisers also offer support to learners in their work placements and ensure that the placement is suitable. They offer the learners additional support to prepare them for interviews.

138. Induction to the programme is satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information to understand fully the requirements of the apprenticeship framework for successful completion.

139. The formal planning of learning to meet individual learners' needs is insufficient. KEY sets the learners' target dates for achievement of units and framework components, but these are not always individual to the learner and take little account of their previous experience, current job role or aptitude. KEY does not link on- and off-the-job training sufficiently and does not involve the employers adequately when discussing the learners' training requirements. Many learners receive on-the-job training but this is often unplanned and coincidental to the programme. Some learners receive structured and well-planned training at work but this is not recorded on the individual learning plan.

140. Target-setting at reviews is ineffective. Progress reviews take place every 10 weeks. Targets are set but they are often short term, with no medium-term target-setting for framework completion. Targets are not skill-based and they are insufficiently challenging. Employers are usually present at reviews but there is little discussion about the learners' progress at work since the previous review.

141. Some assessment practice is poor. There is an over-reliance on learners to complete candidate statements, particularly at level 2, and some learners have completed up to 15 case studies. Little use is made of witness testimonies and photographs of learners at work. Written feedback to learners is not always clear and written work is not always marked promptly. The organisation's internal verification process has not identified these poor assessment practices. Feedback from the internal verifier is directed towards the learners, not the tutors. KEY has recognised this in its new internal verification strategy which it will implement in November 2005.

Leadership and management

142. At the time of the inspection, one of KEY's experienced tutors managed the programme. The regular staff meetings are relevant and actions are recorded. The team functions well and is responsive to employers and learners. Staff are appropriately qualified, have a good range of experience and have a strong commitment to the learners. The equipment, learning resources and accommodation are satisfactory. Learning materials are satisfactory but some communication key skill resources contain punctuation errors. Reinforcement of equality of opportunity and learners' awareness of equality and diversity is inconsistent. Quality improvement is satisfactory and tutors attend standardisation meetings. KEY's self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report did not correctly identify all of the strengths and weaknesses that the inspectors found.

Administration

Grade 2

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good vocational, pastoral and additional support for learners

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- good target-setting

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of apprenticeship NVQs

Achievement and standards

143. The retention and achievement rates of learners on ETP are satisfactory. Of the 22 learners who have started since the programme began, only two have completed it but 13 are still in learning. Many of these are nearing completion of their NVQ. Sixty-six per cent of apprentices and learners on NVQ training have less than five GCSEs at grade C or above and 10 per cent have no previous qualifications. There has been slow achievement of the apprenticeship framework. KEY has good rates of success in key skills and the technical certificate, but achievement of the NVQ has been slow. The achievement rates between 2001 and 2003 were low but have been improving since then. Many of these learners made slow progress initially. KEY identified this weakness in its most recent self-assessment report and has taken action to improve it.

144. Learners develop a wide range of administrative skills that meet employers' requirements and increase their employability. Young learners grow in confidence and maturity and improve their social and communication skills. Learners enjoy their training and are motivated to achieve and progress further. However, apart from achieving the NVQ, the principal goal of most of the learners is to obtain employment in administration. Many of them obtain suitable full-time jobs with their work placements. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, as is the quality of the learners' portfolios, although many of them are of a higher standard.

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	2		1		2	100	1	100								
Retained*	0		0		1	50	1	100								
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	0	0								
Still in learning	1		0		1	50	1	100								

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		66		80		69	100	86	100						
Retained*	0		1		39		21	30	24	28						
Successfully completed	0		1		22		18	26	21	24						
Still in learning	6		44		17		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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		7		13											
Retained*	0		3		6											
Successfully completed	0		1		1											
Still in learning	2		5		6											

*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	9		2		15		24	100								
Retained*	0		1		3		2	8								
Successfully completed	0		1		2		0	0								
Still in learning	8		1		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

The quality of provision

145. Off-the-job training is good. Sessions are well structured and interesting, and the tutors' explanations are consistently clear and concise. Good use is made of visual aids, including videos, and question and answer techniques are used to good effect. Learners participate well in discussions, work independently and are encouraged to evaluate their own work. Tutors praise, encourage and value the learners' responses. Good assignments and practical exercises are used.

146. The learners' experience is enriched by good support. Employers and work-placement providers take a keen interest in their learners and provide them with extra vocational support where necessary. At most locations, the learners benefit from flexible arrangements for providing a wide range of work and are encouraged to carry out a variety of jobs to enhance their experience. There are frequent and regular visits from tutors and placement liaison advisers. KEY encourages the learners to contact them if they have any problems. Learners who require specialist advice are referred to external agencies with ongoing support if needed. Learners with literacy and numeracy needs benefit from

additional support from specialist staff. Currently, eight learners are receiving this support.

147. KEY reviews the learners' progress every 10 weeks and focuses well on target-setting for work skills and NVQ unit achievement. It sets clear objectives for training and assessment. Where necessary, KEY reviews and updates these extensively. It also sets targets for optional units and monitors them effectively with learners, work-placement providers and employers.

148. KEY's assessment arrangements are satisfactory. It carries out NVQ assessments in the workplace and meets awarding body requirements. The organisation's resources are adequate for the level of the provision. The staff are adequately qualified and experienced. The provision meets the requirements of local employers and the learners' needs. KEY provides its learners with a healthy environment.

Leadership and management

149. The staff team maintains good working relationships and shares good practice. Internal communication is effective and there is good communication with external organisations, including employers. Staff effectively share problems relating to learners' progress formally and informally. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory, effective and ensure a consistent approach to assessment. The organisation uses internal verification meetings, such as standardisation meetings, to share good practice. It monitors teaching adequately.

150. Learners cover equality of opportunity during induction but this is not adequately reinforced at reviews. KEY prepared its most recent self-assessment report in consultation with its staff and the employers. The report successfully identified one strength and one weakness. Other strengths were found to be satisfactory.

