

INSPECTION REPORT

Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited

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*

INSPECTION REPORT

Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited (BHFS) is one of the UK's largest providers of childcare services, managing 100 nurseries throughout Europe on behalf of private and public sector organisations, as well as independent private nurseries. Formerly known as Kinderquest, BHFS was formed in 2002 following a merger with a large nursery provider in the USA. The training department within BHFS provides apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in early years care and customer service, and has national contracts with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which have been negotiated through the National Employer Service. All learners are directly employed by BHFS. Twelve members of staff work in the training department, and include an NVQ training manager and a team of assessors and internal verifiers. BHFS has four training centres which are located in Liverpool, Oxford, Rushden and London.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** BHFS's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality improvement are good. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Early years care provision is satisfactory, and the provision in customer service is good.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report is detailed, comprehensive and evaluative. Judgements made in the report are based on the key questions of the Common Inspection Framework and many of the judgements match those of the inspectors. Improvements have been made through action-planning. Team meetings are held frequently to discuss issues and develop action plans which focus on areas of weakness.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Retention and achievement rates are improving, and the arrangements for quality improvement are good. The process of self-assessment is generally satisfactory in identifying weaknesses and establishing action plans to resolve those weaknesses.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BRIGHT HORIZONS FAMILY SOLUTIONS LIMITED:

- continue to implement quality improvement measures
- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the arrangements for the provision of off-the-job training
- increase the influence of the training department throughout BHFS

GRADES

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

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

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Early years		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	93	3	
Other government-funded provision	37	3	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Customer service		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	7	2	
Other government-funded provision	6	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. Inspectors reported on and graded early years care and customer service. This included apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships, and NVQ provision for learners over 25 years of age. Inspectors made two extended visits during July and August, with the inspection culminating in a four-day visit.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	22
Number of learners interviewed	54
Number of staff interviewed	25
Number of employers interviewed	20
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	22

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. Retention and achievement rates in early years care are satisfactory. During the period 2002-03, 48 per cent of advanced apprentices were retained, and 37 per cent completed their full apprenticeship frameworks. Four per cent are still in training. For the period 2003-04, retention was 64 per cent, and the completion rate was 26 per cent, with 38 per cent of learners still in training.

7. **Learners develop good skills in the workplace.** They are all employed by BHFS. Most nurseries have high-quality childcare provision, and learners gain experience with each age group of children. Staff support learners well in developing their practical skills.

8. **In customer service most learners are making good progress** and are very motivated and enthusiastic. Their progress towards the NVQ is good. They are made well aware of their employment rights and responsibilities, and testing for technical certificates is currently taking place.

9. The standard of portfolios produced by care learners is satisfactory. Those produced by customer service learners are good. Most portfolios contain good projects and personal statements, as well as work products and evidence of observations and questioning of knowledge. However, there is no use of professional discussions and a bank of questions is used automatically, rather than drawing upon performance evidence.

The quality of provision

10. **In early years care there is a good key skills programme.** Clear information about the requirements is given at induction. Key skills work is started within the first three months of the learners' programme. The planned projects for key skills are relevant to childcare and are used as evidence for their NVQ.

11. Learners in need of literacy and numeracy support in care programmes have access to well-written tuition packs and individual coaching from assessors. There are no learners in need of such support in customer service programmes at present, but BHFS provides specialist support when necessary.

12. In early years care, assessment practice is satisfactory. There is a good level of direct observation which is recorded in detail and well referenced. However, the provider relies too much on written answers to question packs for each unit. There is no use of the variety of evidence available based on work practice.

13. The level of support given to learners by assessors and managers is satisfactory. The assessors have useful meetings every four to six weeks with their learners. There is a good rapport between learners and their assessors. Communications between them are good, using e-mail and telephone links. Learners report that assessors reply promptly to messages left for them.

14. **Long-term target-setting is poor in early years care.** Short-term action plans are agreed with the learners at every visit. Learners are clear about what they have to achieve

by the next visit. Learners' progress reviews do not focus on the medium- and long-term targets. The reviews are often superficial and insufficiently detailed. Managers are not usually involved in the progress reviews but make comments afterwards. Some of the review records had no employer comments attached. Learners are not clear about their long-term targets. Some of the learners are making slow progress, particularly in the over-25 NVQ groups.

15. Off-the-job training in early years care programmes is inadequate. Attendance is poor at monthly training sessions which are provided in four locations. Many learners and managers report the difficulty learners have in accessing the training because of the distances between their workplaces and the training locations. Not all nurseries have sufficient staff cover to enable them to release their learners for training. Not all managers give sufficient priority to learners' attendance at training sessions.

16. Communications are good between assessors and managers. Assessors visit learners in their workplaces each month and are easily contactable by telephone or e-mail. In most cases the visit is carefully planned with the learner and the manager, so that cover can be arranged to enable the learner to spend time with the assessor.

17. The customer service programme is a useful progression opportunity for those learners at BHFS, or elsewhere, who have achieved the early years qualification and wish to develop themselves further. Several learners are newly promoted and they are very enthusiastic, investing a lot of their own time in the programme. Learners are able to build upon some of the skills and knowledge gained in the nursery, such as dealing with the children's parents.

18. Insufficient learning materials are available for customer service learners. A textbook is provided, but this is not always shared among learners in a nursery, or has been lost. Some learners are able to use the internet at work. There is no use of specialist videos, and no direction is given to relevant media programmes or articles. There are no formal customer service training sessions, but there is a helpful induction pack which prompts ideas for unit evidence.

Leadership and management

19. BHFS has clear strategies for the development of training which are supported by well-documented policies and procedures. Staff appreciate the clear guidance given for procedures such as assessment and internal verification, which include sampling strategies and guidelines. There are clear procedures for the development of individual learning plans and for guiding and supporting learners.

20. Communications are good throughout BHFS. Monthly meetings between the operations manager and the NVQ manager are held to discuss training within the contexts of corporate aims and objectives, budgets, and performance against set targets. Staff and team meetings take place twice each month. These meetings are supplemented with frequent telephone discussions and e-mail correspondence. Nursery managers appreciate the levels of contact they receive from the NVQ manager and the assessors, who make considerable effort to keep the nursery managers informed of the learners' progress and developments within training.

21. Learners receive satisfactory equal opportunities training at induction. The promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity throughout the programme is also satisfactory on training days and during progress reviews.

22. Senior managers give a satisfactory level of priority to the promotion of equal opportunities. Structured training sessions have taken place for training department staff and nursery managers to promote and develop further understanding of equality and diversity. It is planned that the information will be cascaded to all staff working in the nurseries.

23. Learners are treated equitably and fairly, regardless of the length of time they have been employed. They are encouraged by nursery staff and managers to carry out a wide range of activities which allows them to demonstrate competences towards the NVQ. **However there are differences between nurseries in the commitment of managers to release learners to attend off-the-job training sessions.** Many learners live long distances away from their nearest training centre, and access to off-the-job training is not equal for all.

24. **Quality improvement arrangements are good.** Quality monitoring and improvement are integral parts of daily management. Considerable improvements have been made in procedures and arrangements for the management and delivery of training.

25. **Arrangements for internal verification are thorough and effective.** BHFS has received very good reports from the external verifier. Frequent team meetings are held for assessors and verifiers, at least once each month, and much emphasis is placed upon the standardisation of practices and the importance of meeting schedules. Assessment schedules are monitored very effectively and systems for recording progression and outcomes work well. All assessors are observed and feedback is provided. Standardisation meetings are used to share good practice and examples of high-quality portfolios are identified. More targets for the achievement of course units are being met.

26. Self-assessment arrangements are well established and recent revisions to these arrangements place emphasis on the continuous assessment of performance, and prioritise action-planning for improvement. The self-assessment report is detailed, comprehensive and evaluative. Its findings are evaluated and discussed at NVQ team meetings and appropriate actions are taken, although learners and training centre managers do not contribute directly to the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategies with well-documented policies and procedures for the development of training
- good communication throughout BHFS
- good teamworking
- good arrangements for quality improvement
- thorough and effective internal verification

Weaknesses

- poor awareness and understanding of work-based learning among some nursery staff
- operational isolation of the NVQ team within the company management structure
- insufficient management support for learners to attend off-the-job training

Health, public services and care

Early years

Grade 3

Strengths

- good development of skills in the workplace
- good communications between assessors and managers
- good key skills programme

Weaknesses

- inadequate off-the-job training
- poor long-term target-setting

Business administration and law

Customer service

Grade 2

Strengths

- good progress on apprenticeship programmes
- good standard of work in portfolios
- good management of programme

Weaknesses

- insufficient materials

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BRIGHT HORIZONS FAMILY SOLUTIONS LIMITED:

- learning while working
- attending the training days
- sharing ideas with colleagues at the training days
- 'you get lots of work done at the training days'
- the improvements made in the training packs
- the support from assessors
- 'the training will certainly help me with my career'
- 'the training has boosted my confidence'
- 'it's made me realise what I can achieve'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BRIGHT HORIZONS FAMILY SOLUTIONS LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the wording of some questions
- 'we need more study time'
- 'there should be more training days'
- the question packs - make them less repetitive
- 'would have liked the NVQ standards sooner'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- clear strategies with well-documented policies and procedures for the development of training
- good communication throughout BHFS
- good teamworking
- good arrangements for quality improvement
- thorough and effective internal verification

Weaknesses

- poor awareness and understanding of work-based learning among some nursery staff
- operational isolation of the NVQ team within the company management structure
- insufficient management support for learners to attend off-the-job training

27. BHFS has clear strategies for the development of training which are supported by well-documented policies and procedures. The provider has produced a training management guide for all staff which is available as a CD-ROM. This guide is detailed and comprehensive, it provides a complete guide for all aspects of working in the nurseries and is cross-referenced to NVQ training. Staff are appreciative of the clear guidance given for procedures such as assessment and internal verification, which includes sampling strategies and guidelines. There are clear procedures for the development of individual learning plans and for guiding and supporting learners. The training management guide is used in conjunction with the centre management guide, which focuses on daily operational procedures in the nurseries and places great emphasis on the need to meet health and safety regulations. Health and safety issues are reinforced throughout working practices and further reiterated in training programmes.

28. Lines of communication are good throughout BHFS. Monthly meetings between the operations manager and the NVQ manager are used to discuss training within the context of corporate aims and objectives, budgets, and performance against set targets. Staff and team meetings are held twice each month to discuss training matters. These meetings are supplemented by frequent telephone discussions and e-mail correspondence. Telephone conferencing for the training team and for nursery managers and learners has been introduced and has proved to be a popular and effective way of enabling national networking and the sharing of good practice. The NVQ manager has established good working relationships with the regional managers, the nursing centre managers and the education manager. Her attendance at regional manager meetings has raised the other managers' awareness of, and support for, NVQ training. Nursery managers appreciate the levels of contact they receive from the NVQ manager and the assessors, who make considerable efforts to keep the managers informed of learners' progress, and developments within training.

29. The NVQ team works together particularly well as a unit. The team of assessors and verifiers is well managed and forms a cohesive and mutually supportive group. They meet regularly and their meetings are used to identify and share good practice to implement action plans for improving areas of weakness. Networking takes place frequently between team members who use e-mail and telephone contacts and share their knowledge and experience with each other.

30. BHFS has a clear management structure with well-defined roles and responsibilities. Staff understand the line management and accountability arrangements and all have job descriptions. There is, however, some operational isolation of the NVQ team from other BHFS departments. The formal links between the NVQ team and the operations department are weak. This department includes the regional managers, the education manager and the nursery centre managers. Good partnership working is dependent upon individual initiatives, rather than prescribed working practices. Routine operational management focuses on service delivery to clients, but the development of work-based learning rests with the NVQ team. BHFS's strategies for improving early years care and education services are developed largely independently from those for training. The education manager, who is responsible for the development of the nurseries' curriculum, is not directly involved in work-based learning development. However, twice-weekly telephone conferencing has been introduced in which the curriculum discussion topics have been cross-referenced to the NVQ programme. These topics are well publicised and learners are encouraged to participate in the conferences. There is growing awareness of the benefits of nursery curriculum development as a source of evidence for NVQ learners.

31. Learning resources for training are generally adequate, although the quality of resources varies. Learners reported that they have sufficient access to learning materials and textbooks, and the NVQ learning packs, developed by the NVQ team, are provided to all learners. The nursery centres provide good working environments in which to acquire job skills and they offer the full range of experiences to meet NVQ requirements. There are sufficiently experienced and appropriately qualified assessors and internal verifiers who provide appropriate support and guidance to meet learners' needs. Learners appreciate being given unlimited telephone contact with their assessors and the opportunity to take part in the twice-weekly telephone conference. Assessors and verifiers are provided with a range of information and communications technology resources which support good communications and access to BHFS's intranet and management information systems. The provider has good management information systems which fully support the collection and use of data for monitoring learners' progress and achievement.

32. Initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of apprenticeship frameworks among all nursery staff have not been fully effective. Presentations by the NVQ manager to new nursery managers and to regional managers to raise awareness of NVQ programmes and apprenticeship frameworks have met with partial success, but some nursery centre managers remain inadequately prepared to fully support work-based learning. In the best cases, nursery centre managers have a good understanding and are able to advise, support, encourage and guide learners. In some cases, learners are not encouraged or supported sufficiently with their NVQ work.

33. Management arrangements do not fully support learners' attendance at off-the-job training sessions. Despite action being taken, such as increasing the number of national training venues and providing nursery managers with a dedicated budget to support

learners' attendance, many learners find that attending training sessions is difficult for them. Priority is given to maintaining nursery staffing levels, and training venues are often in remote locations. Many learners attend training sessions infrequently, or not at all. The number of learners attending training sessions has increased during the past six months.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

34. BHFS has a satisfactory policy which covers equality of opportunity, harassment and bullying, and whistleblowing. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of staff clearly and indicates what actions should be taken. All staff, including learners, receive a copy of the policy during induction. BHFS has a comprehensive mission statement which is displayed prominently at head office and in the nurseries. The mission statement, supported by the provider's core principles, establishes BHFS's approach to the provision of training. One key statement refers specifically to equality and diversity, and, when questioned, nursery staff and learners spoke in depth about the tangible effects of these principles on their working environment.

35. BHFS produced detailed diversity data about applications, recruitment, and success rates, but this information is not used to identify trends or to devise strategies to increase participation by under-represented groups. An action plan for equal opportunities contains specific references to using the diversity data to plan such strategies. In locations where there is cultural and ethnic diversity, promotional materials and job advertisements have not been produced in locally spoken languages. In the London area, however, BHFS is working with a local charity group in an attempt to encourage under-represented sections of the community. Senior managers give appropriate priority to the promotion of equal opportunities, and structured training sessions have been provided for training department staff and nursery managers to promote and develop further understanding of equality and diversity. It is planned to cascade this information to all staff working in the nurseries.

36. Learners receive satisfactory equal opportunities training at induction, receiving copies of policies and presentation material about equality of opportunity. The promotion and reinforcement of equal opportunities is satisfactory throughout the programme, at training days and during progress reviews. At each progress review, learners must provide a written response to questions regarding equality and diversity. The questions are based on 20 scenarios, one of which is covered at each review. Learners' responses are evaluated by the assessor. However, the quality of the responses is not checked consistently, and in some cases incorrect responses had not been identified.

37. Learners are treated equitably and fairly, regardless of the length of time they have been employed. They are encouraged by nursery staff and managers to carry out a wide range of activities which allows them to demonstrate competence towards the NVQ, and when questioned, learners spoke positively about their experiences in the nurseries. There are differences between nurseries in the commitment of managers to release learners to attend off-the-job training sessions. Many learners live long distances from their nearest training centre, and access to off-the-job training is not equal for all.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

38. Quality improvement arrangements are good. BHFS has a clear strategy for the development of training which is detailed in a three-year development plan. This complements BHFS's corporate business plan and mission statement and prioritises the raising of staff's skills levels. Quality monitoring and improvement are integral parts of daily

management. Considerable improvements have been achieved recently in procedures and arrangements for the management and delivery of training. Scheduled programmes for the observation of teaching and learning, and assessment and induction have been introduced. Findings from observations are discussed at team meetings as part of arrangements for sharing good practice. Resources for the delivery of key skills have been upgraded and the achievement of rate of qualifications has improved.

39. A well-documented manual for quality assuring training has been introduced recently. The manual includes strategy statements for the training and development of a skilled workforce in response to corporate needs. The quality assurance manual includes clear procedural guidelines for staff when gathering feedback, carrying out observations, using management information systems, internally verifying, sharing good practice and monitoring learners' progress. The NVQ manager has written an annual quality monitoring plan with provision for a twice-yearly quality audit to check that systems are being implemented effectively.

40. Annual staff appraisals are systematic and well documented. Findings are used to plan annual programmes for professional development. BHFS strongly supports staff development and all nurseries are allocated annual budgets to support staff training, including NVQ training. Appraisals for training team staff are supplemented with individual review sessions with the NVQ manager, and are used to evaluate staff performance and training needs. Reviews have highlighted the need for all assessors to possess teaching qualifications and four assessors have been enrolled on teacher training programmes.

41. Arrangements for internal verification are thorough and effective. BHFS has received very good external verifier reports which praise the thoroughness of the processes and comment on the high quality of learners' portfolios. Frequent team meetings are held for assessors and verifiers, at least once each month, and much emphasis is given to the standardisation of practices and the importance of meeting schedules. The monitoring of assessment schedules is very effective, as are the systems for recording progress and outcomes. All assessors are observed when assessing, and feedback is provided to them. Standardisation meetings are used to share good practice and examples of high-quality portfolios are identified. A sampling framework has been introduced by the lead internal verifier. Achievement of targets for completion of course units has improved.

42. Self-assessment arrangements are well established and recent revisions to these arrangements emphasise the continuous assessment of performance and prioritise action-planning for improvement. The self-assessment report is detailed, comprehensive and evaluative. Judgements made in the report are based on the key questions of the Common Inspection Framework and many of the judgements match those of inspectors. The self-assessment report and action plan are reviewed quarterly by the NVQ manager and revised annually by the NVQ team. Questionnaires are used to gather feedback from learners and staff about induction, assessment, levels of support and general satisfaction. Findings are evaluated and discussed at NVQ team meetings and appropriate plans are actioned, although learners and nursery centre managers do not contribute directly to the self-assessment report.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		3
Apprenticeships for young people	93	3
Other government-funded provision	37	3

43. BHFS operates 89 nurseries and 12 holiday play schemes for a range of public and private sector organisations. It provides apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships for young people, and NVQ training in early years care and education for learners over 25 years of age. There are currently six apprentices, 87 advanced apprentices and 37 over-25s in training. All learners are employed in nurseries around the UK. Assessments are carried out by visiting assessors employed by BHFS. Off-the-job training takes place at four venues around the country, based in London, Oxford, Liverpool and Rushden.

Early years

Grade 3

Strengths

- good development of skills in the workplace
- good communications between assessors and managers
- good key skills programme

Weaknesses

- inadequate off-the-job training
- poor long-term target-setting

Achievement and standards

44. Learners are developing good skills to enhance their employability and they enjoy their work. The standard of work in most portfolios is good.

45. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. During the period 2002-03, 48 per cent of advanced apprentices were retained and 37 per cent completed their full apprenticeship frameworks. Four per cent are still in training. For the period 2003-04, the retention rate was 64 per cent, and the completion rate was 26 per cent, with 38 per cent of learners still in training. There were not enough apprentices in training to be able to make accurate judgements. For the over-25 group, 84 per cent were retained in 2002-03, and 81 per cent achieved their qualification, with 3 per cent still in training. In 2003-04, the retention rate dropped to 55 per cent and the achievement rate to 34 per cent, with 17 per cent still in training.

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	75		58		27											
Retained*	0		37		13											
Successfully completed	0		15		10											
Still in learning	64		22		1											

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		7		1	100										
Retained*	0		0		1	100										
Successfully completed	0		0		1	100										
Still in learning	3		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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	30		53		37											
Retained*	3		29		31											
Successfully completed	3		18		30											
Still in learning	27		9		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

The quality of provision

46. Learners develop good skills in the workplace. They are all employed by BHFS. Most nurseries have high-quality childcare provision and learners gain experience with each age group. Staff support the learners well in developing their practical skills. Learners have access to nursery and local early years partnership training. Some groups of nurseries arrange joint training. This gives learners the opportunity to network with staff from other nurseries and to share good practice. BHFS has developed a conference call programme to introduce all staff to their new early years curriculum. This has been cross-referenced to the NVQ units so that learners can choose the most appropriate conference call. There are also training CDs covering a range of topics. The effective staff appraisal and development system includes a workplace training report.

47. The provider has good key skills programme. Clear information about the requirements of the programme is given at induction. Key skills work begins in the first

three months of the learners' programmes. The planned key skills projects are relevant to childcare and are used as evidence for learners' NVQs. Previous test papers are given to learners to prepare them for the online key skills tests. Well-written packs for literacy and numeracy support, with guidance and practice questions about specific topics, have been developed recently. These packs are available for learners who need more help. Assessors provide individual coaching if required. When interviewed, learners made positive comments about their key skills programme.

48. Assessment practice is satisfactory. There is a good level of direct observation which is recorded in detail and well referenced. However, too much reliance is placed on written answers to question packs for each unit. Insufficient use is made of the variety of evidence available from work practice.

49. The programmes offered meet the needs of BHFS and most of the learners. The level of qualification is decided on the results of the initial literacy and numeracy skills test rather than job roles and, for a very small number of learners, there is some difficulty in providing all of the evidence requirements of the level 3 NVQ.

50. The support given to learners by assessors and managers is satisfactory. The assessors have useful meetings with their learners every four to six weeks. Learners and their assessors have a good rapport. Assessors are easy to contact by e-mail, and by telephone. Learners report that assessors reply promptly to messages left for them. Assessors provide some individual coaching, explaining the requirements for different parts of the programme and for developing learners' knowledge. Learners report that most managers are very supportive. Induction into the workplace and the training framework is satisfactory. The probationary period is used to good effect by ensuring the suitability of the learner to childcare and providing on-the-job training in practical skills.

51. Long-term target-setting is poor. Short-term action plans are agreed with the learner at every visit and learners are clear about what they have to achieve by the next visit. Learners' progress reviews are also completed at every visit, but they often follow the action plan and do not focus on the medium- and long-term targets. They are often superficial and insufficiently detailed. Managers are not usually involved in the progress reviews but record their comments afterwards. However, some review records had no employer comments. A few assessors refer to individual learning plans, but many do not complete and update them effectively. Learners are not clear about their long-term targets. Some learners make slow progress, particularly some in the over-25s group.

52. Off-the-job training is inadequate. Attendance is generally poor at the monthly training sessions. Many learners and managers comment on the difficulties learners have in accessing the training. There are significant distances between the workplaces and the training locations. Not all nurseries are able to release staff to attend training. Not all managers consider learners' attendance at training to be a high priority. Most of the learners who attend the training sessions report that they find them very useful, enabling them to complete the workpacks more quickly and easily. No distance learning material is available for those learners unable to attend the training sessions. Very few learners are given regular time out to complete NVQ work during their working hours. Inspectors saw no lesson plans for off-the-job training to indicate that trainers were taking into account the individual needs of their learners.

Leadership and management

53. Communications are good between assessors and managers. Assessors visit learners in the workplace at least once each month and are easily contactable by telephone or e-mail. The visits are carefully planned with the learner and the manager, so that cover can be arranged to enable the learner to spend time with the assessor. The assessor feeds back to the manager at the end of every visit and discusses what the learner needs to work on in the nursery to gain further NVQ evidence. Where problems are identified, the assessors respond to managers and learners in a timely way to provide support and guidance. When questioned, managers spoke very positively about the close support they receive from assessors.

54. The internal verification process is satisfactory. BHFS has a comprehensive sampling system. Detailed feedback is given to assessors following internal verification. There are regular standardisation and team meetings. Some nursery managers are unaware of the self-assessment process and the report. The most recent self-assessment report does not identify the weaknesses found by inspectors. Several of the strengths identified in the report were judged by the inspectors to be only satisfactory.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Customer service		2
Apprenticeships for young people	7	2
Other government-funded provision	6	2

55. There are seven apprentices and six NVQ learners all working towards a customer service NVQ at level 3. BHFS has four qualified assessors, two of whom are also internal verifiers. Two lead assessors work together, one of whom is the programme leader. Current learners work in nurseries in London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Oxford, Bath and Derby. They are visited by their assessors approximately once each month.

Customer service**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good progress on apprenticeship programmes
- good standard of work in portfolios
- good management of programme

Weaknesses

- insufficient materials

Achievement and standards

56. Most apprentices are making good progress and are very motivated and enthusiastic. They appreciate the support they are receiving from managers who, wherever possible, allow study time and use of facilities such as internet access. Assessors visit learners each month and make e-mail and telephone contact between visits. The assessors have worked for BHFS as nursery nurses and managers, and can easily relate to the learners' job roles. Assessors also have a good grasp of the NVQ standards, and identify and monitor evidence very efficiently. Some learners begin the customer service programme after being promoted to senior nursery nurse positions and find that the NVQ programme helps to develop their confidence and improve their personal and professional skills. The provider recognises learners' relevant prior learning and experience, such as NVQs at level 2 and 3 in travel services, and key skills achievements. Employment rights and responsibilities training is being delivered to a very good standard and learners commented on how much they had learnt from researching for this aspect of the apprenticeship framework. Formal testing for the technical certificates has been delayed and the awarding body has been slow in providing necessary information. In the meantime, learners have developed their knowledge and understanding in preparation for this aspect of the apprenticeship. The first technical certificate tests were taken by learners during the inspection period.

57. Learners' achievements are judged to be satisfactory. Since 2002, 11 learners have begun apprenticeships, of whom seven are still in training. Eight learners aged over 25 years are taking the NVQ only, of whom six are still in training. Six of the eight apprentices

who began during the period 2004-05 are still in training. Of the six current NVQ learners, four are out of funding and have made generally slow progress. Assessors have continued to provide valued guidance and support, and the learners are on course to achieve their qualifications. There is no funding available for 2005-06 for learners over 25 years of age wishing to train in customer service. No achievement and retention tables are provided because of the low numbers of learners.

The quality of provision

58. The standard of learners' work in portfolios is good. There is a range of evidence with some good projects and personal statements, as well as work products, and evidence of observations and knowledge questioning. However, professional discussions are not used and a bank of questions is used as a standard procedure, in preference to drawing upon performance evidence. Assessment is efficient and very systematic. Assessors are experienced and have occupational competence in early years care and customer service. They have a thorough grasp of the NVQ and provide individual coaching for learners in the workplace. A well-recorded system of action-planning and feedback provides clear, written records of judgements and verbal questioning. However, learners are not given sufficient responsibility for monitoring or referencing their own evidence between assessment visits, and they rely upon the assessor for this service. The assessor takes the portfolio away, sometimes for several weeks to complete the monitoring and referencing tasks.

59. Results of initial assessments are logged on individual learning plans and the learners are informed of the results. Those learners working towards key skills qualifications work carefully through nationally recognised workbooks with support and coaching from their assessors and sometimes their managers. Customer service surveys and improvement projects contribute well to key skills development and achievements. None of the learners has an identified literacy or numeracy need on this programme, but additional support is available from specialists with BHFS if required.

60. The customer service programme is a useful step for those learners at BHFS who have achieved the early years qualification either with BHFS, or elsewhere, and wish to continue their professional development. Several learners are newly promoted and they are very enthusiastic, devoting much of their own time to the programme. They are able to build upon some of the skills and knowledge that they have gained in the nursery, such as dealing with children's parents.

61. Managers appreciate the benefits of improvements in the nurseries made by learners working towards the NVQ and key skills qualifications. In one nursery, the learner carried out a survey which identified that staff were having difficulty in gaining access to a computer to prepare learning materials for the nursery. The nursery manager has just ordered an additional computer.

62. There are not enough learning materials for customer service learners. A textbook is provided for learners, but this is not always shared between learners in a nursery or in some cases has been lost. Some learners are able to use the internet at work. Specialist videos are not used to train learners and they are not directed to relevant media programmes or articles. There are no formal training sessions for customer service learners, but there is a helpful induction pack which prompts ideas for NVQ-unit evidence.

Leadership and management

63. Record-keeping is thorough and extensive for all processes, including individual learning plans, action plans and assessment, monitoring progress, internal verification and quality improvement, where a summary log is kept by the programme manager. All processes are clear and well structured. A comprehensive reporting system has been established between the manager and team members through monthly meetings and individual supervision. Data is exchanged through achievement schedules and other records for each learner which are sent to the head office by assessors.

64. An effective internal verification system ensures that all portfolios are sampled on four occasions and that constructive and accurate feedback is given to assessors. BHFS is beginning to introduce formal recording of learners' interviews. There is no formal observation of assessors specifically for the customer service programme, but they are all observed at least once a year. Opportunities are good for monitoring staff development, but staff do not maintain their own logs of continuing professional development. There is a general tendency to automatically relate all processes to the early years provision as the number of learners on the customer service programme is so small. BHFS provides all assessors with home office equipment, including internet access, laptop computers, fax machines and mobile telephones. All nurseries have a digital camera which assessors can use. BHFS provides development opportunities for its learners.

65. All assessors and verifiers have good knowledge of the self-assessment report, and matters arising are discussed at monthly meetings. The self-assessment report broadly reflects inspectors' findings, although the strengths and weaknesses identified did not precisely match those found by inspectors.

