

INSPECTION REPORT

Mobile Care Qualifications

17 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.

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Mobile Care Qualifications (MCQ) is a private training company, established in 1994. It has learning centres in Newcastle and Washington and provides training across Tyne and Wear. The senior management board comprises the managing director, company secretary, learning centre co-ordinator and the contracts manager. There are 36 staff, of whom 32 are full time and four are part time. The company contracts with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to currently fund 167 work-based learners. MCQ has a franchise with the Tyne and Wear care Alliance for European Social Funding (ESF) for 150 learners. MCQ also has a franchise with a local college, but this was not included in this inspection. A further 197 learners, funded through a terminated Employer Training Pilot (ETP) contract, were not included in this inspection.

2. MCQ offers training in social care and training in early years care and education. Learners work towards apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs). MCQ also provides short courses in food hygiene, first aid, manual handling, fire safety and clinical activities. Most learners are employed in care homes and nursery schools.

3. The unemployment rate in Tyne and Wear was 3.1 per cent in June 2005, compared with a national average of 2.3 per cent. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is 3.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent. In 2004, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education at grade C or above was 49.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 53.7 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** MCQ's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in health, public services and care.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process makes appropriate use of the views of employers, learners and subcontractors. Staff identify strengths and weaknesses and award grades. Inspectors found most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They gave a lower grade for equality of opportunity than that in the report. The development plan is shared with staff and is used effectively to improve the provision.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** In the past 10 months, good progress has been made to improve the provision. Retention rates are improving and learners are making good progress. Some strengths identified at the previous inspection have been further enhanced, such as staff development and employer support. Some weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been rectified, and are now satisfactory, such as induction, strategic planning and target-setting.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MOBILE CARE QUALIFICATIONS:

- continue to improve retention and achievement
- include all key learning processes in quality improvement
- improve and reinforce learner and staff understanding of equality and diversity

GRADES

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

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

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Social care			
Apprenticeships for young people	80	3	
Other government-funded provision	144	3	
NVQ training for young people	4	3	
Early years			
Apprenticeships for young people	67	3	
Other government-funded provision	6	3	
NVQ training for young people	16	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Health, public services and care were reported on and graded. Learners funded through the ETP contract and through a franchise with a local college were not included in this inspection.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	39
Number of staff interviewed	29
Number of employers interviewed	11
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	28
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Development of learners' personal and professional skills is good.** Learners develop their understanding of practice and are effectively able to apply this knowledge in their jobs. Learners have progressed from an NVQ at level 2 to level 3 and 4, or on to further education and professional training, and have been promoted into senior roles.

9. **Retention is now improving on all programmes and is good for ESF learners.** Current learners on all programmes are making good progress. Additional assessors have been appointed and a system introduced that identifies potential early leavers and provides additional support visits to them.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	0	2	1	1	4
Total	0	2	1	1	4

10. **Support for learning is particularly good.** Learners receive visits from their assessors at least every four weeks or more frequently if needed. Visits to learners are at convenient times that fit in with their normal work routines. Support is available outside of office hours and home visits can be made to learners.

11. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners have initial assessment of occupational skills, learning styles, and literacy and numeracy levels. Results are discussed with the assessor, employer and learner. Those identified with additional learning needs receive regular support through one-to-one guidance and group sessions. Support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and provided by appropriately qualified tutors.

12. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Training rooms are spacious, light and well equipped. Both centres have equipment for manual handling training and a training room equipped with computers. There is a good selection of books, videos, magazines and information booklets. There is a good range of technology to support training and assessment including laptop computers, tape recorders and cameras, to assist in the collection of evidence.

13. **Some assessment practice is weak.** Since the previous inspection assessment practice has improved. The internal verification team has recently expanded and internal verification satisfactorily tackles assessment issues when portfolios are sampled. However, in portfolios that have not yet been sampled, assessment relies on learners' written work.

Leadership and management

14. **Staff development is good.** Staff can take a wide range of accredited qualifications. One day each month is used for staff training and development. Staff appointed to new positions undertake appropriate training. Support for new staff is good and staff are

MOBILE CARE QUALIFICATIONS

encouraged to progress in their careers.

15. Good support for employers is provided through regular visits from assessors.

Training sessions for work-based assessors ensure they receive the same information as MCQ's assessors. Learners benefit from on-the-job training by workplace supervisors and managers who have up-to-date knowledge. Many workplace supervisors have taken assessor awards and management qualifications through MCQ.

16. Internal communication is satisfactory. MCQ's management style is open and responsive. Staff have good access to senior managers. Managers consult staff when making decisions.

17. Target-setting is satisfactory. Team targets for qualification achievements are set, monitored and discussed at meetings. Monitoring of learner progress is satisfactory. Slow progress is identified and acted upon. Charts of learners' progress are kept in work placements and regularly updated by assessors.

18. Good support is provided for learners to widen participation. MCQ effectively engages learners who have not previously been in learning or had positive learning experiences. MCQ successfully encourages and motivates learners to access training using a full range of strategies. MCQ has undertaken a range of targeted and innovative marketing actions to try to raise awareness of training across specific localities where uptake of training is poor.

19. Some learners' portfolios demonstrate a good understanding of how equality and diversity impacts on clients. However, many learners' understanding of their own rights and responsibilities as employees and learners is poor.

20. In the last 10 months good progress has been made and the self-assessment report and action plan have been well used to improve provision. However, **MCQ has been slow to tackle identified weaknesses from the previous inspection.** Some weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been rectified. However, some weaknesses, such as some poor assessment practice and poor achievement rates, remain.

21. Internal verification is satisfactory, with a clear strategy for portfolio sampling. Feedback to assessors confirms there is enough evidence, but does not identify how learners and assessors could improve. Assessors are observed annually and learners are interviewed. Work-based assessors are invited to standardisation workshops. Some key aspects of learners' programmes, such as induction and understanding of equality of opportunity, are not systematically monitored through observation.

22. Quality procedures have been improved since the previous inspection. Learners funded through subcontract arrangements benefit from MCQ's quality arrangements.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good staff development
- effective support for employers
- good action to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity
- slow action to improve the provision

Health, public services and care

Strengths

- good personal and professional skills development
- particularly good support for learning

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes
- some weak assessment practice

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MOBILE CARE QUALIFICATIONS:

- the support provided by staff
- the flexibility of learning at home and at work
- learning at their own pace
- gaining confidence
- being able to progress in their careers
- having a better understanding of care practice

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MOBILE CARE QUALIFICATIONS COULD IMPROVE:

- the repetition in written work
- the consistency in the ways in which assessors carry out their work

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good staff development
- effective support for employers
- good action to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity
- slow action to improve the provision

23. Staff development is good. Staff appraisal, the needs of the three-year development plan, and individual development requests, are used well to set staff development targets for the following year. Staff are encouraged to take accredited qualifications and to attend awarding body workshops and national conferences. One day each month is used for staff training and development. Areas of weakness are identified and staff suggest topics they need to know more about, such as dealing with vulnerable adults and key skills. The company and management team have expanded over the last three years and new managers are undertaking appropriate training. A newly developed team provides literacy and numeracy support for learners. The internal verifier team is being expanded to help carry out standardisation and monitoring in the workplace. Support for new staff is good. They are allocated a mentor to monitor and support their learning and progress. Staff know how to progress their careers. They are encouraged to volunteer to extend their responsibilities and are well supported to develop into their new roles. For example, a social care assessor is expanding her skills through a regular work placement, leading to a qualification.

24. Effective support for employers is provided through regular visits from assessors that includes updates and information. Training sessions for work-based assessors ensure they receive the same information as MCQ's assessors. Topics include target-setting and legislation changes. The same training is given in the workplace for employer staff who can not attend off-the-job training sessions. Learners benefit from on-the-job training by workplace supervisors and managers who have up-to-date knowledge. Many workplace supervisors have taken assessor awards and management qualifications through MCQ. One employer uses MCQ's learning centre to train its own staff. Annual newsletters inform managers about training events, dates of assessors' meetings and updates to qualifications. MCQ has productive links with employers and responds quickly when issues arise. Employers are involved in developing individual learning plans and agreeing targets.

25. Internal communication is satisfactory. MCQ's management style is open and responsive. Staff have good access to senior managers. Managers consult staff when making decisions. Ideas from staff have been used to improve the provision. For example, the moving of management responsibility to funding streams was suggested by the staff team. Managers hold three operational meetings and one strategic meeting each month. Meetings produce useful actions.

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26. Target-setting is satisfactory. Team targets for qualification achievements are set, monitored and discussed at meetings. The monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory. Slow progress is identified through management information systems and discussed by the assessor and learning centre co-ordinator at individual monthly meetings. Issues identified are discussed and action plans developed to support the learner. Charts of learners' progress are kept in work placements and are regularly updated by assessors. Satisfactory data reports are used to help managers plan and monitor the provision.

27. Strategic planning is satisfactory. MCQ has skills for life, early leavers, and equality and diversity strategies. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. These strategies are relatively new and have not yet been evaluated. However, mechanisms are in place to collect evidence to evaluate their effectiveness. Strategies and plans link to local and national targets.

28. Staff are effectively and efficiently deployed. Facilities and resources for learning are satisfactory at both learning centres.

29. Support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Appropriately qualified staff provide individual support and group training sessions for learners with additional needs. Support is well planned and closely monitored.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

30. MCQ has implemented good actions to widen participation. MCQ's inclusive approach effectively engages learners. Some learners have not previously been in learning or had positive learning experiences. MCQ successfully encourages and motivates learners to access training using a full range of strategies to support learners in work placement and to progress into paid employment and full apprenticeships. During the inspection, an assessor effectively dealt with a bullying and harassment issue. Actions were recorded in line with MCQ complaints and appeals procedures. Learners who leave programmes can continue to access jobsearch enabling them to obtain paid employment and progress to apprenticeships and the next level of NVQ. There is some good partnership and networking with the local provider network to reach under-represented groups. MCQ has carried out a range of targeted and innovative marketing actions to raise awareness of training across specific localities where uptake of training is poor, such as advertising on local buses.

31. A clear equality and diversity strategy is in place. It reflects current relevant legislation. MCQ has appointed an equality and diversity officer to replace the equal opportunities officer. This person is currently being mentored by a senior manager and has enrolled on a level 2 qualification in equality and diversity. A number of initiatives are being introduced including the revision of training materials to meet the needs of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. Access for learners with restricted mobility is satisfactory at both learning centres. Training sessions can be held in ground-floor rooms and toilets are accessible for people with restricted mobility.

32. Although MCQ did not achieve its own targets for the recruitment of men and learners from minority ethnic groups to social care and early years in 2004-05, there is no clear plan aimed at tackling this issue. However, the two male learners currently enrolled in early years are working effectively with MCQ to develop appropriate marketing and promotional

materials to tackle gender stereotyping.

33. There is insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity. Some social care and early years portfolios show good learner understanding of how equality and diversity impacts on clients. However, some social care learners do not have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity. In many instances their understanding of their own rights and responsibilities as employees and learners is also poor. The induction process includes training on equality and diversity, but this is not sufficiently emphasised or reinforced during induction or during training and progress reviews. Some quality checks have been put in place to ensure that follow-up activities included in induction booklets and induction checklists are completed effectively by learners. These have yet to be systematically applied and it is too early to assess their impact.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

34. A range of strategies has been introduced to tackle retention and achievement rates. These are now improving. The provider identifies potential early leavers who then receive additional assessor visits and progress reviews. There are examples of learners being supported and successfully continuing with their learning. Most retained learners make good progress.

35. Quality assurance procedures have been improved since the previous inspection. New procedures were implemented in September 2005. It is too early to judge their effectiveness. Satisfactory audit systems, including paperwork checks and interviews, are used to monitor procedures. Learners funded through subcontract arrangements benefit from MCQ's quality arrangements.

36. Systems to collect learner and employer feedback are satisfactory. Learners complete questionnaires at the start, during, and at the end of their programme. Some of the questions used to check learners' understanding are not appropriate. Findings from questionnaires are analysed and shared with staff.

37. Internal verification is satisfactory, with a clear strategy for the sampling of portfolios. The lead internal verifier identifies which units will be sampled. Portfolios are sampled after the completion of three units, or every three months. Feedback to assessors is adequate. It confirms sufficiency of evidence, but does not identify how learners and assessors could improve. Written feedback to assessors specifies any actions required. Assessors are observed annually and learners are interviewed. Work-based assessors are invited to standardisation workshops.

38. Action to improve the provision has been slow. The self-assessment report identified that some actions set unrealistic target dates. Not all actions from the 2003-04 annual development plan were completed and had to be carried over to the following year. However, in the last 10 months, progress has been made and the self-assessment report and action plan have been used well to improve the provision. Some strengths identified at the previous inspection have been further enhanced, such as staff development and employer support. Some weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been rectified and are now satisfactory, such as induction, strategic planning and target-setting. However, some weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, including some poor assessment practice and poor achievement rates, remain. The grades awarded for health, public services and care, and leadership and management through this inspection are the same as

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the grades awarded at the previous inspection. The grade awarded for quality improvement is higher, but the grade awarded for equality of opportunity is lower.

39. Mandatory training is observed annually by the lead trainer. He uses a useful document to evaluate each trainer's preparation and presentation of training sessions. Learners evaluate all mandatory training. Trainers self-evaluate mandatory training sessions, but there is an over emphasis on resources and facilities, rather than learning. Observations of training and induction do not always identify differences in quality of provision or share good practice. Some key aspects of learners' programmes, such as induction and understanding of equality of opportunity, are not systematically monitored through observations. MCQ has identified this issue and developed internal verifiers with specific responsibility for monitoring workplace aspects of the provision, but they have not yet started. New trainers self-assess the overall quality of their teaching, to identify how they can be supported to improve. Off-the-job training sessions for literacy and numeracy are new and are not included in the quality assurance system. Learning sessions in the workplace are not observed. Some trainers are observed by external agencies and subcontractors, but most of these observations focus on teaching and not learning.

40. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Staff identify strengths and weaknesses and award grades. Employers', learners' and subcontractors' views are also used. The self-assessment report does not analyse the ETP or the ESF provision. Inspectors identified most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. The grades awarded through self-assessment were the same as the grades given by inspectors, except for equality of opportunity, which was given a lower grade by inspectors. The development plan is shared with staff and is effectively used to improve the quality of provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Social care		
Apprenticeships for young people	80	3
Other government-funded provision	144	3
NVQ training for young people	4	3
Early years		
Apprenticeships for young people	67	3
Other government-funded provision	6	3
NVQ training for young people	16	3

41. MCQ provides training in social care and early years in a range of residential care and nursing homes, domiciliary care services, nurseries and playgroups. Most of the learners are employed and are referred to MCQ by their employers. Other learners are recruited through Connexions, the careers service or are referred by friends and family. Currently 228 learners are taking qualifications in social care, of whom 49 are apprentices, 31 are advanced apprentices and four are working towards a level 2 NVQ. The ESF supports 144 learners taking NVQs, of whom 26 are taking level 2, 44 at level 3 and 38 at level 4.

42. In early years there are 89 learners, of whom 17 are apprentices, 50 are advanced apprentices. Eleven learners are taking NVQs at level 2, two are taking NVQs at level 3 and three are taking NVQs at level 4. Six ESF-supported learners are taking NVQs at level 4. MCQ employs three assessors who visit learners in the workplace to support their qualifications and carry out reviews. In addition, there are 39 work-based assessors. Internal verification is the responsibility of MCQ.

Strengths

- good personal and professional skills development
- particularly good support for learning

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes
- some weak assessment practice

Achievement and standards

43. Development of learners' personal and professional skills is good. Learners develop their understanding of practice well and are able to apply this knowledge in their jobs. They demonstrate increased confidence and self-awareness and are able to question and challenge practices. MCQ offers learners good opportunities for career progression and personal development. Learners have progressed from NVQ at level 2 to level 3 and 4, or on to further education and professional training and have been promoted into senior roles and management positions. A number of learners have trained as assessors. Learners on

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work placement often progress into employment.

44. Retention rates are improving on all programmes and are good for ESF learners. Learners on all programmes are making good progress. A range of strategies has been introduced to improve retention and achievement. Additional assessors have been appointed and a system introduced that identifies potential early leavers and provides additional support visits. Two tutors support learners with additional needs. Historically, retention and achievement rates on advanced apprenticeships are satisfactory but on social care apprenticeships they are poor.

45. Of those learners starting a social care apprenticeship in 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04, 20 per cent, 17 per cent and 15 per cent respectively completed their programmes. Of the apprentices who started these same years, 6 per cent, 20 per cent and 87 per cent are still in learning. Of social care learners who started advanced apprenticeships in 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05, 39 per cent, 22 per cent, 14 per cent respectively completed their apprenticeships. Of the advanced apprentices who started in 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05, 2 per cent, 5 per cent, 49 per cent and 71 per cent respectively are still in learning.

46. In early years, of those learners who started advanced apprenticeships in 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04, 25 per cent, 12 per cent and 20 per cent respectively completed their programmes. Of those learners who began advanced apprenticeships in 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 13 per cent, 24 per cent, 53 per cent and 94 per cent are still in learning.

47. It is too early to make a judgement about the achievement of learners on ESF programmes.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	45		67		57		62										
Retained*	1		11		12		26										
Successfully completed	1		11		11		23										
Still in learning	39		34		6		2										

*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							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		48		59		54		82	100						
Retained*	0		0		12		15		30	37						
Successfully completed	0		0		8		9		16	20						
Still in learning	7		43		13		3		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	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	10		37		9	100	30	100								
Retained*	1		21		6	67	7	23								
Successfully completed	1		6		6	67	5	17								
Still in learning	7		13		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

Other government funded																
Other government-funded provision	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	30		134		65											
Retained*	3		104		47											
Successfully completed	0		13		9											
Still in training	30		96		24											

*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

48. Support for learning is particularly good. Learners are motivated and receive visits from their assessors at least every four weeks and often more frequently depending on their individual needs. Visits to learners are at convenient times including early mornings, evenings and weekends and fit in with their normal work routines. Some learners have been visited at home and receive training and literacy and numeracy support. Assessors' mobile numbers and e-mails are available to learners, and support can be obtained outside of office hours. Transport is arranged to help learners to attend off-the-job training. Drop-in sessions are available at the learning centre to offer learners additional support and guidance. Practice papers are used in preparation for technical certificate and key skill tests. Learners are given a timetable of off-the-job training sessions available at the learning centre. Training is available in over 40 care-related topics including pressure care, dementia, care planning and manual handling. Although not funded, the needs of subcontracted learners are assessed on enrolment with MCQ and they are encouraged to access a wide range of additional training and literacy and numeracy support.

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49. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners have initial assessment of occupational skills, learning styles, and literacy and numeracy. Results are discussed with the assessor, employer and learner within six weeks of the programme's start and results are recorded on the individual's learning plan. Those identified with additional learning needs receive regular support through one-to-one guidance and group sessions. Reviews of progress of additional learning needs take place twice a year. Learners are formally reviewed every three months and action plans are updated. Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory.

50. Support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Two qualified tutors provide additional support. A computer-based diagnostic assessment is used to provide a detailed assessment of literacy and numeracy skills. An individual learning plan is developed to record the support to be provided.

51. Resources for learning are satisfactory. MCQ's training rooms at both learning centres are spacious, light and well equipped with television, video, projectors, overhead projectors and whiteboards. One room at each learning centre contains equipment for manual handling training, including an adjustable bed, hoist, wheelchair and slide sheets. For early years training there is an appropriate range of resources including toys, dolls and feeding equipment. There is a good selection of books, videos, magazines and information booklets. Each centre has a training room equipped with six computers. There is a good range of technology to support training and assessment including laptop computers, tape recorders and cameras to assist in the collection of evidence.

52. Some assessment practice is weak. Since the previous inspection assessment practice has improved, however, not all assessors are working to the same standard. The internal verification team has recently expanded and internal verification is now satisfactorily addressing assessment issues when portfolios are sampled after learners have completed three units. However, in portfolios that have not yet been sampled, assessment relies heavily on learners' written work and there is little use of oral questioning. Reflective accounts are often not supported by other evidence or validated by the assessor. The requirement for direct observation by the assessor is not met consistently. Units of competence are planned separately and evidence is often not cross-referenced. Knowledge demonstrated in some level 3 and level 4 qualifications does not reflect the appropriate depth or breadth for that level. Some learners are producing work towards level 2 qualifications that would meet the requirements of a level 3. Some assessment plans are not negotiated with learners but are imposed by assessors. Short-term targets for unit completion are not clearly specified in all plans.

Leadership and management

53. Management responsibility is allocated according to funding streams and programmes are managed effectively. Staff identify strengths and weaknesses and award grades. Inspectors found most of the same strengths and weaknesses as MCQ.

54. Staff working on social care and early years programmes are appropriately qualified and experienced with current vocational experience. Good opportunities for personal and professional development are provided by MCQ. All staff are either qualified teachers or are working towards a qualification in adult education.

55. Internal verification is satisfactory. There are eight internal qualified verifiers for social

care and three for early years. The lead verifier checks all portfolios before certificates are claimed.

56. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Inspectors found most of the same strengths and weaknesses as MCQ. The grade awarded through self-assessment was the same as the grade awarded by inspectors. The development plan is shared with staff and is effectively used to improve the provision.

