

INSPECTION REPORT

Hull Business Training Centre

14 October 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Hull Business Training Centre

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Hull Business Training Centre Ltd (HBTC) is a privately owned partnership which became a limited company in 2003. The two partners who founded the company are now its directors. The directors manage a team of 14 staff, most of whom work full time. HBTC provides training for learners ranging from 14-year-old schoolchildren to long-term unemployed adults. Training programmes are offered for young people in administration, literacy and numeracy, and information and communications technology (ICT) for users. Adult learners are predominantly involved in literacy and numeracy programmes.

2. Most of the younger learners are working as apprentices and are either employed or have work placements with local companies. Most adults are either working for local companies, or have been unemployed for a long time.

3. Apprenticeships for young people are funded by the Humberside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the provider also has a contract with Yorkshire Forward, Regional Development Agency. The provider works in partnership with the local consortium for learning to offer the adult programmes. In August 2005, HBTC re-opened a learndirect centre funded by the Humber Hub.

4. The unemployment rate in Hull was 5.2 per cent in September 2005 compared with the national average of 2.3 per cent. In 2005, the proportion of school leavers in Hull achieving five or more general certificates in secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 34.7 per cent, compared with 53.7 per cent nationally. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups in Hull is 2.3 per cent compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** HBTC's leadership and management are good. Its arrangements for quality improvement are also good and equality of opportunity is outstanding. The provisions in ICT for users, literacy and numeracy, and administration are all good.

6. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The process includes all relevant stakeholders. All staff are involved at an early stage in identifying strengths and weaknesses through working groups, which look at each aspect of the provision. Learners' and employers' feedback is used as a supporting evidence for judgements, and the finished report and its judgements are supported throughout HBTC. Overall, inspectors' findings matched many of the strengths identified. The report however has a lot of descriptive detail, and the evaluative judgements do not always state clearly what effect they have in raising standards.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.**

HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE

Since the reinspection of 2003, HBTC has developed a number of good quality improvement measures. Retention and achievement rates are now at least satisfactory in all areas and the number of learners out of funding has shown a noticeable decline. Feedback has been used to make improvements such as the purchase of information technology (IT) equipment, and is also used in self-assessment to evaluate the provision. The weaknesses identified during the reinspection of 2003 have been resolved successfully and inspectors judge that the provision has continued to improve during a period of growth and diversification.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE:

- continue to improve the retention and achievement rates
- further develop the scope of provision in preparation for life and work
- continue to improve the full-time employment rates for apprentices
- continue to develop the learndirect centre
- maintain the outstanding approach to 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		1
Quality improvement		2

Information and communications technology			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	9	2	

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		2	
Other government-funded provision	22	2	
learndirect	14	2	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Administration</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	76	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. All contracts and areas of learning were inspected. However, the preparation for life and work programme in the learndirect centre was the only curriculum area inspected. The inspection took place during 12-14 october 2005.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	17
Number of staff interviewed	31
Number of employers interviewed	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	7
Number of visits	5

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **Retention and achievement rates are good in ICT for users programmes.** They are satisfactory in literacy and numeracy and administration programmes.

10. **The progression of apprentices to full-time employment is good in ICT and administration.** During the past three years, progression rates have been consistently between 50 and 60 per cent.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Business administration and law	0	2	0	0	2
Total	0	2	0	0	2

11. **The implementation of the information technology qualification (iTQ) is particularly effective.** The programme has been well designed. Learners and employers have access to a comprehensive range of options enabling both parties to design a tailor-made qualification to suit their needs.

12. **The specially designed learning materials for literacy and numeracy programmes are very good.** Materials are designed to meet the needs of individuals and to be used in a variety of activities. Written materials all conform to a national standard for readability.

13. **Overall, the standard of training in administration programmes is very good.**

HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE

Training sessions delivered at HBTC include all aspects of the apprenticeship framework. This training is designed to complement the training offered by employers. **The resources to support training are good.**

14. **All learners receive good support** which ranges from individual coaching to access to specialised external agencies. The support for literacy and numeracy needs is particularly good, with specialist staff and learning materials readily available. **HBTC has easy access to adapted equipment for those learners with a disability.**

15. **In the learndirect centre, HBTC successfully offers literacy and numeracy courses alongside vocational courses.** Learners working for vocational qualifications are also gaining skills for life qualifications. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language.

16. Assessment and verification of all qualifications are satisfactory. Internal verification is well planned and supports assessment practices well. Assessors receive graded feedback about their assessments.

Leadership and management

17. **Communications between all teams at HBTC are particularly effective.** Staff value the open-door policy created by the directors and this forms a basis for good staff morale. Staff report to directors on a weekly basis about their own areas of work. Regularly held meetings are well minuted, and produce action points which are monitored.

18. HBTC has a successful link with a local consortium for work-based learning. The provider is a very active member, being involved in a number of working groups to share best practice in a number of areas, including quality improvement, administrative and data requirements, and the development of new initiatives.

19. **Accommodation is good and meets legislative requirements.** Spacious, well-decorated training rooms provide a good environment in which to learn. **Specialist equipment is good.** Rooms are equipped with industry-standard networked computers, and there are plenty of supporting materials.

20. **Staff appraisals are effective in identifying training and development needs and have improved the skills, understanding and knowledge of staff.** Training plans ensure that the needs of specific job roles are met, and sufficient funds are available to meet training needs. Staff have attended many training and development events relevant to their job roles, and staff who deliver the preparation for life and work programmes have received particularly extensive training in order to qualify them to teach the courses.

21. HBTC has a satisfactory range of policies and procedures for all staff and learners' activities. The implementation of these policies is monitored by the quality improvement manager and in turn by the directors. Some policies are not sufficiently detailed.

22. Strategic and business planning are satisfactory. The aims and objectives are clear and many are linked specifically to raising standards and retention and achievement rates.

23. The handling and management of data is satisfactory. Key members of the training team keep internal databases which detail learners' progress, and this information is used to

produce statistical evidence about retention and achievement, learners' status, and equality and diversity matters. This information is used regularly by management and all staff in decision-making.

24. **HBTC has introduced an extensive range of programmes** in order to widen participation by people in the Humberside area. This initiative includes extensive development of the preparation for life and work programmes. The courses available range from those designed for 14-year-old schoolchildren to those for adults who have been unemployed for a long time.

25. **HBTC's promotion of equality and diversity is very good.** Learners receive equality and diversity training during induction, at progress reviews and through other training activities. Significantly, each progress review includes an equality and diversity topic in order to check both employers' and learners' understanding. Overall, learners' and employers' understanding of equality of opportunity is good. All promotional materials contain positive images of under-represented groups. The quarterly magazine sent to all learners and employers includes an article about an equality and diversity issue.

26. Access for wheelchair users is satisfactory. Although the first-floor training rooms are not accessible, the ground floor training facilities can offer the full range of training opportunities and there is a specially adapted toilet for wheelchair users.

27. **Since the 2003 reinspection, HBTC has further developed a number of good-quality improvement systems.** A member of staff has overall responsibility for the management and implementation of an annual quality cycle which ensures that all activities identified on a quality improvement chart are carried out. A monthly report is compiled by the quality improvement manager, based on reports submitted by individual teams. This report is shared and discussed at a full staff meeting. Quality improvement plans are produced which identify objectives and actions to be taken. All staff contribute to the production of these plans.

28. Feedback is collected regularly from learners and employers, then analysed effectively using a software programme to identify trends in customer satisfaction. Feedback has been used to make improvements, such as the purchase of IT equipment, and is also used in self-assessment to evaluate the provision.

29. The self-assessment process involves all relevant stakeholders. Overall, inspectors' findings matched many of the strengths identified. The report, however, contains a great deal of descriptive detail. The weaknesses identified during the reinspection of 2003 have been resolved, and inspectors judged that the provision has continued to improve during a period of growth and diversification.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective internal and external communications
- good accommodation and physical resources
- very effective staff training and development programme
- extensive range of programmes to widen participation
- very good promotion of equality and diversity
- good quality improvement systems

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good progression to full-time employment
- particularly effective implementation of the iTQ
- good learning support

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

Preparation for life and work

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 2

Strengths

- thorough assessment procedures
- very good learning resources
- good access to a range of specialist equipment for learners with disabilities
- successful integration with vocational courses in learndirect

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of whiteboards for interactive teaching

Business administration and law

Administration

Grade 2

Strengths

- good progression into full-time employment
- very good standard of training
- good support and guidance

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE:

- 'the enjoyment we get coming to the centre'
- 'the supportive and helpful staff'
- 'that its much better than school'
- 'we like where we work'
- 'we are pleased to have a job'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE COULD IMPROVE:

- the training - some of it isn't difficult enough

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- particularly effective internal and external communications
- good accommodation and physical resources
- very effective staff training and development programme
- extensive range of programmes to widen participation
- very good promotion of equality and diversity
- good quality improvement systems

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

30. Communications between all teams at HBTC are particularly effective. Staff value the open-door policy created by the directors and this forms a basis for good staff morale. Staff report to directors on a weekly basis about their own areas of work. Regularly held meetings are well minuted, and produce action plans which are monitored. Staff are well informed about all aspects of the provider's operations and often share ideas in cross-departmental teams.

31. HBTC has a successful link with a local consortium for work-based learning. The provider is a very active member, being involved in a number of working groups to share best practice in a number of areas, including quality improvement, administrative and data requirements, and the development of new initiatives. For example, since HBTC has been a member of the consortium it has developed and implemented the substantial preparation for life and work programme. Staff from all sections of HBTC sit on these working groups and adopt the best practice and new ideas that they learn about to their own job roles.

32. In 2004, HBTC moved to new premises. The previous accommodation did not meet the requirements for the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and required a significant number of alterations. A decision was made to find new premises. Accommodation is now good and meets legislative requirements. Spacious, well-decorated training rooms provide a good environment in which to learn. Specialist equipment is good. Rooms are equipped with industry-standard networked computers and there are plenty of supporting materials. Resources are supplied to teams where the need is identified, and are deployed effectively to give good value for money.

33. A high staff turnover in tutor and assessor posts has caused difficulties in the past with continuity for learners, and such a period coincided with a drop in the level of ICT achievements. However, all job vacancies are now filled and HBTC provides an appropriate programme of training for those staff requiring assessor awards. A specialist tutor for literacy and numeracy has been appointed since the reinspection and the provision for learners' literacy and numeracy support needs is good.

34. Staff appraisals are effective in identifying training and development needs. The skills,

understanding and knowledge of staff have improved. Training plans ensure that the needs of specific job roles are met, and sufficient funds are available to meet training needs. Staff have attended many training and development events relevant to their job roles, and staff delivering the preparation for life and work programmes have received particularly extensive training in order to qualify to teach the courses.

35. HBTC has a satisfactory range of policies and procedures covering all training activities and functions for staff and learners. The implementation of these policies is monitored by the quality improvement manager and in turn by the directors. Some policies, however, are not sufficiently detailed. For example, the complaints policy does not give clear, specific guidance about how different types of complaint will be dealt with, and the complaints file does not always give confirmation of how the complaint was handled and closed.

36. Strategic and business planning is satisfactory. The directors understand local community and industry requirements, as well as the need to meet government initiatives. Their business plan reflects this. The plan's aims and objectives are clear, and many of them are limited specifically raising standards and retention and achievement rates, as well as securing the long-term future of the business. Self-assessment forms part of the business planning process. HBTC has plans to introduce specific, individual targets for all staff which will be linked to performance-related bonuses.

37. The handling and management of data is satisfactory. One member of staff is responsible for ensuring that learners' data is regularly and accurately stored and submitted to the LSC. Key members of the training team keep internal databases which detail learners' progress, and this information is used to produce statistical evidence about retention and achievement, learners' status, and equality and diversity matters. This information is used regularly by management and all staff in decision-making.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

38. HBTC has introduced an extensive range of programmes in order to widen participation by people in the Humberside area. This includes significant development of the preparation for life and work programmes. The courses available range from those for 14-year-old schoolchildren to those for adults who have been unemployed for a long time.

39. HBTC has implemented a good range of policies and procedures in order to monitor and promote equality of opportunity. The policies include statements of intent in order to further improve the provider's ability to ensure equality of opportunity for all its learners. One example of this is the intent to increase the participation of men in administration courses.

40. The equality of opportunity manager has been a member of the local equality and diversity action group for a long time and has adopted and implemented a great deal of the good practice promoted by this group.

41. HBTC has introduced mandatory diversity training for its staff. Almost all staff are receiving this training on a regular basis, through HBTC's learndirect centre. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item at all staff meetings.

42. HBTC sets itself demanding targets for equality of opportunity in participation and achievement rates. For example, according to a recently conducted local census,

participation in work-based learning by members of minority ethnic groups is 0.7 per cent for the region. HBTC sets itself a target of 2 per cent. The actual participation rate at the time of inspection was 3.25 per cent. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities represent 47 per cent of all learners. The participation of members of minority ethnic groups on preparation for life and work programmes is outstanding, and represents 53 per cent of all learners on these programmes. Achievement rates affect the participation rates.

43. The provider's monitoring of equality of opportunity is very thorough. Each month the manager reviews the data, which includes comparing actual rates with HBTC's targets and the local equality of diversity impact measures. Records demonstrate that HBTC is consistently above all these targets and that the provider is ensuring participation by all interested groups.

44. HBTC's support for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. The learners are encouraged to determine the level of support that they need. If the support requires help from specialist practitioners then this is obtained as a matter of priority by the provider. HBTC has extensive links with a wide range of referral agencies. Through its arrangements with the local consortium for learning, HBTC has access to a wide range of specialist equipment which includes Braille printers, hearing loops and mobile wheelchair ramps.

45. Equality of opportunity and diversity are promoted frequently and very effectively. Learners are well informed about equality and diversity during their induction, at progress reviews and through other training activities. Significantly, each progress review includes an equality and diversity topic with which to check employers' and learners' understanding. Overall, learners' and employers' understanding of equality of opportunity is good.

46. All promotional materials contain positive images of under-represented groups. The quarterly magazine sent to all learners and employers includes an article about an equality and diversity issue. For example, the latest version of the magazine includes an article on teenage pregnancy.

47. Access for wheelchair users is satisfactory. Although the first-floor training rooms are not accessible, the ground-floor training facilities can offer the full range of training opportunities and there is a specially adapted toilet for wheelchair users.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

48. Since the reinspection of 2003, HBTC has further developed a number of good quality improvement measures. A member of staff has overall responsibility for the management and implementation of an annual quality cycle which ensures that all activities identified on a quality improvement chart are carried out. A monthly report is compiled by the quality improvement manager, based on reports submitted by individual teams. The report covers retention and achievement information, learners' status, including the number of learners without funding still on programme, progress towards equality and diversity targets, and recruitment trends. Each report is shared and discussed at a full staff meeting.

49. The overall development plan uses a series of quality improvement plans which identify objectives and actions to be taken, although these are sometimes not always specific enough to be measured effectively. All staff contribute to the production of quality improvement plans. Retention and achievement rates are now at least satisfactory in all

areas and the number of learners without funding has shown a noticeable decline.

50. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is now formally planned and ensures that new, or inexperienced staff, are observed more frequently to identify support needs. Since the introduction of more thorough lesson observations, the planning of learning is more comprehensive, which is illustrated by more detailed lesson plans.

51. Feedback is collected regularly from learners and employers, and is analysed well, using a software programme, to identify trends in customer satisfaction. Feedback has been used to make improvements such as the purchase of IT equipment, and is also used in the self-assessment process to evaluate the provision.

52. Internal verification is satisfactory. It is well planned and supports assessment practice effectively. Assessors receive graded feedback about the quality of their assessments. This process has proved useful, particularly to new and inexperienced assessors, in giving them clear feedback about performances.

53. The self-assessment process includes relevant stakeholders. All staff are involved at an early stage in identifying the provision's strengths and weaknesses, through working groups which examine each aspect of the provision. Learners' and employers' feedback is used as supporting evidence to judgements, and the finished report and its judgements are supported by all sections of HBTC. Overall, inspectors' findings matched many of the strengths identified by the provider. The report relies heavily on descriptive detail, and the evaluative judgements do not always make clear the effects in raising standards. The weaknesses identified during the reinspection of 2003 have been resolved, and inspectors judged that the provision has continued to improve during a period of growth and diversification.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	9	2

54. HBTC offers training in ICT for users for apprentices and advanced apprentices. They attend a one-week induction course and then most proceed directly to work placements. When in work placement, learners attend the HBTC training centre for half a day each week. An individual training programme is agreed with the learner and employer that best suits the needs of both parties. Off-the-job training at the training centre is supported by a range of learning materials. Assessments and progress reviews are carried out on the employers' premises.

ICT for users

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good progression to full-time employment
- particularly effective implementation of the iTQ
- good learning support

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

Achievement and standards

55. The retention and achievement rates for the ICT apprenticeship frameworks are good. For 2002-03, the retention and achievement rates were both 75 per cent. For 2004-05, 25 per cent of learners have completed their frameworks with 50 per cent of learners still in training. The retention and achievement rates for 2003-04 were both unsatisfactory, at 33 per cent. The loss of staff and subsequent staff replacement issues surrounding this drop in performance have now been resolved. All job vacancies are now filled.

56. Learners' work placements are well monitored to ensure that the content of the work is sufficiently IT related. Employment is predominantly with small and medium-sized companies, enabling learners to carry out a wide range of IT activities which include the use of databases, spreadsheets and web-based products. Between 2002 and 2004, entry to full-time employment by apprentices has ranged between 50 and 60 per cent.

57. The quality of work produced by learners in their portfolios of evidence is good. A wide range of predominantly work-based evidence is used.

HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	5		8		15	100	16	100									
Retained*	0		2		5	33	12	75									
Successfully completed	0		2		5	33	12	75									
Still in learning	5		4		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

58. The implementation of the iTQ for IT users has been particularly well designed. Learners have access to a full range of units from the level 2 and level 3 qualifications. Employers and learners are able to choose the course structure and content that directly relates to the work of the employer, and the learners' needs. The assessment strategy has been carefully devised, with all learners having a work placement. Assessment can then be carried out in a real work environment.

59. Support for literacy and numeracy needs is good. All learners receive an initial assessment and if a learner is identified as being at entry level for literacy or numeracy, then further diagnostic testing is carried out. Training and support for identified learning needs are provided by specialist practitioners and closely matched the occupational learning programme.

60. Internal verification is satisfactory. All internal verification is planned, and a sampling grid identifies the relevant assessor and what part of the iTQ is to be verified at any given time. The internal verifier works closely with the assessors. Learners' progress is also monitored frequently.

61. The learners' progress review process is satisfactory. They are visited every four to six weeks in the workplace and the review involves HBTC, the employer and the learner. The progress review includes good reinforcement of equality and diversity matters for the learner and the employer.

Leadership and management

62. The drop in the retention and achievement rates over a one-year period was quickly resolved by the managers. The programme is returning to its previously good standards.

63. Careful consideration has been given to the range of employers offering ICT work placements and to the course offered. Learners' and employers' needs are being met.

64. Plans are at an advanced stage to expand this curriculum area to include offering ICT courses in the learndirect centre, and ICT practitioner courses. When implemented, these plans will increase the opportunities for non-apprenticeship learners to work at the training centre. The findings of the self-assessment report for this area of learning matched those of the inspection team.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	22	2
learndirect	14	2

65. HBTC established its preparation for life and work programmes in 2004. During 2004-05, HBTC had contracts with the Humberside LSC and the Regional Development Agency (RDA), and a European Social Fund contract in collaboration with a local consortium for learning. Two of these contracts have now been completed, but HBTC has secured further funding, with programmes due to begin in 2006. In August 2005 HBTC re-opened a centre for learndirect which currently has 14 learners. Provision is offered to 14 to 16-year-old school pupils, factory workers, apprentices, unemployed people and people for whom English is an additional language. HBTC uses the preparation for life and work department to support its other programme areas, in which 47 per cent of learners have assisted learning needs.

Literacy and numeracy**Grade 2***Strengths*

- thorough assessment procedures
- very good learning resources
- good access to a range of specialist equipment for learners with disabilities
- successful integration with vocational courses in learndirect

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of whiteboards for interactive teaching

Achievement and standards

66. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is good. All work is matched to the national skills for life literacy and numeracy framework.

67. The retention and achievement rates for all programmes are satisfactory. The retention and achievement rate was 60 per cent for 57 work-based learners on a national skills for life pilot. Of the 22 learners still to complete this programme, most are itinerant workers and the training centre has been unable to contact them. The 97 learners funded by RDA also had satisfactory retention and achievement rates of 61 per cent. The learndirect centre, established in August 2005, as yet has no meaningful course completion data. However, early indications for the successful completion of national tests in literacy and numeracy are good. Fifteen learners who completed skills for life short-term courses all achieved passes.

HULL BUSINESS TRAINING CENTRE

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

Other government funded																	
Other government-funded provision	2005-06		2004-05		1998-99												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	0	0	154		0	100											
Retained*	0	0	95		0	100											
Successfully completed	0	0	93		0	100											
Still in training	0	0	22		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

68. Assessment strategies are thorough and administered by well-trained staff. They include individual interviews, and written and online assessments. Assessment results are used in the individual learning plans. Learners are involved in target-setting and understand what they need to do to improve their skills. Progress is consistently monitored, reviewed, and recorded, and new targets are set.

69. Learning resources are of a very good standard. Materials are produced to meet individual needs and are checked for conformity with the adult literacy skills unit readability standards. Learners' work shows that they enjoy working through the various activities in a series of well-planned information books about local topics. Learning is reinforced by accompanying CD-ROMs.

70. Classroom accommodation is good and well furnished. Computer equipment is of a good standard and used frequently by learners. The working environment is welcoming and learners are focused on their work and relate well to their tutors.

71. Activities are carefully matched to the national skills for life literacy and numeracy standards. Learners' feedback indicates that they enjoy the interactive learning challenges provided by well-planned use of computer programmes.

72. The provider makes good use of specialist resources for learners with disabilities which it obtains from the consortium for learning resource base. The resources include an extensive range of books and other publications. Specialist equipment for learners with disabilities, such as moveable ramps, hearing loops, Braille equipment and other technological aids are borrowed as required.

73. All learning resources and resources for learners with disabilities are also available in the learndirect centre. The online learning materials produced by learndirect are used well to support learners. HBTC's advanced practitioners provide specialist guidance and advice to training centre staff.

74. Learndirect is well organised to enable vocational learners to integrate their skills for life programmes with their vocational courses. Learners working towards a lift-truck qualification are also completing skills for life qualifications at an appropriate level. The need to improve entry-level learners' literacy and numeracy skills is well covered and HBTC

has had early successes with learners completing courses.

75. Learners' files are well organised and contain relevant and challenging activities. Each file has a chart identifying literacy skills and targets for learners. Computer-generated certificates of achievement confirm and acknowledge the learner's success.

76. Teaching staff involved in preparation for life and work programmes have, or are working towards, recognised qualifications. All members of HBTC's staff have received skills for life awareness training. There is a comprehensive training programme and all staff are involved in staff development activities.

77. Insufficient use is made of interactive whiteboards. These are readily available, but staff do not have the relevant training or confidence to use them effectively.

Leadership and management

78. The directors of the organisation have a strong commitment to continuing the development of preparation for life and work programmes. Working with other organisations they have secured various short-term contracts. Recently secured long-term funding has allowed HBTC to continue to deliver this programme.

79. Members of the team with management responsibilities are given opportunities to develop and implement systems within their own areas. There are clear lines of communication and regular staff meetings where skills for life is a regular agenda item.

80. A director chairs the meetings of the skills for life working group within the work-based learning network of the consortium for learning. Developments within the local network are shared at the HBTC preparation for life and work staff meetings. The minutes of these meetings, the staff development programme, and the strategic plan demonstrate the progress made in integrating skills for life throughout the provider's organisation, with strong support from the management.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		2
Apprenticeships for young people	76	2

81. HBTC provides administration training for young apprentices, apprentices and advanced apprentices. There are 76 learners on the programme, consisting of 70 apprentices and six advanced apprentices. HBTC is also working in partnership with two other work-based provider groups, the consortium for learning and a consortium of 15 secondary schools within Hull, to deliver the young apprenticeship programme for 14 to 16-year-olds. This programme has recently begun and there are three learners on the programme. All learners joining HBTC as apprentices have a one-week full induction which includes health and safety, equal opportunities, programme content, additional learning needs support and initial assessment tests. Learners also attend the HBTC training centre for one day each week while on work placement.

Administration**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good progression into full-time employment
- very good standard of training
- good support and guidance

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

Achievement and standards

82. Learners make good progress into full-time employment. For the periods 2002-03 and 2003-04, 53 per cent of learners progressed into full-time jobs. HBTC works closely with employers to ensure that the learners develop good office administration skills.

83. The retention rates for advanced apprentices are satisfactory and demonstrate an improvement each year. The rates for apprentices are also satisfactory. The retention rate of learners for 2004-05 is 71 per cent all of whom are still in training.

84. Completion rates are improving for advanced apprentices. The completion rate for 2002-03 was nil, but for 2003-04 the completion rate is 29 per cent, with 57 per cent of learners still in training. Completion rates are also satisfactory for the apprenticeship frameworks. In 2002-03, 41 per cent completed their apprenticeship frameworks, with 7 per cent still in training, although these apprentices are making slow progress. In 2003-04, 46 per cent completed the framework, with 17 per cent still in training. For 2004-05, 5 per cent have completed their frameworks, with 71 per cent still in training.

85. Before 2003-04 learners were making slow progress, but this problem has now been

resolved by HBTC, with current learners making good progress. The learners recruited to the programme are from areas with high deprivation indices and from schools with poor records of academic achievement. An analysis of recent literacy and numeracy diagnostic testing showed that 47 per cent of HBTC's learners require literacy and numeracy support in order to achieve level 1.

86. The learners enjoy the training they receive from HBTC and are keen to improve both their employability skills and literacy and numeracy skills. HBTC meets these learning needs with a very comprehensive skills for life programme. Thirty-seven learners have additional learning needs.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	0	0	1		7		3										
Retained*	0	0	1		5		1										
Successfully completed	0	0	0		2		0										
Still in learning	0	0	1		4		1										

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	0		77		63		59										
Retained*	0		55		29		36										
Successfully completed	0		4		23		24										
Still in learning	0		55		11		4										

*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

87. The learners at HBTC receive a very good standard of training. Training sessions are good. The technical certificate is taught separately in specific sessions, with clear learning outcomes. The learners participate fully in the training sessions. Tutors encourage the learners to reflect on personal experiences to support their knowledge and understanding. The workshop sessions focus on the attainment of key skills, additional learning needs and mandatory and optional national vocational qualification (NVQ) units. Learners have a good understanding of their individual learning targets.

88. Resources to support learning are good. They are delivered by well-qualified and experienced staff in well-resourced classrooms. Learners have access to textbooks, computers, and good learning materials. Learners willingly join in group discussions which are led by the tutor. However, the tutors do not make best use of the ICT resources available during these lessons. The interactive whiteboard is not used sufficiently to

improve the learning experience.

89. Staff at HBTC work well together as a team and with external partners to provide good support and guidance for learners. Assessors and recruitment selection staff support learners in finding suitable work placements to meet their career needs. Staff also work closely with external partners and agencies to deal quickly with any issues arising which could affect learners' progress. Detailed evidence of the effective support given to learners is available in weekly reports, learners' personal files, copies of e-mails and through discussions with employers and learners. Where a learner has a serious problem, support agencies in the local area are notified by HBTC to ensure the safety and welfare of the learner. The personal adviser from Connexions is involved in the induction of all new learners and provides on-site surgeries for learners on a monthly basis. HBTC also participates in a local initiative to acknowledge its learners' successes. These are measured as learners' personal successes, and are not necessarily linked to the achievement of qualifications.

90. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Initial assessment is used effectively in the planning of individual learning needs and establishing the level of key skills training. A wide variety of assessment methods is used to meet individual needs, such as observations, photographs, paper-based assessments, verbal questioning and online assessments.

91. Progress reviews and assessments are carried out in the workplace and the employers are fully informed of the learners' progress and training needs. Feedback to learners is in verbal and written formats. It is detailed and learners understand what they have to do to improve. Quarterly progress reviews involve the employer, the learner and the assessor. Training at the work placement is well planned in partnership with HBTC. Employers provide the learners with many learning opportunities by moving them around the various departments of their organisations.

Leadership and management

92. Good strategies exist to improve the retention and achievement rates for the apprenticeship programmes. However to date, the improvements have been inconsistent. Retention rates for apprentices have fallen and risen again in the three-year period from 2002 to 2005. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory. Internal verification is also satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. The internal verifier has a schedule of assessments and assessors to be reviewed, and has regular meetings with assessors. Equality and diversity are promoted well throughout the provision. At the quarterly reviews, the employer and the learner contribute to the monitoring of equal opportunities. Learners are able to discuss with confidence their understanding of equality and diversity. The findings of the self-assessment report matched those of the inspection team, but the report was too descriptive.

