

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **National Business College Limited**

**26 May 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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## **National Business College Limited**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. National Business College Limited (NBC) is a private training organisation established in 1983 and based in Huddersfield. NBC contracts with the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide apprenticeships for young people. It has nine staff members, including three directors who are responsible for financial management, marketing and placement and training. A development manager is responsible for development of the business and quality improvement. The director responsible for training also acts as an assessor and a tutor. Other staff include two part-time assessors and a full-time tutor in information technology (IT) and key skills qualifications. An internal verifier is contracted to carry out internal verification and graded observations of teaching and reviews.

2. NBC offers training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in business administration. The company has recently been piloting small-scale provision of customer service apprenticeships but this was not inspected.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** NBC's leadership and management are good. Its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. In business administration, management and professional the provision is good.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is effective and identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. NBC has made good use of employers' and learners' views to contribute to the accuracy of the report.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** NBC has rectified weaknesses that were present at the time of the previous inspection and has developed good arrangements for quality improvement. However, some of the arrangements are not sufficiently established to provide evidence of improvement. Strategies for improving retention and achievement rates have been successful.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR NATIONAL BUSINESS COLLEGE LIMITED:

- continue to develop strategies to improve retention and achievement rates further for all learners
- fully establish the quality improvement arrangements
- formalise the strategy for developing literacy, numeracy and language skills
- clarify the operational planning
- further promote equality of opportunity

## 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		3

Business administration, management & professional			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Business administration</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	68	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Business administration was reported on and graded. At the time of inspection only five learners were following the apprenticeship in customer service and this was not inspected. The inspection was carried out over four days in May 2005.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	18
Number of staff interviewed	18
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	9

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

7. **Framework completion rates for apprentices starting in 2002-03 and 2003-04 are good.** Sixty-one per cent of the 2002-03 intake completed the framework. Of apprentices starting in 2003-04, 56 per cent have completed the framework so far and 18 per cent are still in learning. These learners are making good progress and retention rates are improving.

8. Retention and framework completion rates for advanced apprentices have improved and are currently satisfactory. Of the 25 advanced apprentices who started in 2002-03, 10

have completed their frameworks and five remain in learning. Of the 25 who started in 2003-04, four have completed and 14 are still in learning.

**9. Learners achieve good vocational skills.** They benefit from highly appropriate workplaces and make good progress, developing confidence and competence. Some progress into responsible positions and demonstrate good technical knowledge. Good skills are developed in off-the-job training. Learners understand and use appropriate techniques and skills well in practical information and communications technology (ICT) activities.

### The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	1	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

**10. NBC provides good training.** The off-the-job training is organised well, as is the training at work that NBC provides for some learners. Assessors visit learners regularly and give good support. The preparation and training for technical certificates and key skills qualifications at the training centre is good. Learners value the individual support and guidance that they receive. Tutors plan increasingly complex activities and exercises to develop and extend the learners' knowledge. Off-the-job training can be arranged to meet the needs of learners and employers. Tutors are appropriately qualified and resources are satisfactory.

**11.** On-the-job training is satisfactory overall, and in some cases is good. The good training is well structured and clearly linked to the standards of the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Weaker training is not sufficiently developed in the way it is planned, recorded and reviewed by NBC's staff and by employers.

**12.** Assessment is satisfactory. Learners receive well-planned assessment visits at least every two weeks. Portfolios show a good range of work-based evidence including observations.

**13.** Learners receive an appropriate initial assessment of their key skills once they start their off-the-job training. The assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is not sufficiently developed. Learners with identified additional learning needs receive satisfactory support from a local college, although no current learners have such support needs.

**14.** Learners, employers and NBC's staff take part in satisfactory reviews of learners' progress every eight weeks. Individual learning plans are used appropriately and targets are set effectively.

### Leadership and management

**15. NBC has established a well-structured strategic plan for 2003-06 setting straightforward objectives and targets.** Each target is accompanied by a brief statement on how it is to be achieved and its success evaluated. The plan is easily understandable and suitable for the size of the company and its context. Staff are kept well informed.

Information from appraisals is used to develop staff training plans which align with the strategic plan.

**16. Strategies to improve retention and achievement rates have been successful.** NBC has implemented a range of strategies, each of which has improved opportunities for learners. The strategies have included careful selection of learners, improved links and agreements with employers, improved support for learners and identification of those at risk. Reports on retention and achievement rates are discussed at staff meetings. However, no overall monitoring of learners' progress takes place.

17. NBC has managed the development of the provision well since the previous inspection. The company has successfully rectified all of the weaknesses previously identified, and has recorded well the changes it has made. It has developed a full set of policies and procedures and reviews these annually. Employers' awareness has improved and the range of management reports has widened.

**18. Staff at NBC are supported well** through monthly company meetings and weekly team meetings. Communications are good, induction is comprehensive and staff are kept well informed of the strategic plan and the self-assessment report. Staff work well as a team and have good access to training.

**19. NBC has a wide range of good quality improvement measures** which cover key aspects of the learners' experience. Staff have good understanding of the system and a quality improvement calendar provides a clear framework. Teaching and learning observations, observations of reviews, feedback from learners and employers and internal audits have all been put in place. Internal verification systems have been strengthened and are now effective, and verification is systematically planned.

20. NBC has formed productive links with the local population, including good relationships with the Asian community. The company is involved with a wide range of schools and takes an active part in local events. The profile of the learners NBC recruits is in line with the local population.

21. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The topic is covered at induction and reinforced through questions that form part of learners' weekly learning logs. NBC has appropriate equal opportunities policies and procedures but no specific complaints procedure, although learners know who they should contact if they have a complaint. Staff have received training very recently to raise their awareness of equality of opportunity. NBC promotes equality satisfactorily through discussion at monthly meetings. The company produces reports on the performance of learners by ethnic group and gender, although it has not set targets for performance of different groups. Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently promoted at NBC's training centre.

22. Learners with restricted mobility can only access the ground floor of NBC's training centre. They cannot use the computer suite on the centre's first floor, or the recreational area in the basement.

**23. Operational planning is not clear enough.** Although the strategic plan sets a clear framework for business development, it is not accompanied by an operational plan to carry it through. The development plan arising from the self-assessment report relates to some of



the objectives in the strategic plan but the two plans are not linked. An additional plan exists to improve the provision set against the Common Inspection Framework but is not linked to the strategic plan. Neither this nor the development plan are formally monitored or progress reviewed.

**24. Some activities for quality improvement are not sufficiently evaluated.** The audit process is not systematic or incorporated in the quality improvement calendar. Some measures such as teaching and learning observations and collection of learners' feedback are not sufficiently established to provide information on trends. Internal verification has been revised. It is now effective and systematic and meets with awarding body requirements. Outcomes of internal verification are discussed with staff at weekly training team meetings.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good strategic direction and target-setting
- successful strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- well-managed development of the provision
- well-supported staff
- wide range of quality assessment measures

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient evaluation of some quality improvement activities
- insufficient clarity in operational planning

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### *Strengths*

- good framework completion rate of apprentices starting between 2002 and 2004
- well-developed vocational skills
- good training

### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses identified

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NATIONAL BUSINESS COLLEGE LIMITED:**

- the helpful and really friendly staff - 'they are great at explaining things and teaching us'
- that staff are easy to contact and keep in contact well
- the useful training - 'I've developed skills and confidence'
- the well-structured programme - 'it's helpful to me at work'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK NATIONAL BUSINESS COLLEGE LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- the relevance of some projects to work

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Grade 2

#### Strengths

- good strategic direction and target-setting
- successful strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- well-managed development of the provision
- well-supported staff
- wide range of quality assessment measures

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient evaluation of some quality improvement activities
- insufficient clarity in operational planning

25. NBC has established a clear strategic plan for 2003-06. The plan is well structured and provides a vision of how the business is to develop. Straightforward strategic business objectives have been defined and targets for each of the three years have been set against these objectives. The targets are quantified where appropriate. Realistic targets are set for recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Each target is accompanied by a brief statement on how the target is to be achieved and how success will be evaluated. The plan is set out in a simple and easily understandable format which is very suitable for the size of the company and the context in which it operates. The plan is based on local market intelligence related to the area's populations and the skills needs of employers. Staff are kept informed and involved through monthly meetings, and staff members' learning plans developed following their appraisals indicate how their training aligns with the strategic plan.

26. NBC has improved retention and achievement rates and the speed of progression of its learners. It has devised a range of strategies, each of which has improved the provision and the opportunities for learners. Learners' interviews have been made more thorough and decisions are checked by other members of staff. Care is taken with learners' selection to increase the likelihood that they will succeed on their programmes. Support for learners in the workplace has improved. NBC's agreements with employers stress the need for learners to attend and clearly define the employers' roles and responsibilities. Penalties are applied if companies remove the learners that they employ from training. Arrangements are made for assessors to provide individual coaching in the workplace for learners who have difficulty in attending off-the-job training at NBC. Learners at risk of leaving their programmes are quickly identified and given extra support. Online testing of key skills is available and takes place when necessary in the workplace. Reports on achievement and retention rates are discussed at monthly meetings and each learner's progress is discussed at weekly informal training team meetings. However, NBC carries out no overall monitoring of learners' progress to identify how the intakes as a whole are performing. Achievement of key skills qualifications and completion of technical certificates is carefully monitored. Learners complete weekly logs to record their progress and any concerns they feel should be dealt with. These logs are copied to employers to keep them aware of

learners' needs. Failure to attend off-the-job training is immediately raised with employers. Review meetings with employers are frequent and employers are closely involved with supporting learners. On- and off-the-job training are generally well co-ordinated. NBC has good links with other providers to share good practice.

27. NBC has taken seriously the outcomes of the previous inspection. It has appointed a development manager with responsibility for making changes. Development has been managed well overall by the senior management team members, each of whom has a **well-defined role**. NBC **has successfully rectified all of the weaknesses identified at the** previous inspection and has worked to maintain the strengths. A clear log is kept of changes that have been made against each inspection outcome and a file is kept of updates to the resulting documents. NBC now has a full set of policies and procedures which it reviews annually. NBC has produced a redesigned handbook and clearer presentations to improve employers' awareness of the apprenticeship framework. It has widened the range and improved the clarity of its management reports, which are discussed at monthly team meetings. NBC has revised its agreements and strengthened its links with employers. It has developed the customer service qualification it is currently piloting to broaden the experience of learners whose job role would not allow progression to level 3 in business administration.

28. Staff at NBC are supported well. Monthly company meetings and weekly team meetings ensure that staff are well informed about current developments and are able to contribute. Each member of staff has an e-mail address and a message book to ensure that they can be notified as necessary. New staff receive a comprehensive induction, with use made of an induction checklist so that no areas are missed. Staff are fully informed about the self-assessment report and the strategic plan objectives and can get involved through the monthly meetings. Thorough appraisals are carried out. Staff work together as a team and each member of staff has a clear understanding of their job role. Staff have good access to training to obtain qualifications and update their knowledge. Their attendance **can be arranged around their family needs. The training manager is involved with all aspects** of the learners' training. Staff are able to consult freely with the senior managers. They are well motivated by this inclusive approach, and in turn support learners well and help the company in achieving its objectives.

29. NBC's management of additional literacy, numeracy and language skills support is satisfactory overall. Learners are generally well qualified on entry and none are categorised as needing additional learning support. A college-devised test involving numeracy, spelling and free writing is set and learners also take key skills diagnostic tests. However, no use is made of nationally devised tests to ensure the adequate assessment of learners' needs. If learners have particularly significant additional support needs they can be referred to the local college of further education. Support from tutors is prompt and takes place at NBC and in the workplace. Learners' logs record what support actions have taken place. Although no formal strategy exists, staff are well aware of how to deal with learners who require support. Currently no member of staff is qualified to deliver literacy and numeracy support, but few learners need such support.

30. Resources and accommodation at NBC's training centre are managed satisfactorily. The centre is welcoming and clean. Rooms are suitable in size and appropriately equipped with computers and software. NBC has recently purchased new IT equipment. Careful control is exercised over income and expenditure. Staff are well qualified and experienced.

Several have teaching qualifications and one is training as a teacher.

31. NBC's operational planning is not clear. Although the strategic plan creates a clear framework for business development, NBC has not devised a formal operational plan to carry it through. Some of the objectives and targets in the strategic plan relate to those in the development plan arising from the self-assessment report, but the plans are not linked. An additional plan exists to improve the provision, which is set against the Common Inspection Framework, but this plan is not linked to the strategic plan. NBC does not formally monitor progress against the additional plan or the development plan. It does not set review dates to evaluate its position and to prioritise further actions.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 3**

32. NBC has productive links with the community and receives many more applications than it has places. It has established good relationships with a local mosque, a Sikh temple and a neighbourhood community and learning centre run by the Asian community. The company is involved with a wide range of schools including an Asian girls' school. Staff regularly attend careers events, open days and job fairs. They also assist learners in practice interviews. Additional help is provided to learners who lack the confidence to find appropriate workplaces. In one instance a member of staff supported a prospective learner by visiting her home and, with the aid of an interpreter, explaining the apprenticeship scheme to her parents. Currently NBC's recruitment of learners from different groups is satisfactory and in line with the local population and businesses. Twenty-seven per cent of its learners are men and 13 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. When learners leave, NBC examines applications from unsuccessful candidates to target specific groups.

33. Learners with restricted mobility can only access the ground floor of NBC's training centre. They cannot use the computer suite since the IT room is on the second floor. However, a computer can be moved to the ground floor if necessary. The centre's social area is in the basement and can only be reached by a steep flight of stairs. There is ramped access to the building and toilets are easily accessible. No learners who use wheelchairs have applied for apprenticeships during recent years.

34. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Equality is covered fully during induction. Learners are provided with a useful booklet which contains quizzes and activities to involve them. This booklet was developed locally and the training manager was one of those who developed it. When learners fill in their weekly learning logs they are required to complete a set of questions to reinforce their understanding of equality of opportunity. The questions are changed each month so that different aspects are covered throughout the year. NBC has appropriate policies covering equality, harassment and grievances, which it updates each year. Although no specific complaints policy exists, learners know who to contact if they have a concern. Too few complaints have occurred for NBC to carry out any analysis with equality of opportunity in mind. The company resolves complaints promptly. It systematically checks employers' equal opportunities policies for adequacy when signing agreements, and provides a copy of its own policy if the employer does not have one. NBC carries out checks on employers to ensure working environments are safe.

35. NBC promotes and discusses equality of opportunity satisfactorily. Equality has become a standing agenda item at meetings this year. Analysis of the performance of

different ethnic groups and genders has been discussed at a recent staff meeting. NBC has recently revised its performance report so that the information provided to staff is clear. However, targets for recruitment of male learners or for the performance of different groups have not been set in the strategic plan. Posters and leaflets provide images and pen portraits of learners from a range of backgrounds. However, equality of opportunity is not promoted sufficiently in the training centre through posters or displays. In particular, the main display on the front of the building does not mention equality of opportunity. NBC's principal is responsible for equality of opportunity. A recent staff meeting identified that some staff had not had recent updates on equality of opportunity and an internal workshop was arranged shortly before inspection.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 3**

36. NBC has devised a comprehensive range of measures to monitor and improve the key aspects of the learners' experience. No quality assurance manual exists but staff understand the system and are given a quality improvement calendar which indicates when events take place. Teaching and learning observations are carried out by an independent observer. Each tutor is observed at least twice a year against specific criteria. Observations are graded and action points for improvement are set out. Similarly, staff carrying out reviews are observed. Feedback from learners is obtained annually. Focus groups also meet to discuss the training. NBC analyses the reasons that learners give for leaving programmes early. It also collects employers' feedback through questionnaires, the response rate for which is good. Internal audits on documents and learners' records are carried out frequently.

37. NBC carries out insufficient checks to ensure that actions taken to improve provision have actually been effective. Although the company has established a wide range of measures for quality improvement, some are insufficiently well established. The internal audit process is not systematic or incorporated fully into the quality improvement calendar. Priorities for audit are not defined. Although outcomes are taken up with individual members of staff, no successive evaluation is used to establish improvement. NBC analyses learners' feedback but little evidence exists of it taking actions following feedback, and outcomes are not fully shared with staff. NBC does not compare successive feedback to establish trends. Although the company keeps records of the adverts it places and the promotional events it attends, it does not evaluate these actions to establish their worth or to make improvements. Profiles of observations of teaching and learning or reviews are not compared to check on improvements. NBC introduced focus groups in 2003 but only one took place in 2004. Regular meetings are not held. Internal verification has been contracted to a new member of staff since January 2005. The procedure has been rewritten and forms updated. Assessment observations and visits to the workplace are now more frequent. The internal verifier writes a monthly report on activities and attends the weekly team meeting to discuss the outcomes. The process is effective and systematic and meets with the awarding body's requirements. Feedback to assessors is concise and clear, although actions to be carried out are not always noted as completed.

38. The most recent of NBC's three self-assessment reports was produced in January 2005 and updated in March 2005 for the inspection. All staff members were involved in the production of the self-assessment report, which was discussed at the monthly meetings. The report draws on feedback from employers and learners. It is well presented, with clear and well-founded judgements. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the report

broadly matched the inspectors' findings, although some areas highlighted in the report as strengths were no more than normal practice. The action plan is updated to reflect progress but is not formally discussed with staff.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Business administration</i></b> Apprenticeships for young people	68	2

39. NBC provides training for 68 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration. Thirty learners are on advanced apprenticeships and 38 are on apprenticeships. Most learners are employed and work in a range of local industries including financial services, IT services, manufacturing, engineering and legal services. Most learners take part in off-the-job training sessions of half a day each week at NBC's training centre. Some learners employed by larger companies take part in similar training at their employers' premises. Learners receive progress reviews every eight weeks and are visited in the workplace for assessment every fortnight. Two assessors, one tutor/assessor and one tutor work with learners, and one other staff member carries out internal verification.

#### *Strengths*

- good framework completion rate of apprentices starting between 2002 and 2004
- well-developed vocational skills
- good training

#### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses identified

### Achievement and standards

40. Retention rates and framework completion rates for advanced apprentices are improving overall and are currently satisfactory. For example, 36 per cent of the learners starting advanced apprenticeships in 2001-02 completed the framework. Of the 2002-03 starters, 40 per cent have completed their framework and 20 per cent are still in learning. In the same period the retention rate for advanced apprentices improved from 36 per cent to 40 per cent, with 20 per cent of learners still on their programmes. Four of the 25 advanced apprentices starting in 2003-04 have completed their framework and 14 are still in learning.

41. Apprentices starting between 2002 and 2004 have good framework completion rates. Sixty-one per cent of the 61 apprentices starting in 2002-03 completed their framework. In 2003-04, 56 per cent of the 68 learners starting apprenticeships have successfully completed them and 18 per cent are still in learning. The progress made by learners in training is generally good and is sometimes very good.

42. Learners' vocational skills are well developed. Learners benefit from highly appropriate workplaces which offer good opportunities for skills development and learning alongside experienced workers. Learners make good progress and develop confidence and competence. Employers provide training on the job and support learners, although



sometimes the training provided at work is not sufficiently planned and structured.

43. Some learners make progress into positions of responsibility and some carry out tasks and projects outside their normal jobs. For example, one learner compiled a comprehensive set of questions frequently asked by customers. She used these effectively to support the development of her team and demonstrated good technical knowledge of the work. Learners also develop good skills in off-the-job training sessions. They show good understanding and use of appropriate skills and techniques when using ICT to complete practical activities.

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		25		25	100	86	100								
Retained*	1		4		10	40	31	36								
Successfully completed	1		4		10	40	31	36								
Still in learning	11		14		5	20	0	0								

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	41		68		61	100	47	100								
Retained*	6		34		37	61	23	49								
Successfully completed	6		38		37	61	20	43								
Still in learning	26		12		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

44. NBC provides good training. Learners benefit from well-organised off-the-job training, and the training that NBC provides at work for some learners who cannot attend the centre is also good. Assessors visit learners regularly and provide good training support. Learners receive good preparation and training for technical certificates and key skills at the centre, and value the individual support and guidance they are given by staff. Handouts and exercises are designed and prepared well. Plans take account of increasingly complex activities and exercises to develop and extend the learners' knowledge. Learners have good access to online learning materials. Attendance at most training sessions is good. Learners enjoy their training and have very good working relationships with tutors. Learners and employers can arrange off-the-job training to meet their requirements. Learners can also attend NBC's training centre at other times of the week to use the resources or seek additional help and support.

45. On-the-job training is satisfactory overall. The good training sessions were well

structured and clearly linked to the standards required for completing the NVQ. The weaker training showed insufficiently developed planning, recording and reviewing by staff at NBC and the employers.

46. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners receive well-planned and well-carried out assessment visits at least once a fortnight. Portfolios inspected showed a good range of work-based evidence including observations. However, some observation records have insufficient judgements to support assessment decisions.

47. Initial assessment and additional support for learners is satisfactory. However, the assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is not sufficiently developed. All learning plans are based on initial assessment decisions made from the results of a locally devised set of tests covering spelling, use of English and number, and occupational skills. However, these results are not judged in relation to any externally recognised standards. Learners receive appropriate initial assessment for key skills of communication, application of number, and IT once they start their off-the-job training programme in key skills. NBC has recently begun to record learning plans and progress for learners in respect of key skills learning needs.

48. Training staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Learners benefit from the provision of textbooks and a suitable range of other learning resources in the centre, some of which they can take to work to support their learning. Computing facilities are appropriate for the learners' activities. Training rooms are clean and well maintained and have appropriate displays of vocationally relevant materials.

49. Reviews are carried out satisfactorily and employers are appropriately involved. Learners and employers take part in reviews with NBC's staff every eight weeks at the workplace. Progress is considered and training discussed, and targets are usually set effectively. Individual learning plans are used appropriately. All parties agree what needs to be done for learners to progress successfully and complete the programme. Targets for achievement in some reviews are insufficiently specific and do not always cover key skills qualification and unit achievement. However, regular assessment planning provides sufficient detail.

50. NBC has established good contacts with local business and identifies appropriate employment or work-placement opportunities for prospective learners. It provides satisfactory guidance and support to learners during the interview period and during training.

### **Leadership and management**

51. NBC manages the business administration training programme effectively. Members of staff meet to discuss programme developments and improvements. Off-the-job training is supported well by schemes of work and learning session plans. Learners' progress and achievement are considered regularly using reports based on management information. Staff have a clear purpose and focus well on learners and their progress towards framework completion. Much of the communication within the team is informal, but effective as the team is small.

52. NBC promotes equality and diversity by using induction booklets and checking learners' understanding during progress reviews. It has recently developed this further by

using questions systematically in learners' logs. Internal verification is satisfactory and staff meet regularly to discuss assessment and share good practice. Staff contribute well to quality improvement strategies and to self-assessment. The current self-assessment report is generally accurate and identifies most of the features which make up the strengths identified by inspectors. Progress and achievement data is used effectively to support judgements.

