

INSPECTION REPORT

St Helens Chamber Limited

24 November 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.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

St Helens Chamber Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. St Helens Chamber Limited (the Chamber) is a private not-for-profit organisation that has its headquarters in St Helens, Merseyside. It was formed in 1996 as St Helens Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise by the merger of the local chamber of commerce, the training and enterprise council, business link and the enterprise agency. It became the Chamber in 2001. It provides training for young people and adults in the Merseyside area in Entry to Employment (E2E), construction, engineering, business administration, management, information and communications technology (ICT), retailing, customer service, hairdressing and beauty, childcare, and care for the elderly. Learners work towards apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. New Deal participants work in the voluntary sector option, or on a construction project in the environment task force option. ICT, hairdressing and beauty therapy and E2E were not inspected.

2. The Chamber's director of training services has overall responsibility for the provision and is supported by the workforce development manager, an apprenticeship/quality manager and a claims manager who oversee the management information and administration of the training department.

3. In 2004 the Chamber decided to move away from subcontracting to delivering the training directly. Currently, the Chamber provides 47 per cent of the provision and plans to increase this over the next year. The Chamber funds its training provision through Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Jobcentre Plus and European Social Fund (ESF) initiatives.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 4

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** The Chamber's leadership and management are inadequate, as are the arrangements for quality improvement. Engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment, and leisure, sport and recreation are also inadequate. Equality of opportunity, health, public services and care, and business administration and law are satisfactory.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Most staff are involved in the process and the views of learners and employers are taken into account. Subcontractors are also involved in the process. An action plan deals with all the key issues identified through self-assessment. Progress against the plan is regularly monitored and the plan is updated. The self-assessment report is critical and mostly accurate, although inspectors found additional weaknesses. Grading of provision in the self-assessment report often matched those of inspectors. In several areas of learning the self-assessment report contains either insufficient details or too much material from previous inspection reports.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.**

ST HELENS CHAMBER LIMITED

The Chamber recognises that retention and achievement rates are poor in many areas of learning. The poor performance was judged by the Chamber to be caused by most training being subcontracted to other providers, and the Chamber did not have sufficient control over the quality of the training. Managers made a decision to stop subcontracting most of the training from September 2004 and started delivering training in business administration, and health and care. Early data on the direct delivery provision indicates that retention is improving and learners are making good progress.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ST HELENS CHAMBER LIMITED:

- improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the management of work-based learning
- improve the management of subcontractors
- improve quality assurance
- continue to develop learners' progress reviews
- continue to improve learners' progress rates

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Social care			
Apprenticeships for young people	71	3	
New Deal for young people	2	3	
Other government-funded provision	33	3	
Early years			
Apprenticeships for young people	11	3	
Other government-funded provision	17	3	

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Engineering			
Apprenticeships for young people	38	4	
Motor vehicle			
Apprenticeships for young people	2	4	

Construction, planning and the built environment		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		
Apprenticeships for young people	18	4
New Deal for young people	4	3
Building services		
Apprenticeships for young people	29	4

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Leisure, sport and recreation		4
Apprenticeships for young people	23	4

Business administration and law		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		
Apprenticeships for young people	61	3
Business management		
Apprenticeships for young people	1	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Five subject areas offered by the Chamber were reported on and graded. Evidence was examined from ICT, hair and beauty therapy, and E2E which were not separately reported on or graded, to support overall judgements. All inspection took place during the one inspection week.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	30
Number of learners interviewed	103
Number of staff interviewed	36
Number of employers interviewed	32
Number of subcontractors interviewed	21
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **The retention rate for apprentices on the health and social care programme is good** and has improved significantly each year since 2002-03. Learners' progress is good. Many learners will achieve their qualification ahead of their agreed target date. Several learners on the ESF programme have completed their full award before their target date.

9. **Achievement rates are poor on most apprenticeship programmes.** They are particularly poor in construction, engineering, and sport. In construction, of the advanced apprentices who started in 2001-02, only 61 per cent were retained and only 29 per cent completed their frameworks. The poor achievement and retention rates are repeated in 2002-03. Retention and achievement rates on national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programmes are also poor. On New Deal programmes, few participants complete their learning plan and to date only 21 per cent have progressed into jobs overall. In engineering, retention and achievement rates have been poor since 1999-2000. For the apprentices who started in 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03, the retention rates are 33 per cent, 44 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively. The achievement rates for these same years are 8 per cent, zero per cent and 4 per cent respectively. In sport, the retention rates have been poor and there has been no completion of apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship frameworks since 2000-01.

10. **Some learners make slow progress.** All the sport apprentices who started in 2003-04 have remained in learning after their planned completion dates. Of the 38 construction advanced apprentices in construction, nine are beyond their planned end dates. There is slow progress by business administration learners who started in 2001-02 and 2002-03.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	0	0	0	0	0
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	0	0	0	0	0
Construction, planning and the built environment	0	0	0	0	0
Business administration and law	0	0	3	0	3
Total	0	0	3	0	3

11. Learning sessions could only be observed in business administration.

12. **On-the-job training in construction and sport is good.** The sports workplace training includes health and safety, manual handling, pool plant, customer care and first aid. Learners' roles are often rotated to allow them to experience a variety of different aspects of employment in the sport and fitness industry. Construction employers complete a wide variety of construction projects, which enables all learners to work on new build, adaptations, refurbishment, repairs and maintenance, and a wide range of building services work. Most learners develop good industry skills through their workplace training.

13. **There are particularly effective community projects to develop construction learners' skills** and to provide good work experience. The projects have been developed through an

intermediate labour market project managed by the Chamber. New Deal participants work on the community projects and many progress to employment and a further 12 months' training within the labour market project. Eighty per cent of these learners have progressed into employment in the industry.

14. Engineering workplace training is good. The training programmes are well matched to learners' needs. Practical training and background knowledge sessions are good for full-time learners who are working towards the NVQ at level 2. It provides a well-planned introduction into engineering.

15. **Vocational support is good in health and social care, business administration and sport.** For example, in health and social care, the Chamber's assessor visits learners regularly. All visits are planned and designed to meet the learner's needs. Assessors work to fit in with learners' shift patterns. Working relationships are good between assessors and learners and this helps improve learners' self-esteem and confidence. Assessors also provide advice and guidance on employment and further achievement.

16. **Engineering employers provide good support to learners.** Many learners follow a structured programme of workplace training. Time is allocated in a range of departments to equip learners with a good understanding of the processes they will encounter during their working life.

17. **Resources are good in business administration.** The Chamber has invested in good ICT, learning resources and training facilities. Learners use these facilities and resources effectively during planned off-the-job training sessions and during other training.

18. **Insufficient assessment is carried out in engineering and construction.** Workplace assessment arrangements are not effective for most learners. In several cases, no assessor visits were carried out for over eight months in engineering. Learners at one employer had no appointed assessor for 12 months. In construction, an inadequate range of assessment methods is used. The assessors visit learners very infrequently on site. Many learners have not been visited during their entire training programme.

19. **Progress reviews in health and social care are ineffective.** Target-setting is inadequate and does not help learners to improve. Medium- and long-term targets are insufficiently detailed. Some learners are not given adequate guidance to ensure that they can improve their work.

20. **Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in construction is poor.** Employers are unaware of the training delivered at the local college or the skills learners will develop. Employers cannot plan activities in the workplace to support the college training or NVQ assessment.

Leadership and management

21. **The Chamber has good working relationships with a large number of local employers,** which includes helping them recruit and select appropriate staff. The employers provide good support for learners and good on-the-job training. Employers also benefit from training provided to them by the Chamber. It has excellent links with many local organisations. These partnerships help the Chamber respond to identified needs in a

planned, coherent way to meet local and national priorities.

22. **Support for staff is good.** There is a good induction for staff, which includes a detailed individual programme of training. Staff development is good and well planned. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and how they relate to those of colleagues. They are kept well informed about all aspects of the Chamber's work through a good range of regular meetings. Clear records of meetings are maintained.

23. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

24. **The management of subcontractors is poor.** There have been significant problems in subcontractor arrangements, particularly in construction and engineering. These include slow progress, insufficient assessment, little on-the-job assessment, unsatisfactory arrangements for key skills training and assessment, and poor communication between the subcontractor and employers.

25. **Arrangements for quality assurance are incomplete.** A schedule of quality assurance activity has recently been produced covering three months of the operation of the programme evaluation system. This has not been adhered to. The quality assurance procedures are not implemented systematically. There is no plan to ensure that all stages of the learning process are quality assured. Some aspects of the training have not been quality assured since the introduction of the system. There are insufficient systematic quality assurance arrangements for New Deal training provided by the Chamber. Quality assurance arrangements in subcontractors are inadequate.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good working relationships with local employers and partners
- good support for staff

Weaknesses

- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance
- poor management of failing subcontractors

Health, public services and care

Strengths

- good progress by learners
- good vocational support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient progress reviews
- poor framework completion rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices who started between 2001 and 2003

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- good workplace training
- particularly good support provided by employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient workplace assessment
- ineffective management of work-based learning by the subcontractor

Construction, planning and the built environment

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- particularly effective community projects to develop learners' skills

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress by many learners
- inadequate range of assessment methods
- inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Grade 4

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress by some learners
- inadequate quality assurance procedures

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good vocational support by training advisers
- particularly effective action-planning to encourage learners to achieve
- good use of resources to promote learning

Weaknesses

- poor framework completion rates for those learners who started between 2001 and 2003
- slow progress for learners who started between 2001 and 2003

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ST HELENS CHAMBER LIMITED:

- the support provided by the training advisers - 'they always keep appointments and never let you down'
- learning at work
- gaining increased confidence in their ability to do their job
- working on site with the employer
- getting paid during training
- working with different people
- the help provided by workplace mentors
- the support provided by employers
- the good access to information technology (IT) equipment
- the way information is explained - 'makes it easy to understand'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ST HELENS CHAMBER LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the opportunities to progress
- the allocation of the assessor at the start of the programme
- the number of learners in the college workshop
- the relevance of off-the-job training in college to learners' work on site
- less repetition - 'sometimes it seems like I am answering the same questions'
- **high staff turnover in sport and leisure - 'affects how well we do'**
- the standard of the accommodation in sport background knowledge sessions

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- good working relationships with local employers and partners
- good support for staff

Weaknesses

- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance
- poor management of failing subcontractors

26. The Chamber has good working relationships with a large number of local employers. It helps employers recruit and select appropriate staff. The support provided to employers includes advice on recruitment policies, writing job descriptions, compiling contracts of employment, health and safety, equal opportunities and induction procedures. The employers provide good support for learners and good on-the-job training. Employers also benefit from training provided to them by the Chamber which has recently covered updates on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and employment law. The Chamber has excellent links with many local organisations, including the local strategic partnership, St Helens Inward Investment Group, St Helens Local Labour Market Partnership, St Helens Economic Prosperity Group and Learning Disability Partnership Board. These partnerships help the Chamber respond to identified needs in a planned, coherent way to meet local and national priorities.

27. Support for staff is good. There is a good induction for staff which includes a detailed individual programme of training. The induction covers all aspects of the work of the Chamber and includes meeting all managers and key staff. The induction programme provides a valuable introduction to their new job role. Staff development is good and well planned. It supports the development of staff to enable them to develop the provision and is also aimed at improving achievement. Every member of staff has an annual appraisal and a six-monthly performance review where clear targets are set. A personal development plan identifies relevant development needs. All training advisers have a monthly progress and planning meeting with the apprenticeship and quality manager. The learners' progress is reviewed, targets are set, performance is reviewed, and staff development needs are identified. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and how these relate to those of colleagues. They are kept well informed about all aspects of the Chamber's work through a good range of regular meetings. Clear records of meetings are maintained and include action points which are generally followed up at subsequent meetings.

28. There is a three-year strategic plan covering the period from 2004 to 2007. It contains a clear vision, mission and aims and is supported by detailed financial plans. The annual business plan for 2005-06 forms a supplement to the strategic plan. It contains projections of income and expenditure, clear, quantified key targets and states who is responsible for delivering each aspect of the business plan. Performance against the business plan is reviewed on a regular basis by the senior management team together with management

information on learner retention and achievement and management accounts. Staff have a good understanding of planning and contribute to plans through an annual two-day planning event.

29. Processes for initial assessment and the provision of support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. The Chamber's learning centre provides good accommodation and ICT facilities. The resources and facilities at other learning venues are of a high standard.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

30. Staff and managers ensure that equality of opportunity and social inclusiveness is promoted appropriately. The Chamber displays a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity through its actions and policies. There is a detailed set of policies that refer to relevant legislation and they are regularly reviewed.

31. The use of data to monitor equality of opportunity has recently been introduced and is used to measure and monitor the effectiveness of its promotion.

32. Promotional materials for employers are well produced. However, those for learners are not adequate and are being revised. All learners complete an initial assessment. If this indicates that they need additional support, a diagnostic test is completed. Currently, very few learners need additional learning support.

33. There are some good initiatives to widen participation by under-represented groups. For example, the 'New Start Plus' programme engages young people with multiple barriers to learning and employment. An urban renewal project is used to recruit learners from disadvantaged areas.

34. Learners receive appropriate information on equality of opportunity including information about grievance and disciplinary procedures, as well as how to make a complaint or appeal against an assessment decision. Suitable equality training resources are available and there is a good informative workbook for learners. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. They know what to do if they encounter discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying in the workplace or during off-the-job training. The Chamber has a complaints procedure, and if complaints are made, they are dealt with effectively. However, records of actions taken following a complaint do not indicate what action has been taken or how the complaint has been resolved. The monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity at subcontractors, employers, and in progress reviews, is satisfactory.

35. There is regular and adequate staff training and development in equality of opportunity. Staff receive useful training on race relations, disability, human rights, age diversity and in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. There are no targets for equality relating to staff training and development. There is some sharing of good practice in equality of opportunity.

36. Accommodation is good. It provides appropriate access and is adapted to meet the needs of people with restricted mobility. There is sufficient and suitable equipment available in classrooms and workshops to meet the needs of learners.

37. The selection and recruitment process for staff and learners is carried out appropriately. All jobs are advertised in local and regional newspapers. For apprenticeship vacancies, the advertising is provided free to employers by the Chamber, and Connexions is also notified. There are useful selection criteria for each job. The selection panels have an appropriate mix of staff from the Chamber and employers' staff. The proportion of Chamber's staff from minority ethnic groups matches the local population. Staff who have children can work flexible hours to meet their family commitments. In the case of construction and engineering, there are no women in learning at present.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

38. The Chamber has effective systems to collect and record retention and achievement data. Managers review retention and achievement rates on a monthly basis and use the data to develop strategies to improve them. The management information provided to them is current and accurate and managers have a good understanding of the data. Managers set challenging targets for programmes. For individual staff, performance against targets is reviewed in a monthly individual meeting. Staff are clear about the importance of achieving their individual targets, although they are not aware of the overall retention and achievement rates in their area of learning. There is not enough analysis of progression and destination data. The Chamber compares learners' success rates to local and national figures.

39. There is an internal verification system to cover the programmes that are delivered directly by the Chamber. The new internal verification processes were introduced in August 2005. Internal verification is well planned and includes interviews with learners, observations of assessment and assessment feedback to learners, as well as the examination of learners' portfolios. Internal verification records are well maintained and detailed feedback is given to assessors. Good practice is shared through monthly good practice meetings and regular internal verification meetings.

40. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Most staff are involved in the self-assessment process except for some in care programmes. Staff attend a two-day planning event each year where they review programmes and make suggestions for improvements. The views of learners and employers are taken into account. Subcontractors are involved in the self-assessment process. An action plan deals with all the key issues identified through self-assessment. Progress against the plan is regularly monitored and the plan is updated. The self-assessment report is critical and mostly accurate, although inspectors identified additional weaknesses. Grading of provision in the self-assessment report often matched those of inspectors, especially in areas of learning. Some of the strengths were no more than normal practice. In several areas of learning, the self-assessment report contains either insufficient details or too much material from previous inspection reports.

41. Arrangements for quality assurance are incomplete. Quality assurance procedures have been introduced to the apprenticeship programmes and include clear criteria to evaluate all aspects of the training programmes such as induction, initial assessment, internal verification, individual learning plans, on-the-job training, progress reviews, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training, customer feedback, learner support and off-the-job training and assessment. The results of the quality assurance activities are

analysed for each assessor, and a trend analysis links issues to their causes. A schedule of quality assurance activity has recently been produced, covering three month operation of the programme evaluation system. However, the schedule has not been adhered to. The quality assurance procedures are not implemented systematically. There is no plan to ensure that all stages of the learning process are quality assured. Some aspects of the training have not been quality assured since the introduction of the system. There are insufficient systematic quality assurance arrangements for New Deal training provided by the Chamber. Quality assurance arrangements in subcontractors are inadequate. There has been little progress and achievement in several areas of learning since the previous inspection.

42. In July 2005, a system was introduced to evaluate a sample of progress reviews against specific criteria. This has successfully identified specific areas for improvement and staff training sessions have resolved the identified problems. However, some of the reviews are still unsatisfactory.

43. Following a poor response rate to learner questionnaires, the Chamber introduced a telephone feedback system in August 2005. Learners in specific sectors are contacted each month. The results are analysed on a monthly basis. When the system is established it is planned to use the feedback to implement improvements. Feedback is collected from employers through the completion and analysis of employer questionnaires. It has been difficult to identify trends as the last three questionnaires issued to employers in November 2002, June 2004 and September 2005 have consisted of different questions. The response rates are low and have declined over the past four years.

44. There is poor management of subcontractors. In 2004, managers made a strategic decision to move away from subcontracted training and to directly deliver business administration and care. The quality of the direct delivery provision is substantially better than the subcontracted provision. The Chamber has service level agreements with five training providers that deliver subcontracted training. The service level agreement clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the parties to the agreement, including those relating to health and safety, and equality of opportunity. The performance of the subcontractors is monitored through monthly meetings between the Chamber and the subcontractor, and these are also used to collect subcontractor feedback. The monthly meetings were introduced to deal with weaknesses in the provision delivered by some of the subcontractors. However, the meetings are not effective. There is a fixed agenda and an action plan is completed at the end of each meeting, but at the subsequent meeting progress against identified actions is not always followed up. Some of the subcontractors state that they do not receive sufficient information from the Chamber. Despite much effort, the Chamber has attempted to deal with poor retention and achievement relating to the subcontracted provision, especially at the college, through the meetings, which include the detailed monitoring of learners' progress. However, there have been significant problems, particularly in the areas of construction and engineering. These include slow progress, insufficient assessment, little on-the-job assessment, unsatisfactory arrangements for key skills training and assessment, and poor communication between the subcontractor and employers. This situation has been referred to the local LSC.

45. Retention and achievement rates are poor in many areas of learning. The poor performance was judged by managers to be through subcontracting to other providers, and the Chamber did not have sufficient control over the quality of the training. Managers

ST HELENS CHAMBER LIMITED

made a decision to stop subcontracting most of the training from September 2004 and start delivering training in business administration, health and care. Early data on the direct delivery provision indicates that retention is improving and learners are making good progress.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Social care		
Apprenticeships for young people	71	3
New Deal for young people	2	3
Other government-funded provision	33	3
Early years		
Apprenticeships for young people	11	3
Other government-funded provision	17	3

46. Overall 134 learners are on health and social care learning programmes. There are 71 learners in care and 11 are in early years care and education, of whom 68 are apprentices and 14 are advanced apprentices. On the ESF programme there are 33 learners aged over 25, who are working towards NVQs at level 2 or 3 in care, and 17 learners in early years childcare and education. These 33 learners are not shown in the tables. There are two learners on the New Deal programme. Fourteen learners are men. All learners are employed in a range of occupational settings. There are three assessors, one of whom is work-based. Learners are recruited to the programme through contacts with the workplaces. Early years childcare and education is delivered through a subcontract arrangement with Willows Training and a small number of learners in care through Alma Training. Most of the learners on care programmes are taught directly by the Chamber.

Strengths

- good progress by learners
- good vocational support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient progress reviews
- poor framework completion rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices who started between 2001 and 2003

Achievement and standards

47. Learners progress well. Many learners are on target to achieve their qualification ahead of their agreed target date. Several of the learners on the ESF programme have achieved their full award before their target completion date. The retention rate on the apprenticeship programme has improved each year since 2002-03. For example, in 2003-04, the rate improved significantly to 58 per cent, with 33 per cent still in learning. In 2004-05, the retention rate has remained high at 90 per cent.

48. Framework completion rates are poor for apprentices who started between 2001 and 2003. For example, of the five learners who started the apprenticeship programme, only one completed the framework. Of the 23 learners who started the advanced apprenticeship programme, only four completed the framework.

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		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		7		16		7	100	19	100	1	100	1	100		
Retained*	0		1		11		2	29	10	53	1	100	0	0		
Successfully completed	0		0		3		1	14	6	32	1	100	0	0		
Still in learning	4		6		4		0	0	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							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	71		12		3	100	2	100	8	100						
Retained*	0		7		1	33	1	50	0	0						
Successfully completed	0		2		0	0	1	50	0	0						
Still in learning	64		4		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

49. Vocational support is good. All learners are allocated to an assessor who visits them regularly. All visits are planned and are arranged to meet the needs of the learner. Assessors work to fit in with learners' shift patterns. Working relationships are good between assessors and learners and this helps improve learners' self-esteem and confidence. Assessors also provide advice and guidance on employment and further achievement. Work placements are of a high standard. Workplace supervisors and staff provide learners with effective support and encouragement. Learners are encouraged to improve their practical skills, understanding and knowledge and are given every opportunity to put what they have learnt into practice. Early years learners work with all age groups within the nursery, to ensure that they cover the full range of the NVQ, and are able to implement what they have learnt on their programme during their work. Learners have good supervision and are given on-the-job advice and guidance to develop their practical skills. Learners can also attend additional training and workshops. Care learners are in good workplaces that enable them to collect the evidence needed for the NVQ.

50. Induction is satisfactory. Learners remember the induction process and there are good activities related to health and safety, and equal opportunities. On care programmes, the work produced during induction forms a part of the NVQ and technical certificate. Initial assessment is carried out at induction to identify learners' support needs. If a learner is unable to attend the Chamber for the induction, it is carried out in the workplace.

51. Assessment is satisfactory. A wide range of assessment methods is used and meets awarding body requirements. There is a good balance between practical and background

knowledge work. Observation reports are very detailed. Appropriate feedback is given to learners and is recorded and entered into their portfolios of evidence. Portfolios are well organised. All evidence is signed and dated and is at the appropriate level. In care, the key skills, technical certificate and NVQ are developed alongside each other throughout the programme. However, this is not always the case in early years.

52. The Chamber has identified nine learners who need additional support, all of whom are on the care programme. Five have specific learning difficulties, two are receiving literacy and numeracy support and two are receiving language support. Additional visits are planned, alternative assessment methods are used and extra time is permitted. The support learners receive is satisfactory.

53. Learning resources are satisfactory. There are adequate numbers of appropriately qualified staff to support learners. They are able to update their knowledge and skills as required. Employers provide a wide range of training opportunities for learners in the workplace and these are linked to the NVQ. Key skills training resources are used to develop learners' knowledge and help to prepare them for the key skills exam. A drop-in centre is also available for additional training if required. Learners are informed of this, but are not always able to attend as they work shifts. This has been recognised by the Chamber, and it has provided additional resources in the workplace. Many learners are able to access the computer in their workplace and also use policies, procedures and textbooks to extend and develop their knowledge.

54. Progress reviews are insufficient. Some learners are not given adequate guidance to ensure that they can improve their work. Many learners in early years are not given a copy of their progress review form. There is insufficient detail recorded on the review form and some comments are vague and descriptive rather than evaluative. It gives insufficient developmental commentary to allow the learners to progress. Target-setting is inadequate and does not help learners to improve. Medium- and long-term targets are not sufficiently detailed. Reviews are often very informal and do not always involve the employers. In some cases assessors give informal feedback to employers after the review. Assessors do not identify what action the learner should take before the next progress review. They are not used effectively to plan the learners' training. Recent changes have been made to the progress review documents in care.

55. The individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed for some learners. Assessors do not routinely record information on learners' progress towards their qualification, details of what they have achieved, or changes in circumstances. Some learning plans do not include information on additional learning needs or contain an action plan. Individual learning plans are used to record dates of progress reviews, but learners' progress towards their qualification is not always identified.

Leadership and management

56. Internal verification processes are satisfactory. There is clear monitoring and regular sampling of assessment activity, which includes observations of assessor practice, regular NVQ portfolio sampling, and sampling of assessor/learner meetings, assessment plans and assessment feedback. The internal verifier completes monthly reports which are discussed in the monthly moderation meetings to standardise practice.

57. Health and safety is satisfactory. Workplaces are audited and risk assessed by the

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Chamber's staff, and feedback is given to employers. Health and safety is checked frequently during progress reviews. Learners' understanding of equal opportunities is satisfactory. This is covered well at induction and is checked regularly by the assessors.

58. Overall communication is satisfactory. However, there is some insufficient communication with subcontractors. Meetings are held every four weeks to discuss learners' progress and to review their achievement. There is not enough involvement by staff in the development of the self-assessment report or in preparing for the inspection. There is insufficient sharing of good practice.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Engineering Apprenticeships for young people	38	4
Motor vehicle Apprenticeships for young people	2	4

59. There are currently 37 advanced apprentices and three apprentices on technician, maintenance, general engineering and motor vehicle programmes. Most learners are recruited directly by employers, following or during the first year of off-the-job training. No learners have been recruited to the engineering programme since 2003-04. All training, assessment and verification activities are subcontracted to the local college. During the first year of the advanced apprenticeship, learners work towards performing engineering operations qualifications at level 2 NVQ. On the level 3 NVQ programmes, learners complete the off-the-job training elements to meet framework requirements on a day-release basis. Training advisers carry out progress reviews every 12 weeks.

Strengths

- good workplace training
- particularly good support provided by employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient workplace assessment
- ineffective management of work-based learning by the subcontractor

Achievement and standards

60. Learners achieve a good standard of practical work and learn a good range of workplace skills. The achievement of off-the-job qualifications in national and technical certificates is good.

61. Retention and achievement rates are poor. For the advanced apprentices who started their programmes between 1999 and 2001, retention rates range from 45 per cent to 51 per cent. Achievement rates are low at 36 and 21 per cent for learners who started between 1999 and 2001. For the apprentices who started in 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03, the retention rates are poor at 44 per cent, 27 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. The achievement rates for these same years are very poor at 8 per cent, zero and 4 per cent respectively.

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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		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		27		17		37		75		67	100	4	100		
Retained*	0		0		2		12		33		30	45	3	75		
Successfully completed	0		0		0		6		16		24	36	2	50		
Still in learning	1		21		7		7		1		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	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	26		11	100	25	100	3	100	1	100						
Retained*	5		3	27	11	44	1	33	1	100						
Successfully completed	1		0	0	2	8	1	33	0	0						
Still in learning	3		0	0	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																
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-00											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	21	100	5	100	0											
Retained*	20	95	1	20	0											
Successfully completed	19	90	1	20	0											
Still in learning	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

62. Workplace training is good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The training programmes are well matched to learners' needs. Practical and background knowledge training at level 2 NVQ is good for full-time learners and provides them with a well-planned introduction into engineering. A good variety of assessment methods is used and NVQ achievement rates are better during this stage of training than on subsequent programmes. Training sessions are well structured. Some part-time learners are waiting for confirmation of results and the completion of units from training completed two years' previously. Motor vehicle learners receive good training, support and frequent assessment. The quality of background knowledge training is good throughout the programme. Learners are supported effectively through their academic qualifications. Some employers encourage and sponsor their learners through higher-level qualifications such as higher national certificates and degree programmes. Most learners receive additional training in health and safety, risk assessment, first aid and manual handling. A good range of resources

is used for training, particularly in electrical and motor vehicle activities. Learners make good use of modern facilities in IT. Training workshops are tidy and well maintained. The general engineering section has some old equipment, but it is fit for purpose at this level of training. Employers provide a good range of on-the-job training using modern equipment and machinery.

63. Particularly good support is provided by employers. Many learners follow a structured programme of workplace training. Time is allocated in a range of departments to equip learners with a good understanding of the processes they will encounter during their working life. The development of learners' practical skills is good. Workplace supervisors use individual instructional techniques effectively and provide training in practical tasks to meet employers' requirements. Up-to-date computerised systems and machinery are operated effectively by learners. Other learners work on the latest engineering systems and are capable of demonstrating technical electrical and instrumentation skills in the early stages of their programme. Access to IT equipment is good. Employers encourage learners to take on additional responsibility when they are considered capable. For example, in one company a learner leads on all fault-finding activities where small teams are required to complete the job. One employer has developed task recording sheets to support the NVQ.

64. Initial assessment and induction are satisfactory. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Portfolios are generally satisfactory. However, assessors rather than learners are generally responsible for the NVQ cross-referencing of evidence to workplace tasks. Progress reviews meet the pastoral needs of learners. Where sufficient information about learners' progress is available to the training adviser, progress reviews are satisfactory. There is insufficient attendance by employer representatives at some progress reviews. Advisers do not always invite employers to attend. Contributions from employers are recorded after the learner interview. Learners and supervisors receive a copy of the progress review. Individual support for learners by training advisers is good. Learners are encouraged to contact their training adviser at any time to discuss areas of concern.

65. Most apprentices have good general certificate of secondary education grades and rarely require literacy and numeracy support. Management relies on these grades and key skills tests to determine additional support needs. Literacy and numeracy support facilities in the college are satisfactory. Training needs in higher-level mathematics and sciences are met by arrangement with the college that provides additional training, and tutorials to meet individual requirements.

66. Insufficient assessment is carried out in the workplace. Progress towards the completion of apprenticeships is slow. Workplace assessment arrangements are not effective for most learners. In several cases, no assessor visits were carried out for over eight months. Learners at one employer had no appointed assessor for 12 months. Many learners require extensions to their target completion dates. College support for these learners is poor. Some learners require additional assessment guidance in the last few weeks of training. However, learners are not given sufficient guidance on the tasks required to complete their NVQ at level 3 and are unable to collect appropriate evidence. Effective systems for assessment are not in place. Assessment planning is poor. Witness testimony is not used effectively. Portfolios have some workplace evidence, but in many cases this cannot be authenticated. The college has recently recruited two new assessors,

which has improved the number of workplace visits. Assessment planning is beginning to have an impact on those learners who are behind schedule on their programmes. Assessment by observation has recently started to rectify slow progress.

67. Management of work-based learning programmes by the subcontractor is poor. Learners are not adequately supported through the work-based aspects of their training programme. Training and assessment at level 2 NVQ is not consistent. Learners who attend long-term block release are more likely to complete their programme effectively than learners on shorter programmes or day release. Several learners have not completed all units of the performing engineering operations NVQ at level 2 by year three of their apprenticeship. These advanced apprentices are not issued with level 3 information until they complete level 2 and are at least 12 months behind other learners who started at the same time. These learners are completing skilled tasks in the workplace which in some cases meet level 3 standards. Employers and training advisers have not always received progress reports on their learners. Problems associated with the assessor visit arrangements have not been effectively resolved despite repeated efforts by training advisers to increase the number of visits. Learners and employers do not fully understand what evidence is appropriate for the NVQ. Most employers have devised good departmental training to meet business needs. There are few links between this training and the NVQ.

68. Key skills training and assessment are not carried out effectively. There are significant variations in the delivery of key skills training for different groups of learners. Some learners do not complete their key skills until late in the programme. Three learners did not know if their key skills were complete in year four of their apprenticeship. Communications from the college to the training advisers, employers and learners, are generally poor. One learner missed a full year at college through inadequate consultation with employers. A training adviser responsible for completing progress reviews waited for several months for information on the learners' progress at college. Progress reviews are often carried out without this information being available for the training adviser. Training advisers are not able to set clear targets linked to the NVQ.

Leadership and management

69. All staff have been trained to identify and promote equality and diversity. Learners demonstrate an acceptable understanding of equality of opportunity and have a satisfactory awareness of the subject from induction training. There is in-depth reinforcement of equal opportunities and health and safety during twice-yearly subject specific reviews. However, learners are not sufficiently aware of the complaints and appeals procedures. There has been insufficient use of these procedures during long periods of poor assessment practice. There are no women currently on engineering programmes.

70. Staff development is satisfactory. There are two opportunities a year to discuss individual development. Performance targets and action plans are in place for staff and these are monitored and evaluated.

71. Visits to monitor the training and progress of learners by the Chamber's staff are regular and frequent. The management of resources for off-the-job training and for motor vehicle learners is good. The monitoring of health and safety systems at employers and subcontractors is satisfactory. Communications are mainly informal between management and training staff, but there are monthly meetings to monitor learners' progress.

72. The implementation of quality improvements is slow. The management team is aware of what improvements they could make, but do not receive adequate support from the subcontractor. There are satisfactory systems in place to collect feedback from learners and employers. However, the response from learners to questionnaires is poor. Where feedback information is available, data is evaluated and actions are taken if necessary. Feedback is also used in the self-assessment process. The subcontractor carries out peer observations of the standards of teaching and learning.

73. Self-assessment is an integral part of the quality management system and staff are involved in the process. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical and contains much information from previous inspection reports. Strengths were generally accurate but some weak practice in assessment and other issues within the management of training were not identified.

74. Work-based internal verification is unsatisfactory. The process has not identified and dealt with the inadequacies in assessment practice effectively. Some assessor observations are carried out, but they are not planned well enough to ensure adequate coverage of the assessors, particularly in the workplace.

Construction, planning and the built environment**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		
Apprenticeships for young people	18	4
New Deal for young people	4	3
Building services		
Apprenticeships for young people	29	4

75. The Chamber offers advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships in construction and building services. All learners are employed with local employers. A strategic decision was taken to discontinue construction apprenticeship training and no learners have been recruited since 2004-05. The Chamber also provides the New Deal environmental task force option through a community construction project. Currently, there are 38 advanced apprentices, of whom nine are in wood occupations, three are in painting and decorating, 12 are in plumbing and 14 are in electrical installation. On apprenticeship programmes there are currently nine apprentices, with three in wood occupations, three in trowel occupations and three in plumbing. There are currently four participants on the New Deal project. Training for construction apprentices is subcontracted to St Helens College. On-the-job training and assessment is carried out with employers on a wide range of construction projects. Off-the-job training towards the technical certificate and key skills is provided in college on a day- or block-release attendance. New Deal participants spend four days a week working on a range of construction work on community buildings, and one day a week on jobsearch. They then spend 13 weeks on the programme and do not normally train in a particular trade. The Chamber manages a construction partnership with a housing association through which some New Deal participants' training is extended for a further 12 months. Apprentices are recruited by Connexions or directly through employers. New Deal participants are normally recruited by Jobcentre Plus.

Strengths

- good on-the-job training
- particularly effective community projects to develop learners' skills

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress by many learners
- inadequate range of assessment methods
- inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

76. Retention and achievement rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices are poor. Of the advanced apprentices in construction and building services, who started in 2001-02, only 61 per cent were retained and only 29 per cent completed their frameworks. On building services over the same period, only 42 per cent were retained and only 12 per cent completed their framework. Of the learners in construction and building services,

who started in 2002-03, only 59 per cent were retained and only 36 per cent completed their frameworks. Retention and achievement rates on NVQ training programmes are also poor. Overall, only 41 per cent of learners to date have been retained and achieved their qualification. Of the 58 learners who started advanced apprenticeship programmes in 2002-03, only 38 are retained, have completed the programme or are still in learning, and 20 learners have left the programme without achieving their qualifications. On apprenticeship programmes, of the 25 learners who started in 2003-04, 19 learners have been retained or are still in learning. On New Deal programmes, few participants complete their learning plan and to date only 21 per cent have progressed into jobs overall.

77. Most New Deal participants make satisfactory progress and many gain relevant industry skills. However, the skills they gain are not formally recognised or accredited.

78. Many learners make slow progress towards their qualifications. All nine apprentices are beyond their planned end dates and have still not achieved their qualifications. Of the 38 advanced apprentices, nine are beyond their planned end dates. Many learners who achieved their NVQ left the programme without achieving their key skills qualifications. However, this problem has now been resolved by delivering the key skills training earlier in the programme. Other learners still have parts of their training to complete and have insufficient assessed work to complete their qualification. A few learners have completed all components of their frameworks, but several months later have not received their certificates, or confirmation from the college that they have passed their qualifications.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00		1998-99					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24		34		52		53		57	100	6	100				
Retained*	3		7		23		32		28	49	5	83				
Successfully completed	2		4		7		15		16	28	3	50				
Still in learning	13		15		9		1		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	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25		13		15	100	13	100	1	100						
Retained*	11		4		13	87	7	54	1	100						
Successfully completed	0		2		8	53	4	31	1	100						
Still in learning	8		1		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

79. On-the-job training is good. Local employers carry out a wide variety of construction

projects. All learners are employed and work on new build, adaptations, refurbishment, repairs and maintenance, and a wide range of building services work. Most learners develop good industry skills through their training in the workplace. Employers support and encourage learners to help them gain confidence in their work. Most learners are able to work with minimum supervision and produce industry-standard work. Some companies have developed effective on-the-job training plans. Learners with these employers gain a wide range of experiences across the company and develop an understanding of the wider construction industry. Some companies provide workplace mentors who offer effective support for learners' on-the-job training. Many learners complete specific training and gain additional qualifications that include woodworking machinery, access scaffolding, risk assessment, percussion tools, abrasive wheels, manual handling, and equality and diversity.

80. In partnership with industry and community groups, the Chamber has developed particularly effective community projects to develop learners' skills and provide good work experience. The projects have been developed through an intermediate labour market project managed by the Chamber. New Deal participants are deployed on the community projects and many progress to employment and a further 12 months training within the labour market project. New Deal participants, and those learners on the labour market project, work together on the community projects supervised by construction supervisors. Participants are able to improve their employment prospects through good on-site training and work experience. A housing project involves small teams that take occupation of vacant dwellings and carry out a wide range of renovation and repairs and maintenance activities. These include joinery, bricklaying, plastering, tiling, plumbing, kitchen and bathroom fitting, and flagging and fencing. New Deal participants develop good industry skills and some achieve acceptable trade standards. They effectively develop employability skills and work well in teams. Participants also achieve a range of qualifications including health and safety, basic scaffolding, abrasive wheels, manual handling, first aid and a construction skills certification scheme card. Driving lessons and the driving theory test are also provided, as being able to drive is considered essential by employers. Learners on the intermediate labour market project take an NVQ at level 2 in repairs and maintenance. Eighty per cent of these learners have progressed into employment in the industry. Several construction employers have been recruited directly from the intermediate labour market project to their own workforce.

81. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners receive effective initial assessment to identify their support needs. They receive an appropriate induction that adequately prepares them for the training. Progress reviews are satisfactory and are carried out every 12 weeks. However, some employers are not fully involved in the review process. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. Practical lessons are effective and learners develop good skills. Some background knowledge lessons often involve learners copying excessive amounts of information provided by the tutor. Teaching methods do not always fully involve learners and some work is not sufficiently challenging. Resources are satisfactory. Workshops and classrooms at the college are spacious and well equipped. Learners have access to a good range of learning resources, IT equipment, and a library and reference books. All learners receive satisfactory personal, pastoral and academic support from their training advisers and college staff.

82. An inadequate range of assessment methods is used on construction crafts and plumbing programmes. The college assessors visit learners very infrequently on site. Many learners have had no visits during their entire training programme. Few learners receive

direct observation of assessment in the workplace. There is too much use of evidence collected by learners and authenticated by workplace supervisors. These, together with the use of witness testimonies, are the only means of assessing the competence of construction craft learners. The evidence is then assessed by assessors in the college. Planning of work-based assessment is insufficiently developed across most trades and there is no comprehensive plan of proposed assessment visits. On electrical installation, learners have some directly observed assessments in the workplace during the level 3 part of their training. A useful drop-in session has also been organised to help electrical learners complete their site diaries. In plumbing, on-site visits and assessments have only recently started. Employers and workplace supervisors are acting as work-based assessors, but few have had training or guidance to carry out this role effectively.

Leadership and management

83. Regular meetings are held with the college. However, communications are ineffective and the Chamber's requests for information are often not adhered to. Communication with employers is satisfactory. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. Employers are monitored by training advisers who hold appropriate health and safety qualifications. However, training advisers do not have construction industry experience. Internal verification is satisfactory. An adequate sampling plan is in place and standardisation meetings between assessors take place. However, internal verification has not identified the slow progress of some learners. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory but is not sufficiently developed during progress reviews. Self-assessment is satisfactory, although the self-assessment report did not identify several key weaknesses found by inspectors.

84. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Employers are unaware of the training delivered at the college. They are not provided with any off-the-job training details to identify what units will be delivered and when, or the skills learners will develop. Employers are unable to plan activities in the workplace to support the college training or NVQ assessment. Learners are unable to develop the workplace skills needed to achieve the NVQ. Few employers are aware of the progress their learners are making while in college. The college does not send reports to employers to comment on learners' progress. Attendance and punctuality at college is not sufficiently monitored or reported on. Employers often find out many weeks later that their learners have not been attending college. The Chamber has requested details of off-the-job training and reports on progress and attendance from the college but these have not been provided to date.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i>		4
Apprenticeships for young people	23	4

85. The Chamber offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in sport and fitness. The programmes include an NVQ at level 2 in operational services, an NVQ at level 2 in instructing exercise and fitness, an NVQ at level 3 in operations and development and an NVQ at level 3 in instructing physical activity and exercise. Other qualifications include first aid, national pool lifeguard, certificate in teaching gym and advanced fitness instructor. The provision is currently subcontracted to Training Options. Currently there are 11 apprentices and 12 advanced apprentices, at 12 different work placements throughout greater Merseyside, including health club chains and hotel fitness suites. Learners attend off-the-job training at various venues including the subcontractors' own site. The amount and frequency of off-the-job training varies for individual learners. Four full-time assessors, two of whom are also internal verifiers, are involved in the delivery of the programmes. Additional assessors and internal verifiers are contracted when required. There is also a director of sales, a work-placement support worker and three administrative staff employed by the subcontractor. A training and development manager has responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting tutors. The subcontractor is managed by the Chamber's apprenticeship/quality manager.

Leisure, sport and recreation**Grade 4***Strengths*

- good on-the-job training
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress by some learners
- inadequate quality assurance procedures

Achievement and standards

86. Retention and achievement rates are poor. The retention rates in 2001-02 were low at 33 per cent, and increased to 55 per cent in 2003-04. Of the learners who started in 2004-05, 75 per cent are still in learning. There has been no completion of apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship frameworks since 2000-01. One learner is awaiting certification for an apprenticeship framework, although this was achieved four months after the planned end date.

87. Some learners make slow progress. Of the learners who started in 2003-04, all have remained in learning past their planned completion dates. Three out of the seven learners who started in 2004-05 have remained in learning past their planned completion dates.

Advanced apprentices who have started their programmes more recently are making good progress. Of the current advanced apprentices, all are still within their planned programme time and are making good progress. Portfolios are satisfactory and include appropriate standards with a sufficient range of evidence. Many learners have improved their on-the-job performance since starting their programmes and several have been promoted to positions with extra responsibility. Learners are motivated and confident in carrying out their various job roles.

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		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		13		3	100	3	100	3	100						
Retained*	0		0		1	33	2	67	1	33						
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	0	0	1	33						
Still in learning	5		7		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													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		7													
Retained*	0		4													
Successfully completed	0		0													
Still in learning	7		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

88. On-the-job training is good. The training provided in the workplace includes health and safety, manual handling, pool plant, customer care and first aid. Learners' roles are often rotated to allow them to experience a variety of different aspects of employment in the sport and fitness industry, while also generating evidence for their qualifications. Several learners are involved in specific projects such as general medical practitioner referral schemes and weight management groups. The facilities at their workplaces are of a good standard and health clubs have a good range of equipment. Suitable learning materials are used to support off-the-job training, and individual and group learning sessions are provided where required. Assessment takes place regularly. Learners understand how and when they will be assessed and the different sources of evidence they can use.

89. Support for learners is particularly good. Learners receive detailed advice to ensure the most appropriate individual programme is planned. Progress reviews are carried out every four weeks, but learners often receive additional visits depending on their needs at the time. There is a flexible approach to additional training. Assessors offer additional teaching sessions when learners need extra support. Progress reviews are productive with

appropriate targets set. Progress towards these is well monitored. Assessors keep employers well informed about learners' progress and support needs. Employers support learners well by providing good guidance and opportunities to gather evidence. If learners make slow progress or if their attendance at progress reviews becomes poor, assessors notify the employer and the team leader of the problem and suggest the required action. Support for learners has improved considerably in recent months. Previous to this, there was a high turnover of assessors, and learners were not making adequate progress.

90. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy needs is adequate. Learners complete assessments at the beginning of their programme at their workplaces using laptop computers. They are informed of the assessment results and the suitability of their planned programme.

91. There is an adequate range of programmes for learners to choose from. The NVQ programmes and additional qualifications fit individual learners' job roles well. There are opportunities for learners to select, with guidance, training that supports career progression and allows learners to pursue their interests. There are sufficient suitable opportunities for progression from level 2 to level 3 qualifications.

Leadership and management

92. Employers and staff take sufficient steps to promote equality and diversity. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and of the procedures for complaints.

93. Communication is adequate. Regular monthly meetings take place between the provider and subcontractor. However, although the assessment team meets regularly to share good practice, there is insufficient sharing of practice between the provider and the subcontractor.

94. Quality assurance procedures are inadequate. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently detailed and does not accurately reflect all the findings from inspection. Some of the subcontractor's staff are not aware of the existence or purpose of the self-assessment report. Several staff have not been involved in the process. Some of the delivery team members at the subcontractor do not understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The provider has not identified the high turnover of assessment staff or its impact on learners' progress. The subcontractor does not have a policy to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. To date, only one member of staff has been observed teaching and the subsequent report is inadequate. The observer did not have subject expertise, and was unable to identify subject-specific techniques, and technical health and safety issues. There is currently no plan to carry out further observations. There is insufficient collection and use of feedback from learners. The provider has carried out some telephone questionnaires, but these are not adequate. The subcontractor has little awareness of the evaluations that have been carried out to date. There has been insufficient collection of learners' views by the subcontractor. The questionnaires that have been used do not provide appropriate information. The subcontractor does not routinely analyse learner evaluation or use it to self-assess. Some employers are not sufficiently involved in evaluating the provision. Sufficient internal verification takes place to ensure the quality of assessment. The use of data for planning and making improvements is insufficient.

Business administration and law**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	61	3
Business management Apprenticeships for young people	1	3

95. Currently, there are 62 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration, including 42 apprentices and 19 advanced apprentices. One advanced apprentice is working towards a management qualification. All learners are employed in a range of local companies, local authorities and other organisations. Learners are visited at work by training advisers from the Chamber every two weeks for training and assessment. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks in the workplace and involve the employer. Most learning takes place on-the-job with some monthly off-the-job training sessions.

Strengths

- good vocational support by training advisers
- particularly effective action-planning to encourage learners to achieve
- good use of resources to promote learning

Weaknesses

- poor framework completion rates for those learners who started between 2001 and 2003
- slow progress for learners who started between 2001 and 2003

Achievement and standards

96. Achievement and progress towards qualifications in business administration have improved since the Chamber introduced new direct training arrangements in 2003-04. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this in the completion of frameworks. For the administration learners who started between 2001 and 2003, framework completion rates are poor. Framework completion rates for advanced apprentices fell significantly from 35 per cent in 2000-01 to 22 per cent in 2001-02. Framework completion rates for apprentices who started in 2001-02 and 2002-03 are 58 per cent and 36 per cent respectively.

97. Learners who started in 2001-02 and 2002-03 are making slow progress. This issue has recently been rectified by the Chamber and most of these learners have either completed or are due to complete in the next three months. Of the advanced apprentices who started in 2002-03, 28 per cent exceeded their planned end date for training and 22 per cent are still in learning. Thirty per cent of the apprentices who started training in 2003-04 exceeded their planned end dates and 13 per cent are still in learning. Recent changes by staff to the way the programme is planned and managed have been implemented and improvements are now evident in the rate of NVQ units, key skills and technical certificate being achieved.

98. Retention rates since 2001 for administration learners have been satisfactory overall. Retention rates for learners who have started since 2004 have improved, with 79 per cent of all apprentices who started since 2004 still in learning. Achievement rates are now satisfactory.

99. The standard of work produced by learners is satisfactory overall. Some learners demonstrate good skills at work and take responsibility for complex tasks and situations. For example, one apprentice works in a busy administration office which is also the main customer service point of contact for residents in a social housing project. She deals competently and confidently with the public and responds to queries and requests effectively while implementing systems and procedures well.

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		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	11		14		18		27		40		15		2	100		
Retained*	0		3		8		17		21		7		2	100		
Successfully completed	0		2		4		6		14		6		2	100		
Still in learning	11		5		4		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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		51		30		25	100	24	100	23	100	3	100		
Retained*	0		1		16		13	52	17	71	13	57	1	33		
Successfully completed	0		6		10		9	36	14	58	10	43	1	33		
Still in learning	5		33		4		0	0	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

100. Good vocational support is provided by four training advisers. They visit learners every two weeks at work and learners are able to contact them whenever they need to. Training advisers work flexibly and effectively with learners in the off-the-job training sessions to help them develop appropriate knowledge and understanding. These sessions include individual coaching sessions in key skills development. Learners are visited at work every two or three weeks by their training adviser who provides effective on-the-job guidance and coaching to help them develop their skills. Progress reviews at work involve employers, and on-the-job training is reviewed and planned effectively by the training adviser with the learner and employer. The training adviser ensures employers are kept fully informed about the training programme and learners' progress. Employers are involved effectively in the training programme and fully understand the requirements and

their role.

101. Particularly effective action-planning helps learners to achieve their qualifications. The short-term action plan is agreed between the training adviser and the learner, including details of what needs to be done to achieve the standards for each unit. These are reviewed and new plans are defined frequently as the learner progresses. Targets are discussed and agreed with learners. Training advisers and learners use action plans effectively to maintain progress. Learners find these action plans very useful and effective in helping them to make progress, particularly during their first few months on their programme. The training adviser monitors the learners' progress closely and quickly identifies if learners are not completing their planned activities. Assessment practices are satisfactory. All assessments are planned, take place at work and involve a range of methods. Observations are recorded appropriately and learners receive constructive feedback.

102. Resources are good. The Chamber has invested in good ICT, learning resources and training facilities. Learners use these facilities and resources effectively during planned off-the-job training sessions and also on other occasions, as and when required. Learning resources on laptop computers are used effectively by training advisers and learners in the workplace. Learners use digital video facilities and other resources to support their development including key skills learning packs based on individual needs. Some learners use internet-based NVQ systems that provide additional support for learning and assessment. A wide range of suitable learning materials and resources are used to support learning in training sessions. Learners are motivated and respond well to their training and some demonstrate a good understanding of their job activities and administration practices. Learners are employed in satisfactory or better administration work situations and have good access to relevant modern office technology and equipment.

103. Induction is satisfactory and includes suitable introductions to health and safety at work, and equality and diversity. Learners' understanding of these topics is monitored during progress reviews. Off-the-job training is satisfactory overall. Learning sessions are well planned and effectively implemented, although some learners are not provided with sufficiently challenging tasks and activities. On-the-job training, skills development, workplaces and opportunities for additional training and progression are satisfactory.

104. All learners receive an appropriate initial assessment and training is planned satisfactorily for individual learners. However, some individual learning plans are not up to date and do not reflect revisions made to plans, such as targets for completion of units and other aspects of the apprenticeship framework. Assessment is appropriate and implemented effectively. Regular progress reviews take place and involve employers in monitoring progress and planning training. However, some records of progress reviews do not include sufficiently specific targets with achievement dates.

Leadership and management

105. There is good teamwork and staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff are well supported by their managers and have access to good staff development. However, there have been difficulties in maintaining progress by learners and reaching a satisfactory level of completion rates. Since September 2004, managers have implemented a number of improvements to the business administration programme including the appointment of four specialist training advisers, including a lead internal verifier.

Improvements include the investment in equipment and facilities, closer monitoring of progress, better planning of key skills training and assessment and the technical certificate, and the introduction of the internet-based NVQ. The retention rates for learners who started since September 2004 have improved. New learners are progressing well, but it is too early to judge the impact of these changes on framework completion.

106. Arrangements to support learner's literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. Initial assessment is used to identify needs, although currently none of the learners in administration need additional support. Staff are involved in quality assurance and have access to relevant policies and procedures. Staff contribute to the self-assessment process. The current report is generally accurate, but it did not identify learners' progress and achievement as significant weaknesses. Some of the strengths were no more than normal practice.

