

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **Choices 4 All**

**7 April 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 over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### 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.

If satisfactory grades are given 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 have a full inspection.

## Overall judgement

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 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 satisfactory or better grades in leadership and management and at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. A satisfactory 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 improvement. The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Choices 4 All

### CONTENTS

#### **Inspection report**

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Choices 4 All	1
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
Key findings	2

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Choices 4 All (Choices) is a private limited company operating in the London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Haringey and Hillingdon. Choices provides specialised training for adults with a learning disability and aims to enhance their ability to move into paid employment. Choices became a registered charity in 1997. Choices contracts with London West Learning and Skills Council (LWLSC) to provide Entry to Employment (E2E) for young people. Choices also contracts with its sponsoring London boroughs to provide vocational-related training for learners with difficulties and disabilities. There are currently 25 learners in training, of whom nine are funded by LWLSC. There are six staff involved with the training, two instructors, two instructor managers, a development manager and the chief executive. A small number of volunteer staff also support the learners.
2. Choices offers E2E training with the vocational strand focusing on hospitality and catering, however other occupations such as business administration can also be provided. Choices also operates a social firm that provides catering facilities at selected local events, and has also formed partnerships with a small number of local employers to provide managed work placements for the learners.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Choices provision for E2E training is good, as is its approach to leadership and management and equality of opportunity. The arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory.
4. The inspection team were broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The process is inclusive and involves all staff in its production. Particularly innovative mechanisms are used to ensure that the views of learners, including the most vulnerable, are used in the drafting process. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified, however some significant weaknesses are missing from the self-assessment report. The action plan is frequently monitored and evaluated at team meetings and actions form the basis of the performance management reviews for staff.
5. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. Choices has been very effective at making improvements and deals with concerns promptly and successfully. When actions are identified they are dealt with within an appropriate plan and timescale. It is clear with whom the responsibility lies and progress is monitored at frequent team meetings.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR CHOICES 4 ALL:

- provide appropriate support for the literacy, numeracy and language needs of the learners
- strengthen the quality improvement practices
- improve the monitoring of the learner reviews
- further develop the teaching observation scheme
- increase the use of management information

## GRADES

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

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

Foundation		Grade 2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Entry to Employment	9	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. All aspects of the LWLSC funded training were reported and graded. All aspects of the learners' work was examined, teaching sessions were observed, and observations were also undertaken in the partner workplaces. A range of documentary evidence was also examined.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	4
Number of learners interviewed	9
Number of staff interviewed	6
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits to the provider	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

7. **There is very good achievement of vocational and personal skills.** Staff have high expectations of learners' performance. Initial practical skills in catering are gained in the training kitchen at the main training centre. Skills achievement is linked to units of their vocational course.

8. Some learners who initially had behavioural and social difficulties are now working successfully with the public in a café, the refectory of a local sixth form college and at high profile catering events arranged by the provider's own catering company.

9. Learners work towards external work experience with local employers. The three learners who have completed the E2E programme since 2003 have all entered employment. One learner who had been to a law firm for administration work experience has been employed by them for nine months. Choices has continued to support the learner and the employer over this period of time.

10. **Learners develop their confidence and self-esteem.** For some learners who have never travelled by public transport before joining Choices, travelling independently has increased their confidence. Choices awards their own in-house certificates for skills achieved by learners. For example, travelling independently, being engaged and focused on learning. Retention and attendance are very good. All learners who started the programme have successfully moved into employment or are still in training.

### **The quality of provision**

11. **Good use is made of the local community and training centre resources** to provide very good practical experiential learning. The training kitchen provides learners with the opportunity to work in a good, realistic setting, preparing food for other learners and staff. The kitchen is very well equipped to meet the needs of the vocational programmes as well as meeting the specific needs of the learners. Links with the community involve all learners spending part of their time at the provider's café which is run in partnership with the local authority at a community centre. All learners spend part of their programme on external work placements.

12. **Teaching staff use very effective individual behavioural strategies to help learners progress.** Potential problems are recognised by tutors and dealt with immediately in a calm and firm manner. Learners respond well to this approach. Many learners start their programme with inappropriate behaviour and some have been referred to Choices because a previous provider has been unable to deal with their specific problems. All learners develop appropriate behaviour and work very effectively in the catering outlets managed by Choices.

13. **Learners receive very good support during their time at Choices.** The provider recognises that travel skills are an issue for many of the learners and has developed their own modular independent travel course for learners to work towards. Learners report an increase in their self-confidence once they have achieved routes successfully. Learners have weekly access to individual external specialist counselling services. Links with local specialist services are also well used by learners, such as with emotional and physical issues. Learners can choose a personal advocate from a member of the teaching staff with whom to discuss daily concerns.

14. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The observed sessions were all satisfactory or better. Sessions plans include aims and learning outcomes and key skills and literacy and numeracy objectives. In the best sessions, learners are fully engaged in their activities, they respond well to group discussions and demonstrate good understanding of what is expected of them to complete their assigned tasks.

15. **There is insufficient support for literacy, numeracy and language skills.** There is no qualified member of staff to deliver or co-ordinate literacy, numeracy and language support. One member of staff is trained to deliver the diagnostic assessment which all learners take during the induction. There are a few learners for whom English is their second language. Choices does not provide any specialist training to support these learners. There is a literacy and numeracy workshop, which is run by a volunteer who is a trained teacher, but not in basic skills. However, during the inspection, there was good use of opportunities, particularly in the practical sessions, to reinforce numeracy skills. The provider is aware that this area of training needs further development and is considering various options at the present time.

16. **There is insufficient formal recording of targets for learners.** Review documents do not contain sufficient detail to help learners understand their development. Many targets are too general and do not include those elements of literacy or numeracy that are identified from the initial diagnostic assessment. Individual learning plans are produced using a computerised management information system and are used to record the elements of the core units completed. However, these learning plans do not contain personal targets or long-term aims.

### **Leadership and management**

17. **There is a clearly understood strategic vision and common purpose within the staff at Choices.** They form a highly effective team and possess complimentary skills that provide the learners with a secure learning environment. Tutors and managers meet formally at the end of each day to review the day's activities and plan those for the following day. Concerns are dealt with promptly.

18. **There is strong financial management and control at Choices.** The chief executive closely monitors and reports on financial matters monthly to the board of trustees. The provider has moved from a position of deficit some three years ago, to now having a significant surplus. This strong position has enabled Choices to plan a move to more convenient and larger premises with appropriate access.

19. **Choices has developed particularly effective partnerships** to support and enhance the opportunities for its learners. These include the local Connexions personal adviser who refers learners who are most likely to benefit from the E2E provision, and more specifically, the local authorities and further education college that provide realistic work placements for the learners.

20. **Choices works well with Connexions and LWLSC to widen participation** and recruits learners that have few other appropriate opportunities locally. Many of the learners have profound and complex difficulties and have not been able to settle into a learning environment prior to arriving at Choices. The primary focus is to help the learners to become fully included in society and this they do well. Learners are encouraged to take additional responsibilities, such as the six who represent all learners at board meetings.

21. The self-assessment process has involved all staff and learners. The views of learners, including the most vulnerable, are collected through innovative questionnaires and discussion groups. The report identified some of the strengths and weaknesses found during inspection. However, it did not identify the key weakness in literacy, numeracy and language provision. Management of the teaching is well co-ordinated. Lesson observations take place and contribute to the development of detailed schemes of work.

22. **The quality improvement practices are effective** at resolving problems promptly. Actions are dealt with in an appropriate timescale and the resolution is closely monitored at frequent team meetings. However, the improvement processes are incomplete and insufficiently robust. Some key weaknesses in the learning cycle have been missed, for example, the lack of detail in target-setting during learner reviews.



*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

### **Leadership and management**

#### ***Strengths***

- clearly understood strategic vision
- strong financial management
- good focus on widening participation
- particularly effective partnerships that enhance learning
- good use of learner feedback

#### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficiently robust quality improvement practices

### **Foundation**

#### ***Entry to Employment***

#### ***Strengths***

- very good achievement of vocational and personal skills
- good use of resources to support practical training
- very effective behaviour management
- good personal support

#### ***Weaknesses***

- insufficient support for literacy, numeracy and language needs
- insufficient formal recording of targets