

INSPECTION REPORT

Gen II Engineering and Technology Training

10 June 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. Gen II Engineering and Technology Training (Gen II) was founded in June 2000 as a joint venture training company by British Nuclear Fuels, Corus, Amec, Iggesund Paperboard and UCB. It provides engineering and technology training for its founding companies, as well as for the wider West Cumbrian business community. Gen II's three main centres are at the British Nuclear Fuels site at Sellafield, the Corus site at Workington and the Lillyhall Business Centre near Workington. There are 30 training staff, of whom 25 are full-time employees and five are contracted. Gen II's 300 learners are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in performing manufacturing operations, or apprenticeships in engineering, business administration, and scientific operations. Technical certificate delivery is subcontracted to local colleges. Most learners are employed by local companies. A significant number are initially employed by Gen II until they are offered permanent employment with one of the participating companies. Training for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships is funded through a contract with Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In 2003, Gen II became a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) for nuclear engineering technology, but the CoVE facilities were not in use at the time of inspection. Gen II has recently introduced training for adults in information and communications technology (ICT).

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Gen II's leadership and management are good, and its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. Provision in engineering and business administration is good. Provision in ICT is satisfactory.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The most recent self-assessment report was produced by the quality manager following extensive consultation. It provides an accurate picture of the organisation, and identifies most of the same strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. However, the process did not directly involve all staff in an assessment of their own work.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Retention and achievement rates have been maintained or improved since June 2001, when the organisation was last inspected. The grades awarded at this inspection are higher in leadership and management, and business administration, and the grade for engineering has been maintained. With only one identified exception, the provider has been rigorous in identifying and dealing with weaknesses. The self-assessment report and development plans are effective in bringing about improvements.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR GEN II ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY TRAINING:

- maintain the high retention rates
- raise achievement rates in all areas of learning to the levels in engineering programmes
- develop a more consistent and effective approach to target-setting for learners
- ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities in terms of learning programmes and the learners' experience
- ensure that managers and training staff are better able to share good practice and adopt a common approach to new developments
- ensure that literacy and numeracy, and other learning support needs, are identified and met within the framework of a quality assured, organisation-wide strategy
- develop a more consistent and effective approach to the coverage of equality of opportunity in learners' progress reviews
- ensure that all learners are fully informed of the progress they are making towards completing their training programme
- implement effectively the new quality improvement system and procedures

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Other contributory areas		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	268	2	
Other government-funded provision	9	2	

Business administration, management & professional			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Business administration		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	24	2	

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	39	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. All areas of learning offered by Gen II were reported on and graded.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	21
Number of learners interviewed	52
Number of staff interviewed	30
Number of employers interviewed	18
Number of subcontractors interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	22
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **Retention and achievement rates for engineering learners are good.** There is a particularly effective approach to teaching key skills, and they are introduced at an early stage in the learners' training programme. Learners are fully aware of the need to achieve key skills qualifications and have a very good understanding of the part they play in the training programme.

7. **In engineering there is good completion of additional training and qualifications.** Many learners take up to four additional NVQ units, which are selected to meet the particular needs of their employer. Learners experience a wide range of additional training, some of which is externally accredited.

8. **The standard of learners' work in engineering is good.** Learners are highly motivated and produce written and practical work of a high standard. They develop good practical skills and their NVQ portfolios are well produced.

9. **Retention rates are good on the apprenticeship programme in business administration.** Learners develop good workplace skills that are valued by learners and employers alike.

10. There is **very good progression to full-time employment and further training for learners on business administration programmes**. Many learners gain permanent employment with their work-placement providers. A major law firm in the area, for example, has employed a learner on placement from Gen II for each of the past four years.

11. The rate of achievement of apprenticeship frameworks by business administration learners is satisfactory. Learners have also achieved a number of additional qualifications in, for example, information technology (IT). The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and portfolios are well organised. Learners have a clear understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework, and most have successfully achieved the technical certificate element of the qualification. However, Gen II has had staffing problems in this contract year, and learners have made slow progress towards completing the apprenticeship. The problems have now been dealt with.

12. There has been **insufficient use of assessment targets for learners in business administration**. Measurable targets are identified during learners' progress reviews, but they are not monitored rigorously enough.

13. **In ICT, learners enhance their existing ICT skills significantly and develop competence in using the more complex features of software packages**. Learners' portfolios and their work are at least satisfactory, and in some cases, good. All the learners recruited to this new programme are still in learning and are progressing at a satisfactory rate.

The quality of provision

14. **Engineering and scientific training resources are good**. Training staff are well qualified and industrially experienced. Workshops and classrooms are clean and tidy and there are ample specialist tools and equipment. Information and learning technology resources are good. There are good displays of vocational wall charts, posters and visual aids. On-the-job training resources are very good. Learners work with modern high-technology equipment.

15. **The range of on-the-job tasks and training activities for engineering, scientific and manufacturing learners is very good**. Learners quickly progress to working on complex and demanding engineering tasks. On-the-job training is well planned and co-ordinated by employers and Gen II's assessors.

16. Assessment and verification in engineering are satisfactory. Learners' portfolios contain a wide range of appropriate evidence, which reflects the demanding tasks they carry out in the workplace. Background knowledge questions are completed in a timely way, and assessment is planned, fair and rigorous. However, many learners working on the British Nuclear Group site are late in starting the assessment programme for their level 3 NVQ. Learners and employers have a clear understanding of the NVQ and framework assessment requirements.

17. Support for learners in engineering, manufacturing and science is satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate vocational advice and guidance, together with good pastoral support. There is satisfactory identification of, and support for, learners' literacy and numeracy needs. All learners have an initial assessment, which includes tests for aptitude, and verbal

and numerical skills. However, Gen II does not have a clear policy and strategy for the identification of literacy and numeracy needs, or the provision of support.

18. There is **poor target-setting for learners in engineering**. The targets that are set are not realistic, measurable or achievable in the short term. However, staff are fully involved in the progress review process and all parties receive a copy of the review document. Staff from the Lakes College contribute feedback to the progress reviews. All learners have up-to-date copies of their individual learning plans.

19. **Work placements for learners in business administration are good**. Learners are placed with a wide range of employers, accurately reflecting the varied economy of the region. Learners' personal confidence and self-esteem are enhanced by their roles and responsibilities. Workplace supervisors recognise the value of training and they facilitate progress.

20. **Business administration learners receive good support** from Gen II. In a number of instances, the support provided has helped learners remain on programme. Learners appreciate the support and advice they receive, and staff record it in learners' portfolios.

21. Gen II has developed a **very effective system of formative assessments on ICT programmes**. Learners' computer skills are assessed well at the beginning of their programme using a software package which has been developed in-house. The learners are encouraged to use this web-based package frequently, at work and at home, to monitor their knowledge. Gen II regularly e-mails the learners' assessment scores to the employers so that additional support can be provided. Learners are very motivated by using the assessment package and strive to improve their score by improving their knowledge and their competence. However, **individual learners are insufficiently informed about their overall progress** towards their qualification.

22. Teaching and learning in ICT is satisfactory, with learners receiving effective individual coaching and support in the workplace. Gen II is progressing well in using e-learning to improve the training of its learners. ICT resources are satisfactory, with Gen II providing portable computer facilities at the employers' premises for training or to support learners' developmental needs.

23. In ICT, initial assessment arrangements and guidance and support are satisfactory. All learners are given a diagnostic assessment to assess their prior knowledge of ICT. The learners' literacy, numeracy, and language needs are not assessed at this stage, but any learner who is identified as requiring additional help during the programme receives satisfactory individual support. Gen II is developing more effective literacy, numeracy and dyslexia assessment for its ICT learners. Learners are visited frequently at their place of work and they also benefit from supportive employers that take a keen interest in their progress.

Leadership and management

24. **Gen II has a strong focus on retention and achievement rates**. It monitors learners' progress carefully, and holds regular meetings with the subcontracted college to monitor attendance and progress. **Retention and achievement rates have been consistently good** over the past few years. On most courses almost all learners progress to employment at

the end of their apprenticeship.

25. Gen II has developed a **rigorous approach to the management of health and safety**. Its policy has been recently reviewed and updated, and an action plan has been established to further raise standards of safety monitoring and compliance. Work-placement providers are carefully checked to ensure the safety of their work environment before learners are placed with them, and this is further monitored at each progress review.

26. Gen II has **clear and comprehensive strategic and business plans** to guide its development. The business plan identifies strategic imperatives for the organisation that lead to strategic objectives for each area, and these are used to set performance targets for managers. These in turn generate targets set for each member of staff during the annual appraisal process. Progress towards performance targets is monitored rigorously.

27. **Good data reports are available from Gen II's management information system**, enabling close monitoring of both business and training performance. All staff have an annual appraisal to review their achievements and identify training needs. These are collated in an annual learning plan. Staff development opportunities are good.

28. **Learners benefit from very good facilities for both practical and background knowledge training**. Both of Gen II's engineering training centres are very well equipped with up-to-date machinery and equipment. The management of resources is good. The organisation's close relationship with local firms enables it to gain access to very modern, large-scale equipment which provides very good training opportunities. Training staff are well qualified and the ratio of tutors to learners is high.

29. **Learners receive good support**. Those on work placements are visited regularly for progress reviews and assessments, and have the opportunity to raise any concerns with Gen II staff. At college they have a personal tutor, with whom they can discuss any problems or personal issues. Gen II employs a professional counsellor, who is available both to staff and learners. Learners in difficulty are helped, for example, with finding accommodation. Learners with identified disabilities are assisted by making adjustments to their programme. However, Gen II does not have a policy or established procedure for helping learners with literacy or numeracy difficulties.

30. **Key skills training is good**, and literacy and numeracy support is provided by the college where learners study. These arrangements generally meet the needs of learners, but are insufficiently systematic or coherent.

31. Gen II has **strong links with local industry, schools, and other agencies**. The company participates fully in initiatives to promote careers in engineering. It has a strong relationship with the Lakes College and with local schools, two of which have gained academy status with its support. Gen II has very good contacts with a network of over 100 smaller companies that provide work placements and often employment for learners. It maintains particularly close links with British Nuclear Group.

32. Gen II has worked with businesses and agencies in the nuclear engineering field to successfully bid for CoVE status in nuclear engineering technology. The funding obtained has been used to build state-of-the-art training rigs to enable learners to practise nuclear and chemical industrial processing skills. A programme of curriculum development is underway

to make this facility available to a wide range of learners in future.

33. Despite its monitoring processes, Gen II was slow to respond to poor performance in business administration. Managers were insufficiently experienced in performance management, and allowed poor performance in this area to continue for some time after it was identified. The situation was resolved through staffing changes, and coaching in performance management has been provided to relevant staff. Gen II is going to continue the training of learners affected by these problems until they complete their qualification.

34. There is too little sharing of good practice between area of learning teams. Managers recognise the need to break down barriers created by the different histories and traditions at the two training centres. There is no process for ensuring that the good practice identified and discussed at team level is communicated to other teams and implemented more widely.

35. Gen II has a sound policy for ensuring equality of opportunity, and preventing bullying and harassment. All learners are given a copy of the policy, and those on engineering and business administration programmes have training in equality of opportunity during their induction. Their understanding of the policy and its contents is checked through post-induction surveys, which reveal high levels of awareness. There is less awareness among ICT learners. However, in all areas there is insufficient reinforcement of this learning at later stages of the course.

36. The company monitors the ethnicity of its learners and recognises the persistence of gender inequalities in recruitment to its training programmes. There are few female applicants for engineering programmes or male applicants for business administration. Gen II tries hard to overcome these stereotypes, and its marketing literature provides positive images of women working in the engineering industry.

37. The organisation has recently reviewed its learner recruitment processes to make them more consistent, transparent, and free from bias. Applicants for apprenticeships take a nationally recognised battery of tests, and then have a structured interview. Interview panels include men and women, and panel members have received training. Only about a quarter of applicants are accepted for training in engineering subjects, but those who are not offered a place are referred to other providers.

38. Gen II has recently appointed a senior manager, to take overall charge of quality improvement, and a new quality co-ordinator. Managers have actively worked to remedy identified weaknesses in the provision. The quality assurance policy has been rewritten, and the new policy and procedures are well conceived. The previous arrangements were comprehensive in scope but not clearly focused, and the management of outcomes was ineffective. The new system is not yet fully established, and has not had time to have a measurable effect on learners' experience.

39. The use of learners' feedback remains good. Learners' views are regularly sampled using questionnaires, and the results are carefully analysed and reported on. Where problems are identified they are dealt with. The views of employers and partner organisations are also collected. Teams of tutors meet regularly to discuss learners' progress and to identify opportunities for improvement. Actions are decided upon and then carried out.

40. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory in general, and are good in business administration. All areas hold regular standardisation meetings for assessors. Internal verifiers keep assessors well informed about developments in assessment practice, and provide good feedback to them on the quality of their work.

41. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Gen II's most recent report was produced by the quality manager following extensive consultation. The report provides an accurate picture of the organisation, and identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. However, the self-assessment process did not directly involve all staff in assessing their own work.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- very effective health and safety management
- good target-setting for staff
- very good training resources for science and engineering
- good support for learners
- strong links with external organisations

Weaknesses

- slow response to poor performance in one area of learning
- too little sharing of good practice

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Other contributory areas

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- particularly effective approach to key skills
- good completion of additional training and qualifications
- good training resources
- very good range of on-the-job training activities

Weaknesses

- poor target-setting for learners
- inadequate reinforcement of equal opportunities for learners

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention rates on apprenticeship programmes
- good development of workplace skills
- very good progression into employment and further training
- good work placements
- very effective support for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress in completing apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient use of assessment targets

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good ICT skills development
- very effective use of formative assessment

Weaknesses

- insufficient feedback to learners on their individual progress
- insufficient awareness of equal opportunities

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT GEN II ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY TRAINING:

- getting the ICT course content on a CD
- 'staff who know what they are talking about'
- the good working relationships with assessors and tutors
- 'the staff are very approachable and supportive - always there for you'
- getting many of their qualifications completed during initial training
- the manufacturing course being taught in-house
- being treated with respect by everyone
- 'they are really behind you - big style'
- 'the fantastic quality of the training'
- getting key skills done early
- the extra help at the assessment surgery
- 'women being given the same opportunities as the men'
- the good placements in business administration

WHAT LEARNERS THINK GEN II ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY TRAINING COULD IMPROVE:

- the difficulty of the work in ICT - it could be more challenging
- 'nothing' (from many learners across the disciplines and companies)
- the work in the training centre for engineering learners - it could be more challenging and specialised
- the communications between Gen II and learners on science programmes
- 'we could start the engineering NVQ 3 assessment earlier'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- very effective health and safety management
- good target-setting for staff
- very good training resources for science and engineering
- good support for learners
- strong links with external organisations

Weaknesses

- slow response to poor performance in one area of learning
- too little sharing of good practice

42. Gen II has a strong focus on retention and achievement. Learners' progress is monitored carefully. Their tutors report fortnightly to team meetings on their progress, and use colour-coded data reports to enable those in need of help to be identified quickly. The data reports are discussed at monthly management team meetings, and action is taken to support learners who are not making the progress expected of them. Regular meetings are held with the Lakes College to monitor learners' attendance and progress in a timely way. The training programmes offered by Gen II are highly regarded in the West Cumbria area and attract some of the most able young people. Retention and achievement rates have been consistently good over the past few years. Almost all the learners progress to employment at the end of their apprenticeship.

43. Gen II has developed a rigorous approach to the management of health and safety. The organisation's policy has recently been reviewed and updated, and an action plan has been established to further raise standards of safety monitoring and compliance, with a view to achieving an internationally recognised standard. Responsibility for health and safety is allocated to a member of the management team. All staff working with learners hold a recognised qualification in health and safety. The subject has a high profile in learners' induction process and is reinforced throughout the training. Learners attain an accredited qualification in working safely. Companies providing work placements are rigorously monitored to ensure the safety of their work environment before learners are placed with them, and this is further checked at each learner's progress review. Gen II's staff work to raise awareness of hazard and risk among their work-placement providers. The organisation's own premises are inspected regularly by senior managers, including the managing director, to ensure health and safety has the highest possible profile.

44. The organisation has clear and comprehensive strategic and business plans to guide its development. They set out its mission and values, and analyse the training and business environment within which it operates. The business plan identifies strategic imperatives in the areas of quality, sustainability, growth and cost, which lead to strategic objectives that form the basis of the performance targets set for managers. These in turn are used to set

targets for each member of staff during the annual appraisal process. Progress towards performance targets is monitored rigorously. Good-quality data reports are available from the organisation's management information system, enabling both business and training performance to be monitored closely. Managers hold team meetings, every fortnight, at which progress is discussed, and have recently introduced monthly individual meetings with their team members. These have proved valuable in improving communication across the organisation. All staff have an annual appraisal to review their achievements and identify training needs. The outcomes are used to devise the organisation's annual learning plan. Staff development opportunities are good, and at the time of the inspection, two-thirds of the training staff were engaged in professional development.

45. Learners benefit from very good facilities for both practical and background knowledge training. Both of Gen II's training centres are very well equipped with up-to-date machinery and equipment. For example, there are several training rigs which replicate the operations of a chemical process plant, and there is a wide range of machining equipment. The management of resources is good. The company's close relationship with local firms enables it to gain access to very modern large-scale equipment, which provides very good training opportunities. Training staff are well qualified in their vocational area and nearly all have training qualifications or are working towards them. The ratio of tutors to learners is good, ensuring that learners are carefully supervised and given frequent individual attention.

46. Learners receive good support. They benefit from additional mathematics teaching which helps them to progress to higher engineering courses. Those on work placements are visited regularly for progress reviews and assessments, and have the opportunity to raise any concerns with Gen II's staff. At college they have a personal tutor, with whom they can discuss any problems or personal issues. Gen II employs a professional counsellor, who is available to staff and learners. Learners in difficulty are given help, for example, with finding accommodation. Learners with identified disabilities are assisted by adjustments to their programme. For example, an electrical engineering learner was diagnosed with severe colour blindness, which prevented him continuing with his programme. After discussion, he was transferred to a mechanical engineering programme where his condition was not a barrier to progress. However, Gen II does not have a policy or established provision to help learners with literacy or numeracy difficulties. Engineering learners are recruited through a competitive process which excludes those with difficulties in these areas, but this is not the case in other areas of learning. The company also has good key skills provision, and literacy and numeracy support is provided by the college where learners study their level 3 programme. These arrangements generally meet the needs of learners, but are insufficiently systematic or coherent.

47. Gen II has strong links with local industry, schools, and other agencies. Its senior managers serve on local working parties, and as governors of other institutions. The company participates fully in initiatives to promote careers in engineering, particularly to women, who are under-represented in the industry. It has a strong relationship with the Lakes College and with local schools, two of which have gained academy status with its support. Gen II has very good contacts with a network of over a hundred smaller companies, which provide work placements and often employment for apprentices. It maintains particularly close links with British Nuclear Group. Almost half its learners take up work placements with British Nuclear Group on completion of their level 2 certificates, and nearly all of these subsequently gain full-time employment with the company. Daily contact between Gen II and British Nuclear Group's staff ensures that courses meet the

needs of the industry. For example, Gen II has recently begun a pilot programme of additional engineering modules, offered in collaboration with British Nuclear Group, to enable learners to carry out nuclear decommissioning. This is expected to be a rapidly increasing area of work over the next few years. Gen II has worked with companies and agencies in the nuclear engineering field to successfully bid for CoVE status in nuclear engineering technology. The funding obtained has been used to build state-of-the-art training rigs to enable learners to practise nuclear and chemical industrial processing skills. A programme of curriculum development is underway to make this facility available to a wide range of learners in future.

48. Initially, Gen II was slow to respond to the identification of poor performance in business administration. Poor assessment practice and inadequate feedback to learners were accompanied by slow progress, and many learners did not fully benefit from their training programme for a period of several months. The situation was resolved through staffing changes, and coaching of relevant staff in performance management. Rates of retention and progression into employment for learners in business administration are now good, and Gen II is ensuring that the effect of the previous weaknesses on learners is minimised. It has resolved to provide additional support, and to continue training the affected learners until they complete their qualifications.

49. There is too little sharing of good practice between teams at the company. Managers recognise the need to break down barriers created by the different histories and traditions at the two training centres. In recent months, joint training days have been held, and working groups have been set up comprising staff from both centres. However, most of these initiatives involve company policies or generic issues such as equality of opportunity. There are too few opportunities for dialogue about the detail of teaching, assessment and programme management. There is no process for ensuring that the good practice identified and discussed at team level is communicated to other teams and implemented more widely.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

50. Gen II has sound policies for ensuring equality of opportunity and preventing bullying and harassment. The policies refer to relevant legislation, and are written in an easily understandable style. The equality of opportunity policy is reviewed annually. All learners are given a copy of the policy, and engineering and business administration learners receive training in equality of opportunity during their induction. Learners' understanding of the policy and its contents is checked using post-induction surveys. The surveys reveal that levels of awareness are high among engineering and business administration learners, but less so among ICT learners. However, there is insufficient reinforcement of this learning at later stages of the course. Gen II plans to introduce regular questioning about equality issues during learners' reviews, but this has not yet been started. All work-placement providers are also provided with a copy of Gen II's policy, and the operation of their own equality policies is regularly reviewed. Gen II has produced posters promoting respect for diversity, and strongly encourages its work-placement providers and partners to display them. It has recently produced a 'Standards and Expectations' booklet for staff and learners, setting out its expectations for conduct. This reinforces the messages of inclusivity and equality of opportunity for all. All staff have attended a course on equality of opportunity in the past year.

51. The minority ethnic population in West Cumbria is very small, at less than 1 per cent of

the total. Gen II monitors its learners' ethnicity and recognises the persistence of gender inequalities at recruitment, such as the low number of women who apply for engineering programmes and men who apply for business administration. Gen II tries hard to overcome these stereotypes. Its marketing literature provides positive images of women working in the engineering industry, and the organisation makes regular presentations to schools in the area on this subject. Women apprentices have visited local primary schools as part of a teaching topic on 'jobs in our area'. Gen II monitors the performance of women applicants through the application process and finds that those who apply perform well.

52. Gen II has recently reviewed its learner recruitment processes to make them more consistent, transparent, and free from bias. Applicants for apprenticeships take a nationally recognised battery of tests followed by an interview in which there is a standard set of questions and scoring procedure. Interview panels now include men and women, and panel members have received training. Only about a quarter of applicants are accepted for training in engineering subjects, but those who are not offered a place are referred to the local college which has an appropriate entry-level course.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

53. Gen II has recently appointed a senior manager, to take overall charge of quality improvement, and a new quality co-ordinator. Managers have dealt actively with identified weaknesses in the provision. The quality assurance policy has been rewritten, and now defines quality monitoring measures and targets for each stage of the learners' training programme. It sets out clear procedures to be followed at each stage, and an internal audit procedure to ensure compliance. For example, the procedure for training and learning sets out in detail the requirements for lesson planning and teaching, and this is used as a checklist when carrying out observations of training. Similar checklists are in use for observations of assessments and progress reviews. The new policy and procedures are well conceived. They were drawn up by a working group led by the quality co-ordinator, after an extensive consultation process, which built on existing good practice within the company but also incorporated ideas from outside. They have been welcomed by staff, and are well understood. The audit process has begun, and reports are being prepared on the quality of teaching and of progress reviews. These will lead to action plans for the areas involved, monitored by the quality co-ordinator. However, the system is not fully established and has not yet had a measurable effect on learners' experience.

54. The use of learners' feedback was a strength at the inspection in June 2001, and remains good. Learners' views are regularly sampled using questionnaires, and the results are carefully analysed and reported to team leaders and senior managers. If problems are identified they are dealt with. The views of employers and partners are also collected, mainly through informal discussion but also through an annual questionnaire. Teams of tutors meet regularly to discuss learners' progress and to identify opportunities for improvement and act on them.

55. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory in general, and are good in business administration. All areas of learning hold regular standardisation meetings for assessors. Internal verifiers keep assessors well informed about developments in assessment practice, and provide good feedback to them on the quality of their work. In business administration, the internal verifiers produce a report twice a year setting out key strengths and issues for the assessment process.

56. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The organisation's most recent self-assessment report was produced in March 2005 by the quality manager, following extensive consultation. A group of staff from all areas of the organisation volunteered to consult with colleagues and bring forward key strengths and weaknesses for consideration. In addition, the staff all attended two day-long staff development events which included consideration of self-assessment. The resulting report provides an accurate picture of Gen II, and identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. However, the process did not directly involve all staff in an assessment of their own work. There are plans to develop the self-assessment process this year, placing the emphasis more firmly on individual and team performance.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas		2
Apprenticeships for young people	268	2
Other government-funded provision	9	2

57. There are 277 learners on work-based learning programmes in engineering. Two hundred and three are advanced apprentices, 65 are apprentices and nine are taking NVQs. One hundred and eighty-nine advanced apprentices and 45 apprentices are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in production engineering, 27 are working towards NVQs at level 2 in manufacturing processes and 16 advanced apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 3 in laboratory operations. All engineering learners follow off-the-job training programmes at the provider's training centre, working towards NVQs at level 2 in performing engineering operations. Process learners are trained in the workplace, working towards an NVQ in performing manufacturing operations. Learners attend the Lakes College for training towards a technical certificate. Key skills training is provided by Gen II and completed in the first seven months of the programme. For engineering and process learners, assessment is carried out by Gen II's qualified assessors at agreed times, or on demand. A qualified assessor and internal verifier from Technical Training Enterprises, a subcontractor, carry out assessments and internal verification for some scientific learners, but most, based at British Nuclear Group, have qualified work-based assessors and verifiers. Learners are recruited by Gen II and placed with one of 25 large to medium-sized engineering employers after the off-the-job training. The major employer is British Nuclear Group with 101 learners. Initial assessment and induction is carried out by the provider and used to determine the most suitable programme for the learner and any additional learning needs.

Other contributory areas

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- particularly effective approach to key skills
- good completion of additional training and qualifications
- good training resources
- very good range of on-the-job training activities

Weaknesses

- poor target-setting for learners
- inadequate reinforcement of equal opportunities for learners

Achievement and standards

58. Retention and achievement rates for all engineering programmes are good. Over the two years for which full data is available, 1999-2000 and 2000-01, 104 learners started advanced apprenticeships and 84 were retained. This represents a retention rate of 81 per cent. Eighty-two of these learners achieved their intended qualification, an achievement rate of 79 per cent. Between 1999-2000 and 2002-03, 92 learners started apprenticeships, 65 were retained and 57 achieved their qualification. This represents retention and achievement rates of 62 and 71 per cent respectively. Since then, very few learners have left the programme early. The retention and achievement rates for NVQ learners are excellent. Between 2000-01 and 2003-04 there have been 40 starters, of whom 36 achieved their qualification and only three left the programme early.

59. Gen II has a particularly effective approach to key skills. They are introduced at an early stage, and learners are expected to achieve the qualifications within the first seven months of training. Learners fully understand the importance of key skills and the part they play in the training programme. They are also well aware of employers' requirements regarding key skills. All learners work towards key skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT. In addition, a one-week residential outdoor activities course is used effectively to contribute to a key skills award in improving own learning and working with others. Key skills are effectively integrated with the core vocational units. The achievement rate for key skills is good.

60. There is good completion of additional training and qualifications. All engineering and manufacturing learners work towards up to four additional NVQ units, selected to meet the particular needs of the employer and to widen the learners' experience in a particular vocational aspect of engineering. Learners can experience a wide range of additional training, some of which is externally accredited. Such training includes, manual handling, risk assessment, working safely, and safe systems of work. Learners are pleased with the opportunity to complete additional training and gain further qualifications, and their needs are effectively met.

61. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners are highly motivated and produce written and practical work of a high standard. They are developing good new practical skills and enhancing those previously acquired. Portfolios are well produced and contain diverse evidence which is effectively cross-referenced to the NVQ unit.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	52		75		90		65		62	100	42	100				
Retained*	0		3		6		32		51	82	33	79				
Successfully completed	0		3		4		31		50	81	32	76				
Still in learning	51		67		69		16		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

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LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	54		39		35	100	26	100	26	100	5	100				
Retained*	0		23		30	86	10	38	22	85	3	60				
Successfully completed	0		23		30	86	4	15	21	81	2	40				
Still in learning	53		10		0	0	1	4	0	0	1	20				

*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		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		5	100	15	100	19	100	1	100	0	100				
Retained*	0		5	100	15	100	16	84	1	100	0	100				
Successfully completed	0		5	100	15	100	15	79	1	100	0	100				
Still in learning	9		0	100	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	100				

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

The quality of provision

62. Training resources are good. Training staff are well qualified and industrially experienced. There are sufficient staff for the number of learners, and the ratio of staff to learners in practical sessions is good. Workshops are clean and tidy and there are ample specialist tools and equipment. Equipment is of a good industrial standard. Classroom accommodation is clean and tidy, with good information and learning technology resources, overhead projectors, whiteboards and interactive whiteboards. There are good displays of vocational wall charts, posters and visual aids. On-the-job training resources are very good. Learners work with modern high-technology equipment. Workplace staff have good industrial experience, and many learners have on-site assessors.

63. The range of on-the-job training activities is very good. Learners are employed in a wide variety of international, national and small to medium-sized engineering businesses, that perform an impressive range of high-technology tasks. Learners quickly progress to carrying out complex and demanding engineering tasks. Staff from Gen II and the employer ensure that support is available when required. Learners follow a planned rotation around their factory during the training period. Their on-the-job training is planned and co-ordinated well by their employers and Gen II's assessors. Learners develop good practical skills and speak with confidence about their work.

64. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Learners' portfolios contain a wide range of appropriate evidence that reflects the demanding tasks they complete in the workplace. Background knowledge questions are completed in a timely way, and assessment is planned, fair and rigorous. Learners have good awareness of appeals procedures. However, many learners working on the British Nuclear Group site are late in starting assessments for their level 3 NVQ. Managers on the site prefer learners to gain a wide and comprehensive experience of the facilities before assessment starts. In some

cases this means that learners do not start NVQ assessment until near the end of their third year of training. Some learners undergo formative assessment and others are assessed for the generic units of the NVQ, but the approach is inconsistent. Learners and employers have a clear understanding of NVQ and framework assessment requirements.

65. Support for learners on engineering, manufacturing and science programmes is satisfactory. They receive appropriate vocational advice and guidance, together with good pastoral support. Personal development is promoted through the achievement of wider key skills during the outdoor activities week. Gen II supports learners until they gain suitable employment.

66. The identification of, and support for, learners' literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. All learners have an initial assessment, which includes tests for aptitude, and verbal and numerical skills. Learners receive clear feedback on their performance, and are made aware of the learning support that is available if needed. Most learners entering training programmes with Gen II have good general certificate of secondary education results in mathematics and English, and many have completed A levels. These learners rarely have learning support needs. However, two learners who were identified as having dyslexia while at school have received appropriate support. This includes the use of different coloured papers for learning materials, extra time to complete assessments, and laptop computers where appropriate. One learner, with a form of dyspraxia, had difficulty making engineering drawings and sketches by hand. He was given training in computer-aided design, earlier than his peers, and now uses this to produce drawings. All engineering learners attend college where they are also screened to identify any literacy and numeracy needs. However, Gen II does not have a clear policy or strategy for the identification of learners' literacy and numeracy needs and the provision of support.

67. The target-setting at learners' progress reviews is poor. The targets are long-term and do not cater for the learners' short- or medium-term needs. They are not realistic, measurable or achievable in the short term. Most targets are no more than general statements about collecting evidence or completing units. However, staff are fully involved in the review process and all parties receive a copy of the review document. Progress reviews take account of feedback from the college. All learners have updated copies of their individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

68. Achievement and retention rates, and learners' progress, are very closely monitored. Staff are systematically observed when carrying out teaching and training, progress reviews and on-site assessment. Learners are well aware of their progress and receive good feedback on performance. Assessment and verification is planned, fair and accurate. However, internal verification for learners on programmes in laboratory operations is not adequately planned.

69. Staff are satisfactorily qualified and uses their extensive vocational experience to good effect in training and guiding learners. There is regular staff appraisal and staff development opportunities are actively taken up. All staff were consulted in the preparation of the self-assessment report, which gives an accurate reflection of the current quality of provision.

70. Equality of opportunity is discussed during induction but not adequately reinforced at learners' progress reviews. A standard question is used at most progress reviews, but does

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not maintain or develop the learners' understanding of equal opportunities. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities but these are not effectively portrayed in the organisational structure chart. The chart shows reporting responsibilities but does not reflect who provides, or is responsible for, defined areas of training.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration		2
Apprenticeships for young people	24	2

71. There are 24 learners on business administration programmes. Five are advanced apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 3 and 19 are apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 2. All the learners are women and none has a disability. All have an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills, and an induction that covers the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Learners attend Gen II's premises in Workington on one day each fortnight for key skills training and to prepare for the technical certificate. All learners are in work placements and are visited by training staff at least once a month to assess their performance. There are two qualified assessors, both of whom have a number of years' experience in administration. A formal review of progress is completed every 12 weeks. Internal verification of the training programmes is subcontracted to JNC Training, a Carlisle-based provider. Gen II has decided to phase out its business administration provision, but will support the learners currently on programme until they complete their qualifications. Gen II is working with the LSC on this strategic development, and has committed itself to working with the new business administration provider during the coming months.

Business administration**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good retention rates on apprenticeship programmes
- good development of workplace skills
- very good progression into employment and further training
- good work placements
- very effective support for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress in completing apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient use of assessment targets

Achievement and standards

72. Retention rates are good on the apprenticeship programme. Over the period 2000-01 to 2003-04, 56 learners started programmes and the retention rate averaged 84 per cent. Learners develop good workplace skills. These include working as a member of a team, using ICT in a work context, managing time in order to meet agreed workplace targets, and communicating effectively with colleagues and members of the public. Learners are clear about the skills they have acquired and are aware of their value in improving employability.

73. There is very good progression to full-time employment and further training. Since September 2002, 75 per cent of learners have gained full-time jobs, and an additional 8 per

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cent have progressed to more advanced training or education. In a number of work placements, learners have the opportunity to apply for permanent posts. A major law firm in the area, for example, has employed a learner on work placement from Gen II for each of the past four years. These learners have continued to progress in their careers with the firm. Two currently hold responsible secretarial positions and have had the opportunity to work towards legal secretarial qualifications. Former learners currently hold full-time positions with a wide range of employers in the area, including the local council, a major insurance broker and a local process engineering company.

74. The rate of achievement of frameworks by learners is satisfactory. In the three years since 2002-03, 64 learners have been recruited to apprenticeship programmes. Eighteen have achieved the full apprenticeship framework and 24 are still in learning. Learners have also achieved a number of additional qualifications in ICT, for example, and have the opportunity to develop team skills through involvement in an outdoor activities programme funded by the training provider.

75. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Portfolios are well organised. There is a wide range of evidence from the workplace that is clearly referenced to the appropriate NVQ criteria. Good use is made of witness testimonies to confirm learners' competence. Learners have a clear understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework, and most have successfully achieved the technical certificate element of the qualification. Learners demonstrate high levels of competence in their job roles.

76. Learners are making slow progress towards completing their apprenticeship framework. Gen II has had staffing problems in this contract year but these have now been dealt with. The team of assessors has been strengthened and clear individual assessment plans were agreed in April with each learner. Visits to learners in the workplace by training staff increasingly focus on promoting progress and this is evident from written comments in learners' portfolios. The provider has made a positive commitment to maintaining a high level of resource and support until the end of the programme in December 2005.

77. Insufficient use has been made of assessment targets to promote progress. At progress reviews, learners are set measurable targets that focus on individual units, but these have not been monitored rigorously enough. Learners do not always understand the importance of targets as part of an individual learning plan. Learners' targets are not checked when they attend the training centre each fortnight. The new assessment plans do not set realistic, time-bound targets for the assessment of competence.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		5		5	100	6	100	3	100	1	100				
Retained*	0		3		4	80	1	17	3	100	1	100				
Successfully completed	0		0		3	60	0	0	3	100	1	100				
Still in learning	1		3		1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0				

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		18	100	18	100	10	100	7	100	9	100				
Retained*	0		14	78	18	100	7	70	5	71	3	33				
Successfully completed	0		6	33	9	50	7	70	4	57	3	33				
Still in learning	15		3	17	1	6	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

78. Learners have good work placements with a wide range of employers, accurately reflecting the varied economy of the region. Employers include the local council, schools, engineering and construction companies, retail outlets, and insurance and law firms. Learners have the opportunity to develop employability skills as members of teams, being responsible for managing their own time and meeting the needs of customers. Their personal confidence and self-esteem are enhanced by the roles and responsibilities they perform. One learner, for example, is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of employees' timesheets before wages are paid. Workplace supervisors recognise the value of training, and they facilitate progress. In one work placement, time is allocated each week for the learners to work on their qualification.

79. Learners receive good support from Gen II. In a number of instances, this has helped them remain on programme. For example, one learner has been supported by Gen II's counsellors through a period of severe personal crisis, receiving extra funding to help with accommodation, and help with attending off-the-job training. Training staff have also worked closely with one work-placement provider to accommodate a learner whose physical disability affects their use of the telephone. An appropriate piece of equipment was identified and purchased to overcome the problem. Learners confirm the value of the support and advice they receive from training staff during visits to work placements and as part of off-the-job training. The support and advice provided is recorded by staff in learners' portfolios.

80. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. There are formal training sessions to support progress towards the technical certificate. These have clearly identified learning outcomes and learners participate in appropriate activities, including group work. Learners have access to computers and software which meet industry standards.

81. Internal verification is satisfactory. Gen II subcontracts this activity, and an internal verifier visits the Workington training centre regularly to inspect learners' work. Procedures are clear and an agreed sampling plan is implemented. Standardisation meetings are held with assessors, and where appropriate, actions are agreed. However, there has been some delay in remedying identified problems with assessment.

82. The management of support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. All learners take an initial assessment to identify their literacy and numeracy skills. To date, no support needs have been identified in this area of learning. However, Gen II has developed links

with the Connexions service to provide support, should such a need arise.

Leadership and management

83. In business administration there is effective and ongoing communication between the small team of assessors and tutors. There are quarterly team meetings, which are minuted. Managers are supportive of professional development. Assessors have, for example, been supported in achieving and updating assessor qualifications. In the period since September 2004, there has been a staffing problem, and learners' performance has deteriorated. Managers were slow to respond to this identified problem, but have now taken appropriate measures to deal with it.

84. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Most remember the equality of opportunity information they were given as part of their induction to the training programme. However, the standard question on equality of opportunity asked at progress reviews is not enough to ensure that learners' understanding is maintained or developed.

85. Gen II's self-assessment report identified one key strength and one key weakness, which were also identified by inspectors. Inspectors found further strengths and weaknesses which were not in the report. Training staff were involved in the preparation of the self-assessment report.

Information & communications technology**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	39	3

86. Thirty-nine learners, of whom 13 are women, have been following programmes in using IT, which started in March 2005. Twenty-six learners are following an examination-based qualification in IT and 13 are on NVQ programmes at level 2. Most learners on the examination-based programme are expected to complete their course within five months, while most NVQ learners will take seven months. All learners are employed, 12 of them by Gen II. The remainder were either recruited by direct application or through their employers. The employers are local small to medium-sized commercial businesses. Induction takes place at Gen II's training centres or at the employers' premises, whichever is more suitable for the learners. Learners are offered off-the-job training following an assessment of their training and developmental needs. This training is provided at Gen II's training centres or at the employers' premises. There are three members of staff, of whom two are assessors and one takes responsibility for the recruitment and overall management of the programme. Internal verification for the area is subcontracted to JNC Training. All learners are trained and assessed by Gen II staff at the employers' premises. Assessments are carried out in the workplace every four weeks with learners scheduled to receive progress reviews every 12 weeks. Learners on the examination-based course are, however, visited at least once a week.

Using IT***Grade 3******Strengths***

- good ICT skills development
- very effective use of formative assessment

Weaknesses

- insufficient feedback to learners on their individual progress
- insufficient awareness of equal opportunities

Achievement and standards

87. Many learners start their programmes with little experience of IT or specific software packages. These learners significantly enhance their existing ICT skills and become competent in using the more complex features of the software packages. They apply these skills well at work and in their day-to-day tasks. For example, one learner is using spreadsheets to develop a database of contacts in conjunction with the mailmerge features of a word processor. NVQ learners, in addition to developing these skills, develop confidence in using ICT and developing their study skills. For example, one NVQ learner, after her initial nervousness in starting the programme, is progressing well and is planning to move on to other courses after completing her NVQ.

88. Learners' portfolios and their standard of work are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. For example, one learner has used the customisation feature of her word processor to demonstrate her high level of competence. None of the learners has left their programme, and all are progressing at a satisfactory rate.

The quality of provision

89. Gen II has developed very effective ways of using formative assessments to improve the learners' training. Learners' computer skills are assessed well at the beginning of their programme using a software package which has been developed in house. The computer package assesses and scores the learners' prior knowledge of ICT and identifies their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the requirements of their programmes. The learners are encouraged to use this web-based package frequently, at work and home, to monitor their knowledge. The scores of learners on the examination-based course indicate their readiness to take the appropriate module tests. Gen II uses this formative assessment system in conjunction with progress monitoring software to check on the learners' progress and provides additional training where necessary. Gen II regularly e-mails the learners' scores to their employers so that additional support can be provided. Learners are very motivated by using this assessment package and strive to improve their score by improving their knowledge and their competence.

90. Gen II has developed its own software to monitor its learners' progress. For NVQ learners, this system records the target dates for the achievement of different NVQ units. For learners on the examination-based course, the system records the target achievement dates for different modules, and a score that indicates the learners' knowledge of the modules. Following monthly progress reviews, the programme manager takes effective action if any learner has not progressed as expected. A report on each learner's progress is e-mailed to their employer so that they can provide additional support where it is needed.

91. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory, with learners receiving effective individual coaching and support in the workplace. Gen II is progressing well in using e-learning to improve the training of its learners. For example, learners on the examination-based course receive a CD-ROM which contains all the learning material for their programme, and which they can use at work or at home. ICT resources are satisfactory, with Gen II providing portable computer facilities at the employers' premises for training or learners' developmental needs. There is a comprehensive set of information for learners, clearly explaining the learning process and some aspects of Gen II's quality assurance arrangements.

92. Initial assessment arrangements are satisfactory. All learners have a diagnostic assessment of their prior knowledge of ICT but their literacy, numeracy and language needs and their learning disabilities are not assessed. Any learner who is identified as requiring additional help during the programme receives satisfactory individual support. However, Gen II has recognised that it relies too much on employers telling it about learners' additional needs, and is now developing literacy, numeracy and dyslexia assessment for its ICT learners.

93. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Most learners are visited frequently at work. They comment positively on the support they receive from the assessors. Learners also benefit from supportive employers that take a keen interest in their progress.

94. The programmes match the needs and interests of learners and their employers. Learners with an interest in developing specific ICT skills are further supported with additional training. There is a clear match between the learners' career aspirations, their current employment and the qualifications they choose to follow. All learners and their managers recognise the programmes as relevant to learners' job roles, and their current and future needs.

95. Learners are not given enough information about their own overall progress towards their qualification. Most learners have a reasonable view of their progress. But despite having been on the programme for more than five weeks, none of the learners has discussed their progress individually with their assessor, and none has an informed view of their progress. Gen II only offers learners formal progress reviews every 12 weeks, despite the newness of the provision and the relatively short duration of the courses.

Leadership and management

96. All learners receive an induction which covers the content of the training programme, equal opportunities, and health and safety. Workplace supervisors and assessors help learners set long-term and short-term targets. Gen II provides a training programme which extends and builds on the learners' development and individual needs. For example, a number of learners have been offered additional courses to improve their performance at work. However, it is not always clear how and when aspects of training are planned, provided or assessed. Initial assessment of learners' job roles is made against qualification standards but the results vary in the level of detail. The way that the learning programme and work activities are co-ordinated is not always clear. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification and quality improvement, but Gen II did not self-assess this area, as the provision is too new.

97. Most learners have insufficient understanding of equality of opportunity. Gen II provides training in equality of opportunity during induction, and additional training for the learners it employs. However, a significant number of its learners do not clearly understand their rights and responsibilities at work, and many are insufficiently aware of how to deal with poor equality of opportunity practices at work. It is not always clear how equality of opportunity is promoted. Gen II has recognised this weakness and is developing strategies to improve the learners' understanding.

