

INSPECTION REPORT

Oakmere House

08 June 2006



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

Oakmere House

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Oakmere House is a private company and registered faith charity based in Walton, Liverpool. It was set up in 1981 to provide education and training opportunities in a broad range of skills in the Merseyside area. It has a training centre and conference suite at a single site in Walton. Many of the learners attending Oakmere House are from some of the most deprived areas of Liverpool. Over 40 per cent of the learners attending Oakmere House have not completed year 11 in school.
2. Oakmere House was inspected in June 2002 and reinspected in June 2004. It is a lead provider for the delivery of Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes and works with four partner providers to deliver this programme. This provision is funded by Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council. In addition to the E2E programme, the provider delivers the local borough responses programmes for 16-19 year olds which they call Breakthrough. This is a European Social Fund (ESF) co-financed programme targeted to reach learners from Liverpool and Sefton who face major difficulties and who, for various reasons, are not able to join the E2E programme. Learners progressing from this programme can enter E2E or other positive outcomes. Both sets of learners follow the same programme of activities and work in mixed groups.
3. The company's senior management team consists of the chief executive, the programme manager, who is responsible for co-ordinating training, the finance, administration and personnel manager, and an executive officer, who is also the company secretary. The chief executive reports to a board of trustees. Oakmere House employs 36 staff, of whom four work part time.
4. The unemployment rate in Liverpool in April 2006 was 5.8 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Liverpool is 5.7 per cent and 2.7 per cent for the wards that feed the company's local Connexions offices, compared with a national average of 9.1 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** More specifically, Oakmere House's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality improvement are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are outstanding. Provision is good in preparation for life and work programmes.
6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The most recent self-assessment report was produced in November 2005. All staff fully contributed to this report and the assessment of strengths and weaknesses takes full consideration of learners' views. Grades in the self-assessment report match those in the inspection. The report identifies many strengths and weaknesses across the provision which match the findings of inspectors. The scope of actions it proposes to maintain and improve strengths and remedy weaknesses is good.

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

Many of the actions from the quality improvement plan have been implemented and are resulting in improvements in the quality of the provision. Positive outcomes for learners are good and continue to improve. Oakmere House places a strong emphasis on improving the experience of learners. Insufficient attention is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning activities, however.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR OAKMERE HOUSE:

- further consolidate good, positive outcomes for learners
- better formalise quality procedures to ensure quality improvements
- encourage learners to take more responsibility for their learning
- continue to develop a role which uses Oakmere House's expertise to engage disadvantaged learners
- further raise the quality in teaching and learning

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		1
Quality improvement		2

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Employability training</i>		2	
Other government-funded provision	21	2	
Entry to Employment	38	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. The inspection reported on and graded preparation for life and work provision. Inspection activity took place in a single week.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	9
Number of learners interviewed	30
Number of staff interviewed	38
Number of employers interviewed	2
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	3
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	7
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **The rate of progression to positive outcomes such as further education, training or employment is good.** The achievement rate for accredited qualifications is good. Learners also gain accreditation of one or more short qualifications. These qualifications enhance learners' confidence and improve their chance to progress into employment and/or further education.

10. The standard of learners' work in literacy, numeracy is good and learners are developing high levels of skills in all areas of learning including practical training. Learners make good progress on the programme.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Preparation for life and work	1	3	4	0	8
Total	1	3	4	0	8

11. **Literacy and numeracy support is excellent.** Tutors very carefully identify learners' needs through a broad range of effective initial assessments and diagnostic tools. Many of the learners make better progress than they did while at school and have developed greater confidence in their ability. Tutors very carefully match literacy and numeracy skills required in each of the vocational skills to the schemes of work and lesson plans.

12. **The programme offers a broad range of flexible activities and projects.** Each learner has an individual timetable of activities that meets their interest and needs well. This includes a good range of vocational tasters and work placements.

13. A four-strong dedicated learner services team gives very effective and prompt support to learners on all personal matters. The provider has good links with a broad range of agencies to support the learners should they need it. A Connexions personal adviser works very closely with the staff and learners and makes them aware of appropriate provision. Oakmere House's counselling service is very effective and sensitive to the needs of the learners.

14. The tutors do not sufficiently involve learners in their progress reviews, and in many cases the learners do not take ownership of their learning and future. Learners do not fully prepare for the reviews. They do not always discuss the quality of their work with the reviewer. Some learners are capable of making greater progress and achieving positive outcomes more quickly.

Leadership and management

15. Formal and informal communication is particularly good at Oakmere House. Strategic and operational planning are well integrated. Staff feel valued and included. Oakmere House's collaborative style of working is highly regarded by partners. Meetings are well structured. The effective meeting arrangements are supported by regular informal discussions between staff.

16. Oakmere House has demonstrated the capacity to maintaining stability while responding to a changing external environment. Effective business and development planning ensures that Oakmere House is able to develop training consistent with its mission. The company's creative and entrepreneurial use of income that it generates through other activities enables it to give particularly good and consistent support to learners.

17. Oakmere House makes very good use of partners and specialist organisations to widen access to learning programmes. The company has a good understanding of the local community and a strong commitment to the learners it serves. It works very effectively with specialist organisations to remove barriers to learning to enable learners to achieve their potential.

18. The provider's strategies to engage young offenders in learning are excellent. Intensive support mechanisms are in place to deal with learners' personal and social needs and provide a safety net of support. Sixty-seven per cent of learners achieve positive outcomes. Progression routes to further education and training are good.

19. Oakmere House's actions to promote equality of opportunity are very good. Staff are strongly committed to supporting learners, many of whom have significant barriers to learning. Bright displays of learners' work demonstrate well the effect that learning sessions have on improving learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Other displays promote the importance of healthy lifestyles and remind learners how and where to seek help if they need it. Learners are aware of the importance of respect and of the standards of behaviour expected of them.

20. The quality assurance procedures in Oakmere House place a strong emphasis on the learners' experience. The company has comprehensive arrangements to ensure that all procedures affecting the learners are routinely monitored. Learners' views about the

quality of their experience are gathered through questionnaires, focus groups and individual discussions. Prompt action is taken to make improvements.

21. Lesson observation does not systematically identify action for continuous improvement. Tutors who reach the target standard, which is satisfactory, are not challenged to raise their standard further.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very good formal and informal communications
- effective planning for change
- excellent strategies to engage young offenders in learning
- very good use of partners and specialist organisations to widen access to provision
- very good actions to promote equality of opportunity in learning activities
- strong emphasis on learners' experience in quality assurance procedures

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on continuous improvement through the learning observation procedures

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- good rates of positive outcomes and progression
- excellent literacy and numeracy support
- broad curriculum range
- very good personal support

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of learners in target-setting and action-planning during reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT OAKMERE HOUSE:

- 'the opportunity to improve my mathematics and English'
- the teaching in small groups
- 'learnt much more in a very short period than when I went to school'
- 'just decent - like everything'
- the tutors - 'they are alright, and respect us'
- the opportunity to learn new things/new skills
- 'I have found direction to my life and raised my expectations'
- skiing

WHAT LEARNERS THINK OAKMERE HOUSE COULD IMPROVE:

- the length of break and dinner times
- the style of safety boots

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- very good formal and informal communications
- effective planning for change
- excellent strategies to engage young offenders in learning
- very good use of partners and specialist organisations to widen access to provision
- very good actions to promote equality of opportunity in learning activities
- strong emphasis on learners' experience in quality assurance procedures

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on continuous improvement through the learning observation procedures

22. Formal and informal communication is particularly good at Oakmere House. This helps to ensure that strategic planning and operational planning are well integrated, and that staff feel valued and included. Oakmere House's commitment and its transparent and collaborative style of working are highly regarded by partners. Extensive and well-structured meeting arrangements involve trustees, partners and staff in decision-making. A business-like approach to meetings ensures that key areas are discussed, actions are planned and issues are routinely reviewed. In addition to broad strategic issues, this good communication results in a range of small improvements that make a real difference to the learners, such as the introduction of a recruitment telephone line, quizzes to add interest to induction, and the use of text messages to prompt absent learners to attend. The effective meeting arrangements are supported by regular informal discussions between staff, and by the introduction of an internal electronic mailing and information storage facility. Collaboration with outside organisations helps to ensure an integrated approach to supporting young learners. For example, local colleges and private training organisations contribute to Oakmere House's open days, promoting opportunities for learners to progress to work-based learning courses. In addition, links with other agencies have led to valuable sharing of good practice. Learners are offered payment for writing articles for the newsletter about their experiences.

23. The organisation plans effectively for change. Oakmere House has developed a capacity to maintain stability while responding to a changing external environment. Effective business and development planning ensures that Oakmere House is able to develop training consistent with its mission. For example, it has switched provision from higher-level vocational training and has successfully tendered for an E2E programme, to better match local needs. This has required trainers to alter their approach to training to include more practical activities. Plans are in hand to extend provision across the 14 to 19 age range. Creative and entrepreneurial use of income generated through other activities, such as the provision of conference facilities, enables the company to give particularly good and consistent support to learners. Systematic action-planning and good use of management information to set challenging targets have brought about a range of

improvements, including higher rates of retention and achievement.

24. Provision for performance management and staff training is satisfactory. Oakmere House has in place an effective two-year appraisal cycle, consisting of a full appraisal followed by a more focused appraisal the following year, which is linked well to the provision of staff training. All but one new member of staff has been appraised in the current year. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for the induction for new staff, and staff receive good support through other training. Oakmere House has for three consecutive assessments over a period of nine years demonstrated its commitment to staff training and development by meeting the standard of a national awarding body.

25. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of staff and learners are sound. The member of staff responsible for this area makes good use of local networking through the funding body to keep up-to-date with new requirements and share good practice. The use of risk assessment and the monitoring and reporting of accidents are systematic and appropriate.

26. The management of literacy and numeracy skills support is satisfactory. Oakmere House has a written strategy covering literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). Good working arrangements are in place with partners for initial assessment and the transfer of learners' results. The provider has satisfactory arrangements for meeting through referral the needs of learners who speak English as an additional language. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are good. Most staff have attended a dyslexia awareness event. Oakmere House plans to develop the capacity of staff through further accredited training.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

27. Oakmere House makes very good use of partners and specialist organisations to widen access to learning programmes. This was a strength in the previous inspection and is reflected in strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Oakmere House has a strong commitment to social justice and has explicit aims and strategic objectives to widen access to learning and skills for hard-to-reach learners in deprived areas of Liverpool. This commitment forms a key part of the business plan. Oakmere House has a good understanding of the local community and a strong commitment to the learners it serves. It works well with partners and Connexions to provide good advice and guidance on education and training opportunities that best suit individual needs. The company works very effectively with specialist organisations to remove barriers to learning to enable learners to achieve their potential. These organisations provide a wide range of specialist services including training in drug and alcohol awareness, sexual health, healthy eating, smoking and anger management and support with bereavement counselling, self-harm and welfare issues including housing and mental health. These services help learners improve their wellbeing. A counsellor visits the provider each week. This service is valued by learners.

28. Oakmere House's strategies to engage young offenders in learning are excellent. The provider has responded quickly to forge strong partnerships to support this particularly vulnerable group of learners. It has taken a leading role in developing programmes for young offenders and ensuring that the approach is effectively co-ordinated. Intensive support mechanisms are in place to deal with learners' personal and social needs and provide a safety net of support. Sixty-seven per cent of learners achieve positive

outcomes. Progression routes onto further education and training are good.

29. Oakmere House's actions to promote equality of opportunity are very good. Staff are strongly committed to supporting learners, many of whom have significant barriers to learning. A rich mix of learners' work, images and promotional materials are on display in corridors, classrooms and learners' work areas. Bright displays of learners' work effectively demonstrate how learning sessions have improved learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Other displays promote the importance of healthy lifestyles. Informative promotional material is displayed well to remind learners how and where to seek help if they need it. Images are used to good effect in classrooms to help learners develop vocational vocabularies. Learners are encouraged to complete taster courses to find out more about non-traditional training opportunities. This has increased the proportion of young women moving on to construction programmes, especially in painting and decorating. Much recent staff training has focused on equality of opportunity. It has included training on discrimination, mental health issues, acceptable boundaries of behaviour, self-harm and anger management. Learners are aware of the importance of respect and the standards of behaviour expected of them. Oakmere House provides good mentoring arrangements to support learners in temporary difficulty with, for example, misbehaviour, time-keeping or inattentiveness. Learners are given clear guidance on how to complain and seek help when they need to.

30. Although the proportion of minority ethnic groups in the community is small, learners are prepared well for life in a multi-cultural society. Oakmere House is making good progress in monitoring participation, retention and achievement rates of different groups of learners. Targets relating to the participation of learners from minority ethnic groups are set and monitored through the business plan. Oakmere House is working collaboratively with local minority ethnic communities to improve participation rates. The provider has introduced equality and diversity impact measures over the three years to 2006-07. It has met or exceeded many of these targets. Marketing materials avoid stereotypical images.

31. Oakmere House has an appropriate range of policies and documents that promote equality of opportunity for learners and staff. These include an equal opportunities policy and action plan and policies on harassment and bullying. Systems to combat bullying and harassment are effective. The provider has a detailed policy for children and vulnerable adults with good guidance for staff, which has been supported with extensive training. Oakmere House has made good progress in completing actions described in its disability action plan.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

32. The quality assurance procedures in Oakmere House place a strong emphasis on the learners' experience. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to ensure that all procedures affecting learners are routinely monitored. These include initial assessment, learning plans, induction, training and progress reviews. Oakmere House gathers learners' views about the quality of their experience in an appropriate variety of ways, including questionnaires, focus groups and individual discussions. Regular performance reports to the monthly quality improvement meetings draw on this evidence, and staff take prompt action to make improvements. In addition to these formal arrangements, staff take every opportunity to respond to issues relating to learners as they arise.

33. The provider has comprehensive arrangements to ensure that procedures are followed, and to check quality. The quality manager monitors the implementation of the procedures and reports routinely on progress to the monthly quality improvement meetings, where actions for improvements are identified. Oakmere House has made good progress this year towards establishing these procedures. Arrangements to assure the quality of partners' provision are fit for purpose. Service level agreements are in place, requiring partners to conform where appropriate to Oakmere House's working practices, including its quality assurance procedures. However, these arrangements are not sufficiently formalised and brought together within one quality framework. For example, there are documents outlining the quality policy and strategy, but no summary overview document showing the operational detail of quality procedures, such as how evidence will be gathered, what procedures are to be carried out, and when and how they should be reported. Much of this information is contained within a variety of documents, but how they relate to each other and to the self-assessment process to form part of an overall quality improvement framework is not explicit. This does not help staff to understand the procedures fully, or to review their operation effectively.

34. Oakmere House's self-assessment process is comprehensive and consultative. The report draws on evidence from self-assessments carried out by training staff of their own area of delivery, and from employers' and learners' views. Partners' representatives and others reviewed the draft report through a specially convened committee. The report is critical and evaluative, and makes good use of the Common Inspection Framework to support judgements. The development plan arising from the self-assessment report covers weaknesses as well as consolidation of strengths and has been carefully monitored. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths in leadership and management and partly in quality improvement. However, Oakmere House has not identified the weakness in quality improvement found by inspectors. The provider's judgements on the area of learning are mostly accurate, but it has not identified the weakness in progress reviews.

35. Insufficient focus is placed on continuous improvement through the company's procedures for learning observation. The observation scheme for key learning processes is shifting the emphasis in quality arrangements from audit towards quality improvement. However, the observations do not systematically identify action for continuous improvement. Observers use a grid to identify and record the standard of teaching observed, but the target standard is satisfactory, and if this is achieved no action is identified to raise this further. In addition, the use of this recording instrument alone places too little emphasis on the attainment of the learners in the sessions observed.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	21	2
Entry to Employment	38	2

36. At the time of inspection, 59 learners were on preparation for life and work programmes. Of these, 39 were on E2E and 20 on Breakthrough programmes. Forty learners are men and three are from minority ethnic groups. Six learners are disabled and 45 have additional learning needs. Connexions personal advisers refer most learners to Oakmere House, although several refer themselves or are referred by other agencies such as the Youth Offending Team. E2E and Breakthrough learners attend for an average of 18 and 12 weeks and for a minimum of 16 and 12 hours a week, respectively. Many E2E learners attend for 20 to 25 hours a week. All learners have additional learning and/or social needs. Many learners face a range of disadvantages associated with poor schooling experience, physical and sexual abuse, offending, drugs, homelessness, bullying and teenage pregnancy.

37. The programme consists of three strands that cover skills for life, personal development, and employability including skills development. Skills for life is the government's strategy for training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. All learners complete an initial assessment to determine their starting points for literacy, numeracy, information technology and social skills. They participate in a two-week induction at the start of their programme. Learners can join the programme at any time of the year. All learners can access additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy levels. They can gain accreditation in literacy, numeracy and computer literacy and short qualifications in health and safety, first aid and basic food hygiene.

38. The programme also includes a range of accredited and non-accredited short courses in drug and alcohol awareness, healthy eating, money management, independent living skills, jobsearch and outdoor activities. The learners can attend a range of skill tasters in vocational areas such as painting and decorating, joinery, multi-skills, plastering, catering, hard landscaping, ICT, dance and business administration.

39. The tutors review each learner's progress every four weeks. Oakmere House works with 38 employers, which provide work experience to some of the learners in a range of occupations. Currently, seven learners are gaining work experience.

Employability training

Strengths

- good rates of positive outcomes and progression
- excellent literacy and numeracy support

- broad curriculum range
- very good personal support

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of learners in target-setting and action-planning during reviews

Achievement and standards

40. The rate of positive outcomes and progression is good. Learners make good progress on the programme. They get jobs and participate in further education and work-based learning. The rates of progression into a positive outcome such as employment, further education or training were 43 per cent, 58 per cent and 33 per cent for 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06, respectively. This is good in comparison to the local circumstances and regional and national averages for the period. In addition to this, the provider is still monitoring the progress of 29 per cent of the learners from 2004-05 and 50 per cent of the learners from 2005-06.

41. The standard of learners' work in literacy, numeracy, ICT and practical vocations is good. Inspectors saw many examples of well-produced portfolios with a rich range of evidence as well as products and displays. The learners are developing high levels of skills in all areas of learning, including practical training.

42. The rate of achievement of accredited qualifications is now good and have improved in the past three years from 21 per cent in 2003-04 to 42 per cent in 2004-05 and 60 per cent in 2005-06. Learners also gain accreditation for one or more short qualifications such as food hygiene, health and safety and first aid. These qualifications enhance learners' confidence and give them the chance to progress into employment, further education or apprenticeship programmes.

43. Learners' achievement of their personal objectives and of the targets on their individual learning plans is good and it is improving on a year-on-year basis. It is good in the current year. In the past three years, the rates of achievement of all targets on individual learning plans have been 50 per cent, 60 per cent and 75 per cent, respectively. Learners make satisfactory gains in self-confidence and learn to relate well to other learners. Many of them make friends very quickly. They learn very quickly what vocational area they want to work in and concentrate very heavily on developing appropriate skills, including English and mathematics. They develop satisfactory levels of attendance, punctuality and the discipline of getting to work on a regular basis. Most of the learners have gained a satisfactory degree of motivation. They engage with their learning well. Other positive outcomes include much-improved behaviour and making positive career choices. Retention rates are satisfactory.

44. Many learners do not sufficiently develop employability skills such as interview techniques and curriculum vitae writing skills early in their study. They do not regularly update their curriculum vitae, in many cases leaving it until late into their training. The standard of curriculum vitae is poor for many learners but good for learners on business administration courses.

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

Inspection:

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	121		231	100	292	100	70	100								
Progression ¹	28		135	58	125	43	23	33								
Achieved objectives ²	63		139	60	147	50	43	61								
Still in learning	38		1	0	0	0	0	100								

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

Other government funded																
Other government-funded provision	2005-06		2004-05													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	95		103	100												
Retained*	43		66	64												
Successfully completed	48		61	59												
Still in training	20		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

45. Literacy and numeracy support is excellent. The learners produce good standards of work in individual and small-group sessions. Tutors very carefully identify learners' needs through a broad range of effective initial assessment tools such as literacy and numeracy screening, diagnostic assessment, skills mapping and learning style diagnosis. All tutors are fully aware of the literacy and numeracy levels and needs of all learners. Tutors provide very effective support to learners, who develop skills to a good level. For example, all learners have improved their literacy and numeracy skills by at least one level and an increasing number of them take qualifications. They now have much-improved financial awareness on issues such as taxation, and working out VAT, averages, fractions, decimals and percentages. Joinery and multi-skills learners, for example, are now more capable of working out the area of a building for costing the materials. Their spelling has improved as well as their reading and writing. Many of the learners have made better progress than they did while at school and have developed greater confidence in their ability. Tutors have very carefully matched the literacy and numeracy skills required in each of the vocational skills to the learners' schemes of work and lesson plans. They give extensive, good-quality help to the learners in vocational lessons. Tutors have displayed posters of various tools and work processes on the walls to reinforce literacy. In addition, they have made extensive adjustments to the way they deliver their programme of vocational teaching by getting learners to think about practical application and mental arithmetic. Oakmere House has made satisfactory arrangements to meet the needs of the few learners who speak English as an additional language who expected to start in the near future. Current learners do not have such needs.

46. The programme offers a broad range of flexible activities and projects that meet

learners' needs well. The programme hours are flexible and each learner has an individual timetable that meets their interest and needs. This includes a good range of vocational tasters and work placements. Learners try out various skills and vocations before deciding which one to concentrate on. Teaching groups are small. All groups have eight or fewer learners. Learners look forward to learning during the outdoor activities such as wall climbing and dry-slope skiing. They enjoy input from visiting speakers on interesting and very relevant topics such as drugs and their effect on people. The centre is located in a very deprived ward of the city and is easily accessible to most learners. This broadens their experience and develops their interpersonal skills. Jobsearch is satisfactory but limited, and is mainly carried out by the work-placement officer.

47. Pastoral support is very good at all stages of the learners' journey on the programme. Oakmere House has established a four-strong dedicated learner services team. The team members give very effective and prompt support to learners on all personal matters, including some additional services such as free bus passes, help with opening bank accounts and payment of educational maintenance allowance if any difficulties occur. The provider has good links with a broad range of agencies to support the learners should they need it. Several of the agencies work collaboratively from the provider's premises on allotted days. Support to provide information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. A Connexions personal adviser works very closely with the staff and learners and guides them to appropriate provision. Counselling services are very effective and sensitive to the needs of the learners.

48. The teaching overall is satisfactory. Tutors plan their lessons well and deliver them appropriately. However, tutors dominate the sessions and talk for most of the time. They make insufficient use of learners' experiences within teaching and learning. Learners do not fully contribute to the discussions. Tutors give satisfactory feedback to learners on their progress and guidance on how they can improve. Initial assessment is good, and ongoing verbal assessment is satisfactory. The overall progress review process is satisfactory.

49. The tutors do not sufficiently involve learners in their progress reviews. Learners themselves do not suggest any improvements that they need to make to their rate of progress, attitude or behaviour. In many cases the learners do not take ownership of their learning and future. They are told what they need to do. Some of them have become too dependent on the tutors. For example, in reviews most of the action points are for the staff member and very few are for the learners. Learners do not fully prepare for the reviews. They do not always discuss the quality of their work with the reviewer. Learners need extensive help during their earlier reviews but the tutors do not subsequently reduce this level of intervention. Learners are not fully encouraged to take control of their learning and progress. Tutors do not measure how much progress the learners have made against their final positive outcome, but focus very heavily on details of the actions. Some learners are capable of making greater progress and achieving positive outcomes sooner. Some of the target-setting is weak. For example, the learners are aware of their current levels of skills but they do not agree a timetable in which they can achieve them. Learners work at their own pace and some make slow progress.

Leadership and management

50. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. They are supported well by the managers and work closely in a team. Communications are very good. Tutors enhance

their skills to improve the learners' experience. Managers use data effectively to monitor the learners' participation and achievement. They meet with other local E2E providers to share good practice and improve learners' experience. Quality improvement is effective and the standards have gone up. Managers observe teaching but do not give the tutors sufficient guidance as to how they could continuously improve teaching on an ongoing basis. The focus of observations is on tutors' input and not on the quality of learning. The self-assessment process is good. It involves all staff and also includes learners' views as well as data. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. It does not identify the weakness in reviews and target-setting. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Learning resources are good. Oakmere House offers a very large range of vocational skills and has very good numbers of staff to support learners. It manages the support for learners very well and celebrates their success comprehensively.

