

# INSPECTION REPORT

**riverside training**

**10 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
- **learnndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

### Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

## Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Grading

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

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

# INSPECTION REPORT

## riverside training

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. riverside training, formerly Howarth Hancorn, is a work-based learning provider privately owned and operated by the managing director with the help of a company secretary. The company has changed its name and moved since it was reinspected in November 2003, and it now operates from larger premises near the centre of Hereford. It offers training in business administration and law, leisure, travel and tourism, and retailing and commercial enterprise. There are 83 learners following courses in business administration and law, 15 in leisure, travel and tourism and 30 in retailing and commercial enterprise. Learners receive some off-the-job training at the company's own premises and are placed with local employers for on-the-job training and NVQ assessments. The training is funded through Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. The company employs seven training consultants, who are assessors. It is managed by a senior management group which comprises the managing director, the company secretary and a quality improvement manager. In addition, an office manager, an examinations officer and a trainee receptionist support the administration of government-funded programmes. Internal verification is carried out by the lead verifier supported by the managing company director. The company is accredited as an Investor in People. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

### Grade 1

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.** Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement are outstanding. The provision in leisure, travel and tourism is outstanding and that in business administration and law is good. Retailing and commercial enterprise was not inspected.

4. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** All staff are involved in the process, and learners' views are gained from feedback questionnaires and an annual satisfaction survey. Employers' views are obtained from an annual survey. The management information system is reliable and managers make good use of data to arrive at appropriate judgements about retention, achievement, completion and progression rates. The process is well established and the company produces an annual report. It celebrates its strengths and its development plans include appropriate measures to maintain the strengths and overcome the weaknesses identified. The report accurately identified most of the strengths found by the inspectors. It is very self-critical, and identified a number of weaknesses which the inspectors did not consider to be key weaknesses. Self-assessment grades were consistent with this degree of self-criticism and were one grade lower than those awarded at inspection in all but one area of learning. There were no significant omissions from the report. The strengths have a significant impact on the learners' experience and achievement. The weaknesses identified demonstrate the provider's commitment to continuous improvement.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to maintain the high**

## RIVERSIDE TRAINING

**quality of provision.** Following a previous inspection in 2002, at which its provision was found to be inadequate, the provider implemented a number of changes including a new quality assurance system. At reinspection in 2003, all areas of learning and elements of leadership and management were graded as good. The provider has continued to improve, and retention and achievement rates have been consistently high since then. Post-inspection action plans for the inspection and reinspection have been particularly successful, and none of the weaknesses then identified remain. The degree of self-criticism in self-assessment, and the commitment to improvement demonstrated in the development plans, further contribute to the capacity to make further improvements.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR RIVERSIDE TRAINING:

- maintain good links with employers
- maintain good support for learners
- continue to improve the standard of teaching and learning
- formalise the recording of complaints, incidents and issues

## GRADES

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

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

Leisure, travel and tourism			1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b><i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i></b>		<b><i>1</i></b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	15	1	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b><i>Administration</i></b>		<b><i>1</i></b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	28	1	
<b><i>Business management</i></b>		<b><i>2</i></b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	14	2	
<b><i>Customer service</i></b>		<b><i>2</i></b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	41	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Two of the three areas of learning offered by the provider were inspected. They were leisure, travel and tourism, and business administration and law. The third area, retail and commercial enterprise, was not inspected.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	17
Number of learners interviewed	33
Number of staff interviewed	19
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	23
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

7. **Retention rates are very good in sport, leisure and recreation and on apprenticeship frameworks in business administration and law.** In sport, leisure and recreation the retention rate increased from 65 per cent in 2001-02 to 89 per cent in 2003-04. In the same period, it rose from 57 to 74 per cent in customer service, and did not fall below 80 per cent in administration.

8. **Achievement rates are very good in sport, leisure and recreation, and good in business administration and law.** In sport, leisure and recreation, achievement rates improved from 65 per cent in 2001-02 to 89 per cent in 2003-04. In administration, the achievement rate for apprentices is consistently 80 per cent or above, and for advanced apprentices it is around 65 per cent. For apprentices in customer service, the achievement rate has been around 55 per cent.

9. There is **very good acquisition of additional work skills in business administration and law.** Many learners have attended short specialist courses relevant to their employers. Some have been promoted and others have been given additional responsibilities at work.

### The quality of provision

10. **Links with employers are very good.** Many of the employers have provided work placements for several years, and understand the programmes. All supervisors and line managers are familiar with the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks and can fully support the learners. Most of the learners are employed. Employers are involved in the selection and induction processes and contribute to the quarterly reviews which maintain learners' progress.

11. **Support for learners is good.** The staff provide very effective learning and pastoral

support and advice to all learners, and learners can contact them at any time. Learners benefit from the individual coaching that riverside training's staff provide in the workplace, and from the training offered at the training centre towards the technical certificate and key skills. There are good facilities at the training centre and learners have access to computers and internet facilities. Learners make good progress towards developing occupational skills and benefit from the individual attention and support provided by employers and by riverside training.

**12. For learners in sport and recreation, workplace facilities are outstanding.** Learners benefit from access to up-to-date, good-quality, and well-maintained equipment. The wide range of equipment available facilitates evidence gathering and also allows learners to gain skills and qualifications additional to those required by their frameworks.

### Leadership and management

**14. Programme management is good in sport and recreation.** Learners benefit from effective links with a wide range of sports and recreation companies and organisations that provide very good workplace experience. Many younger learners are unable to carry out the supervisory work needed to achieve a level 3 qualification. Managers at riverside training have designed an alternative progression route for them through the development of more specific skills and knowledge in exercise and fitness.

**15. The leadership of riverside training is particularly strong.** The senior management group share its vision of an expanding and improving organisation with the rest of the staff. The management style, whilst dynamic and enthusiastic, is also open and inclusive. Below the senior management group, the company has a flat organisational structure in which assessors and others are strongly encouraged to take on additional responsibilities.

**16. Networking is very effective.** Members of the senior management group are very active in a number of networks and forums for providers and employers in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The network of employers provides learners with good opportunities for employment or work placements. The provider has a reciprocal arrangement with a work-based learning provider in Somerset, with which it shares a common ethos. Senior managers from each organisation act as strategic advisers to the other, and the two providers exchange good practice, ideas and experiences.

**17. Staff development is good, and staff induction is very good.** During their three months' probation, new staff have an experienced colleague as mentor. Their training needs are assessed on appointment and reviewed at the end of their probationary period. This process is repeated at annual appraisals and six-monthly reviews. Individuals undergo training in order to further their professional development and to contribute to the providers' business objectives. Trainee assessors and internal verifiers are effectively monitored and assisted by experienced colleagues. Assessors take on additional responsibilities for other aspects of the business.

**18. There are very good arrangements to widen participation.** Staff have a very good understanding of individual learners' barriers to learning, and assessors provide excellent support to overcome these barriers. The provider promotes its training very well to learners from under-represented groups. Staff visit schools and attend careers evenings, and give talks for young male pupils about careers in business administration. They have



made particularly good links with a specialist school for students who have a range of learning difficulties.

19. **Developments in promoting equality of opportunity are good.** riverside training has recently appointed one of its assessors as equality and diversity co-ordinator. She has introduced equality of opportunity awareness sessions for learners at induction as well as for staff.

20. The provider is an active member of the regional training provider association. The association can lend its members useful sets of tools, both software and hardware, for use with learners who have disabilities. riverside training is well aware of how to access these resources if new learners need them.

21. The provider has a **well-designed and learner-centred quality assurance system**, which helps it to drive forward improvement. The quality manager is a member of the senior management group and has overall responsibility for quality issues. The quality system comprehensively identifies each stage of the learners' experience from recruitment through to exit and progress. The system also effectively documents the auditing and feedback procedures used to check that the learner-centred procedures are being followed by all staff.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- particularly strong leadership
- very effective networking
- good staff development
- very good arrangements to widen participation
- good development in promoting equality of opportunities
- well-designed, learner-centred quality assurance system

### **Weaknesses**

- no key weaknesses identified

## **Leisure, travel and tourism**

### ***Sport, leisure and recreation***

***Grade 1***

#### *Strengths*

- very good retention and achievement rates
- excellent support for learners
- outstanding facilities in the workplace
- very good links with employers
- good programme management

*Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

**Business administration and law**

***Administration***

***Grade 1***

*Strengths*

- particularly good retention and achievement rates for apprentices
- good achievement for advanced apprentices
- good acquisition of additional work skills
- good support for learners
- very good links with employers

*Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

***Business management***

***Grade 2***

*Strengths*

- very good retention rates for apprentices
- good achievement rates
- very good links with employers
- good acquisition of additional work skills
- good support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

***Customer service***

***Grade 2***

*Strengths*

- very good retention rates for apprentices
- good achievement rate
- good acquisition of additional work skills
- good support for learners
- very good links with employers

*Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT RIVERSIDE TRAINING:**

- 'my confidence has improved and so has my ability to deal with the public'
- 'assessors are stars'
- 'the regular meetings with the assessor'
- 'the support I get for my dyslexia'
- 'support for my childcare arrangements'
- 'being able to choose optional units'
- 'extra qualifications will help me to become a 'stunt man''
- 'key skills have helped me, big time'
- 'I can tell my assessor anything and contact them at any time'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK RIVERSIDE TRAINING COULD IMPROVE:**

- the amount of advance notice of workshops and tests

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 1**

#### Strengths

- particularly strong leadership
- very effective networking
- good staff development
- very good arrangements to widen participation
- good development in promoting equality of opportunities
- well-designed, learner-centred quality assurance system

#### Weaknesses

- no key weaknesses identified

22. The leadership of riverside training is particularly strong. The senior management group, comprising the managing director, company secretary and quality improvement manager, shares its vision of an expanding and improving organisation with the rest of the staff. The management style, while dynamic and enthusiastic, is also open and inclusive, and the minutes of senior management group meetings are available to all staff through the company's management information system. Below the senior management group, the company has a flat organisational structure in which assessors and others are strongly encouraged to develop additional responsibilities. The managing director has successfully led the company through a number of recent changes including its move to new, more prominent premises, and its renaming, rebranding and expansion. She and the other members of the senior management group are in constant informal contact with their staff. They also communicate with them regularly through a series of formal meetings, which include whole staff meetings, caseload meetings and assessment standardisation meetings. Senior managers actively promote the importance of the learners' experience and take a personal interest in each learner's progress and welfare.

23. Networking by riverside training's managers is very effective. Senior managers are very active in a number of local networks and forums for providers and businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The provider also has good links with a number of local schools and colleges. In several cases, the relationship with other organisations has been enhanced by riverside training providing additional training and assistance in business development. Staff have been seconded to local businesses, which has helped to maintain their own professional currency and their understanding of employers' and learners' needs. The network of employers provides learners with good employment or work-placement opportunities. Several employers use the provider as their main recruitment route for new employees. The provider has a reciprocal arrangement with a work-based learning provider in Somerset, with which it shares a common ethos. Senior managers from each organisation act as strategic advisers to the other, and the two providers exchange good practice, ideas and experiences. Both organisations see this as advantageous, and the geographical separation precludes any competition between them. Many local employers see riverside training as their provider of choice, and the company encourages them in this view by assisting with advice and training or recommending other appropriate

organisations. The close working relationship between provider and employers, facilitates the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The provider's networking activities have had a positive effect on the development of the sport and recreation sector in the area, providing direct progression opportunities for learners in the expanded businesses.

24. Staff development is good, and induction is very good. During their three-month probationary period, new staff have an experienced colleague as mentor. The mentoring continues informally after this. Training needs are assessed on appointment and reviewed following probation. This process is repeated at annual appraisal and six-monthly review. Individuals undergo training in order to further their professional development and to contribute to the providers' business objectives. Trainee assessors and internal verifiers are monitored effectively and assisted by experienced colleagues as they work towards qualified status. Trainee and newly appointed assessors are given graduated caseloads of learners, with numbers increasing in proportion to their ability and experience. Once established, the training consultants, who are all assessors, take on additional responsibilities. For example, one is responsible for equality and diversity, one for health and safety, another for co-ordinating internal verification and others for other aspects of off-the-job training. The provider also employs three apprentices on its own premises and has a history of subsequent employment both of former apprentices and of others it has trained. One former apprentice has gone on to become the training manager of another company in the area. All the provider's staff maintain a useful portfolio in which they keep their own job descriptions, development plans and training logs as well as the latest versions of all relevant policies and procedures. New members of staff find the portfolio invaluable.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 1**

25. There are very good arrangements to widen participation. Staff have a very good understanding of individual learners' barriers to training, and assessors provide excellent support to overcome these barriers. There are many examples of success. For example, a single parent was enabled to remain in training after being supported with travel and childcare arrangements, and a learner who had great difficulty with transport had flexible hours negotiated with her employer. Staff have developed very effective links with secondary schools, a local further education college and the local Connexions partnership. They promote riverside training very well to learners from under-represented groups. They visit schools, attend careers evenings, and organise talks with young male pupils about careers in business administration, encouraging and challenging them to consider the range of opportunities available away from stereotypical roles. They have made particularly good links with a specialist school for students who have a range of learning difficulties. Two students were fully supported by riverside training in a good-quality work placement in hospitality. The students, school and provider were all delighted when they achieved two NVQ units. There are plans to give more students opportunities to try out work in commercial settings.

26. Developments in promoting equality of opportunity are good. One of the assessors has been made the company's equality and diversity co-ordinator and is currently undergoing training to develop this role. The co-ordinator has already introduced equality of opportunity awareness sessions for learners at induction as well as for staff. Learners who have been on programme for some time have this awareness training built in to their off-the-job training. There are plans for an awareness raising session during a forthcoming employers' forum. Although there are few young people in the region from minority ethnic

backgrounds, an increasing number of people from minority ethnic groups are now coming to live and work in the county and the company has made plans to support those who may apply for training. One such young person has recently approached the provider, and staff have discussed with the relevant awarding body the support procedures that could be provided. Discussions have also taken place with the local college about the availability of courses in English as an additional language. Assessors routinely discuss equality of opportunity issues with learners during their fortnightly visits. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Where there have been allegations of bullying and harassment at work, riverside training is very quick to act and resolve problems successfully.

27. The provider is an active member of the regional training provider association. This has useful sets of disability tools, both software and hardware, that providers can use. Staff from riverside training are well aware of how to access these resources if they need to. New marketing materials promote the provider's commitment to equality of opportunity very clearly.

28. Policies and procedures relating to equality of opportunity, bullying and harassment and complaints are satisfactory. The provider has a detailed and up-to-date equality of opportunity action plan, and its three-year development plan contains precise targets for equality of opportunity, such as to increase participation by under-represented groups of learners. There is a useful disability statement both for employers and learners. Learners are made aware of the complaints procedure during induction. There is a formal complaints file which contains one complaint with a good record of the actions taken. Problems at work, for example, alleged bullying or harassment, are sometimes recorded in the equality of opportunity section of the assessor's visit notes, but not in detail. A record of the problem and the actions taken is placed in the learner's file but does not always contain sufficient detail about dates of actions taken. There is no standardised paperwork for recording incidents or issues.

29. The provider effectively monitors employers' equality of opportunities policies and procedures. A number of employers have adopted the provider's policies and procedures as their own.

30. The collation of data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disabilities is satisfactory. Managers are now starting to use this information more formally in their planning and are introducing it at various meetings. They recognise that this is still an area that needs to be improved. The newly appointed equality and diversity co-ordinator is planning to provide a summary of equality of opportunity data at quarterly strategic management group meetings.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 1**

31. The provider has a well-designed, effective and learner-centred quality improvement system. The quality manager is a member of the senior management group and has overall responsibility for quality issues. The quality improvement system comprehensively identifies each stage of the learners' experience from recruitment to exit and progress. The process for each stage is well documented and copies of the latest versions of the paperwork are kept by each member of staff in their own portfolio for ease of reference. In addition the quality improvement system and all policy documents are available through the company's management information system. The quality improvement system also effectively

documents the auditing and feedback procedures to be used to check that the procedures are being followed by all staff. The office manager carries out clerical audits of files and procedures to check that they are being completed at the required frequency and that the correct paperwork is being used. The quality manager conducts periodic qualitative audits to ensure that the content of documents is appropriate. A systematically planned series of staff observations ensures that the quality of teaching sessions, visits, reviews and inductions is maintained.

32. When the system was originally introduced in 2003, the quality manager systematically conducted a detailed audit of each of the processes to see how well the procedures were being followed. He produced an evaluative report, and the procedures were adjusted as required. At the end of the training year, he then produced a comprehensive summary report. This year the audit schedule has been adjusted to cover all the staff and all the procedures, with particular emphasis on more recently recruited members of staff. Additional staff have been trained as internal auditors.

33. The results of the auditing and monitoring procedures are used at regular caseload meetings, when individual assessors discuss their learners with the quality manager and the office manager. When there is any cause for concern over progress or other issues the provider invokes an 'amber tagging' process, which may involve additional visits, the tightening of targets or the provision of additional support.

34. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. An experienced, qualified internal verifier co-ordinates all internal verification including that bought in from an outside agency. The internal verification plan complements the other planned quality assurance arrangements. The provider is increasing the number of qualified assessors and verifiers in sport and recreation, and business administration in order to cope with planned increases in the number of learners. The frequency of internal verification is varied according to the experience and previous performance of the assessors. Internal verifiers give satisfactory formative written feedback to assessors to assist in their professional development.

35. Staff who have attended external training, reflectively record it in an innovative log what they have learnt and how they will apply it. At the end of off-the-job training sessions, the tutors reflect on how they might be improved.

36. Learners' feedback is obtained from end-of-session evaluation questionnaires and from an annual learner perception survey. The feedback is satisfactorily analysed and used to improve the provision. For example the 2004-05 survey revealed that learners had little knowledge of some elements of the framework. In response, the provider improved the induction programme and provided workshops to extend the knowledge of existing learners. A specialist agency conducts an annual survey of employers' views. The most recent survey showed high levels of satisfaction in most areas. Employers indicated a desire for more information about what the provider was offering and the scheduling of workshops. The provider has already implemented plans to improve the dissemination of this information to employers.

37. The surveys of learners and employers were used in the self-assessment process. Staff involvement in self-assessment is good. The latest self-assessment report was updated in September 2005, and identified most of the strengths found by inspectors. It was very self-critical, and identified a number of areas as key weaknesses, which the inspectors

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considered to be minor. The report also identified a number of other improvements needed, which demonstrate the provider's commitment to continuous improvement. The associated development plan gives satisfactory details of appropriate measures to maintain the strengths, overcome the weaknesses and make the other improvements needed.



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Leisure, travel and tourism

### Grade 1

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i></b>		<b><i>1</i></b>
Apprenticeships for young people	15	1

38. Learners are either full-time employees or in work placements with eight employers in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Many learners join the training programmes through Connexions. There are 15 learners following apprenticeships in sport and recreation. Twelve apprentices are taking NVQs at level 2 in operational services, and three are taking NVQs at level 2 in exercise and fitness. Learners complete a technical certificate, the key skills appropriate to the framework and two industry-specific qualifications. They have the opportunity to progress from NVQs at level 2 in sport and recreation to NVQs at level 3 in customer care, administration or management. The provision is managed by the managing director and the company secretary, supported by two internal verifiers and one assessor. A further assessor has been appointed to start work in December 2005. Off-the-job training is provided at riverside training's office and at some of the employers' premises.

### ***Sport, leisure and recreation***

### ***Grade 1***

#### *Strengths*

- very good retention and achievement rates
- excellent support for learners
- outstanding facilities in the workplace
- very good links with employers
- good programme management

#### *Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

### **Achievement and standards**

39. Learners' retention and achievement rates are very good. Between 2001-02 and 2003-04, the retention rate increased from 65 to 89 per cent. Similarly, achievement rates are very good and the proportion of learners successfully completing the NVQ improved steadily from 65 per cent in 2001-02 to 89 per cent in 2003-04. It is too early to judge the retention and achievement rates for subsequent years. Since the inspection in 2003, all the learners retained have achieved the framework. Learners' portfolios of evidence are good, and contain a broad range of evidence. All the learners' portfolios contain evidence for key skills qualifications. Learners achieve a good understanding of the background knowledge for sport and recreation, and significantly improve their knowledge of health and fitness. They also develop the very good personal and social skills required to work successfully with people on fitness programmes. An external verifier congratulated riverside training on their development of a workbook for the technical certificate. Employers commend

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learners for their commitment to their work and the high standards of their performance. For example, most learners are punctual and have very good records of attendance. Most achieve a good range of additional occupational qualifications that effectively enhance their employability and help increase their motivation. These include instructors and coaching qualifications, first aid at work, lifeguarding, and certificates in exercise and fitness.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		9		9	100	5	100								
Retained*	0		2		8	89	5	100								
Successfully completed	0		1		8	89	4	80								
Still in learning	5		8		1	11	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

40. Learners receive excellent support and very good on- and off-the-job training. They have a wide range of opportunities to collect evidence for their training programme and are provided with very good, up-to-date resources. Learners make good progress towards developing occupational skills, and benefit greatly from the individual attention and support employers and riverside training provide. For one learner, the support included flexible working arrangements and help with the cost of childcare. For another, travel costs were paid. One learner with dyslexia has more frequent visits from his assessor and has been given the opportunity to have evidence recorded digitally. This is appropriately referenced in the learner's portfolio for verification purposes.

41. Facilities in the workplace are outstanding. There is a wide range of good-quality fitness and gymnasium equipment, and changing rooms and ancillary equipment are also of particularly high quality. Learners make good progress through the qualification framework and the quality of their working environment improves their employability in the industry. It also contributes to their access to additional related qualifications.

42. Staff use appropriate initial assessment tools to identify learners' additional literacy, numeracy or language support needs. They provide informal support, and riverside training uses a local specialist agency to provide qualified support in literacy and numeracy if required. It also has contingency plans to use the local college of further education for language support. Currently no learners in sport and recreation have been identified as requiring this level of support.

43. There are particularly strong links and good communication between riverside training and the employers. Employers are involved in the selection and induction processes, and contribute to the quarterly progress reviews which maintain the learners' progress. Employers are given copies of the assessor's visit records to enable them to monitor and assist the learners' progress. Employers and riverside training work well to provide a good range of additional qualifications for the benefit of learners and the employers' other staff. The assessor has taken part in a work placement with one employer to update his industry

experience and strengthen the links between the organisations.

44. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. The assessor is occupationally competent, experienced, has good technical knowledge and skills, and holds relevant qualifications. Assessment in the workplace is satisfactory. Learners are assessed often enough, and the results of assessments are discussed in progress reviews and added to individual learning plans. Assessors complete detailed visit records and provide copies for the learner and employer. Learners' attendance and punctuality are generally good. Learning sessions are appropriately planned, with some good arrangements to meet learners' individual needs. Most learners are well motivated and very interested in their work. The assessor makes good use of modern information and communications technology (ICT) equipment to help present information and assist learners' understanding of background information. Learning materials are good. Training rooms are very comfortable, well lit and suitably equipped.

45. Learners receive good inductions from riverside training and their employers, and they clearly understand most aspects of their programme. They are well aware of the links between learning and the assessments required for the NVQ and key skills, and know that the same evidence can be used for both aspects of their course. Initial assessments are satisfactory. All learners are assessed to identify their levels of literacy and numeracy. The results are recorded on their individual learning plan, and the assessor plans and records any additional training they need.

46. Assessors visit learners once every two weeks to assess their progress against the targets set. In addition, they carry out regular formal progress reviews. Workplace supervisors are closely involved in the review process and in setting learners' targets and monitoring their progress. All assessors' visits to the workplace are fully recorded. Progress is monitored effectively by the office manager and the quality manager. If there is any cause for concern or a learner makes unexpectedly slow progress, they instigate an 'amber tagging' procedure. Under this, the assessor makes more frequent visits and may negotiate revised targets and corrective action plans with the learner.

47. Progress in key skills is satisfactory. Evidence for key skills qualifications is generated in the vocational area through project work and through workplace practices. Most learners are fully aware of the relevance of key skills, and two of those interviewed indicated that they found the acquisition of key skills had improved their performance in the workplace. After the last visit from an external verifier, the provider was granted 'self certification' status.

## **Leadership and management**

48. Many aspects of the programme are managed extremely well. In particular, learners benefit from the effective links with a wide range of sports and recreation companies that provide a well-balanced programme of on- and off-the-job training. To achieve a level 3 qualification, learners have to carry out a significant amount of supervisory work. The age range of the learners currently in training does not allow for this level of performance so riverside training has provided an alternative progression route through the development of more specific skills and knowledge in exercise and fitness. Staff are deployed very effectively and have access to good development opportunities. They receive information and support to help them achieve the skills required for their work, and are actively encouraged to use those skills for the benefit of the employers they work with. Staff from

## RIVERSIDE TRAINING

riverside training teach qualification courses for employers' staff and run fitness classes at employers' premises. They take part in work experience with employers to update their own industry skills. Internal communications are good. Monthly team and assessor meetings provide a suitable forum to exchange information and discuss learners' progress and development.

49. Internal verification of assessments is satisfactory. Most internal verification is conducted by an external consultant and is carried out at appropriate intervals. There is evidence of action plans from the verification process being followed up by assessors. Records of internal verification are held in a central file and copies are kept in the assessor's file. Because there is only one assessor in this area of learning, the external consultant facilitated genuine standardisation by arranging a joint standardisation meeting with another training company, for which he also does internal verification work.

50. Learners have a good understanding of the company's equal opportunities policy and their own rights and responsibilities in this area. Equality of opportunity is discussed with learners during assessors' visits, and their responses are recorded. Learners feel safe in the learning environment, and are confident that staff will deal promptly and appropriately with bullying or inappropriate behaviour.

51. Feedback from learners is effectively collected through questionnaires and an annual survey. The results are analysed and used in an action plan. The induction process for new learners has improved as a result of learners' feedback.

**Business administration and law****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	28	<b>1</b> 1
<b>Business management</b> Apprenticeships for young people	14	<b>2</b> 2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	41	<b>2</b> 2

52. There are 28 learners on business administration programmes and 41 on customer service programmes. Fifteen of these are advanced apprentices and 54 are apprentices. Of the 14 management learners, three are advanced apprentices and 11 are apprentices in team leading. Most learners are recruited through their employers or through Hereford Connexions. They work in a variety of public and private sector organisations around Hereford. Learners have an initial assessment and individual induction at the start of their programme. Most training takes place on the job, but learners attend riverside training's centre in Hereford to work on the technical certificate and key skills. Staff visit learners at work to carry out training, progress reviews, action-planning for evidence collection, and assessment. Internal verifiers visit learners once a month. Most staff have appropriate assessor qualifications and all have commercial experience relevant to the occupational areas. There are two tutors for off-the-job training.

**Administration****Grade 1***Strengths*

- particularly good retention and achievement rates for apprentices
- good achievement for advanced apprentices
- good acquisition of additional work skills
- good support for learners
- very good links with employers

*Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

**Achievement and standards**

53. The retention and achievement rates for apprentices in administration are particularly good. The retention rate was 80 per cent or higher in 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04. The achievement rate was 100 per cent in 2001-02 and 80 per cent in 2002-03. In 2003-04, it is 50 per cent so far, but a further 30 per cent of learners are still in learning.

54. The achievement rate for advanced apprenticeships is good at 60 per cent in 2002-03 and 67 per cent in 2003-04. However, the number of learners is so small that one learner can have a disproportional effect on the statistics.

55. Learners are making very good progress and there is a good standard of work in their portfolios. Learners have very good communication skills, and they have developed their ICT and related administrative skills. During their programme, learners gain confidence and become more professional in their dealings with the public.

56. Learners acquire very good additional work skills. Employers provide very good training and development for learners in the workplace, and many learners have attended short specialist courses, specific to their organisations. Some learners have been given additional responsibilities and others have been promoted in their employment.

57. Many learners progress from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. Several have been able to progress between administration and customer service qualifications when their job roles have changed.

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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		6		5	100										
Retained*	0		4		3	60										
Successfully completed	0		4		3	60										
Still in learning	2		2		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							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		18		10		5	100	2	100						
Retained*	0		3		8		4	80	2	100						
Successfully completed	0		1		5		4	80	2	100						
Still in learning	6		15		3		0	0	0	0						

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

### The quality of provision

58. There is very good support for learners. Staff provide very effective learning and pastoral support to all learners and learners can contact them for advice at any time. Learners benefit from the individual coaching that riverside training's staff provide in the workplace, and also from the off-the-job training for the technical certificate and key skills. Employers are actively involved in learners' progress reviews and most support off-the-job training. There are good facilities at the training centre and learners have access to computers and internet facilities. Most learners' jobs include a good range of tasks to ensure their skills are developed. Learners can go into the provider's training rooms after work to access computers and individual support.

59. The arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. All learners are given an initial assessment as part of their induction and additional individual support is provided where required. The informal coaching given during assessment sessions is not recorded. Some learners are receiving additional support in numeracy and communications.

60. There are very good links with employers. Many of the employers have provided work placements for several years, and understand the programmes. All supervisors and line managers are familiar with the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks and can fully support the learners. Most of the learners on the programmes are employed. There is a very effective selection process organised between the employers, Connexions and riverside training. Employers can select from four or five applicants, and most learners are placed successfully with employers who match their individual employment needs.

61. Supervisors usually work closely with staff from riverside training to offer opportunities for learners to practise their skills and collect evidence for their qualification. The provider works well with many of the employers to provide specialist short informal training courses on the employers' premises. Communication between the employers and the assessors is very good.

62. Assessment is satisfactory. For most learners assessment takes place every two weeks. Assessors are well organised, and use their time effectively and efficiently. Learners' progress is monitored well through regular reviews, monitoring documents and feedback from employers. Assessors set learners clear timebound targets, and follow up previously agreed action points. They give learners good written feedback. Assessors use a wide range of appropriate assessment methods, and most learners have a comprehensive range of evidence in their portfolios. Some professional discussions are very brief and poorly recorded.

63. There is a good two-week induction programme for trainee assessors. They are supported well by a mentor and their internal verifier and they have good opportunities to watch qualified and experienced assessors during their first three months in post.

64. The internal verification process focuses on feedback to assessors about the choice and appropriateness of assessment methods. Internal verification is being used effectively to train assessors and ensure standardisation and improvements to assessment practice. Internal verification is planned to sample learners' portfolio evidence every six months. The internal verifier is alerted to any potential assessment problems early in the programme through the caseload review and monthly assessor meetings.

65. The training rooms are pleasant and well equipped. A few recommended business administration learning resources are available to learners.

### **Leadership and management**

66. The changes in personnel over the past two years have not affected the learners. Managers ensure that staff have the necessary skills and experience to meet learners' needs. The strong links with employers ensure good work placements for the learners. Communication between managers and staff is effective. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and work well together. The self-assessment process is well established and staff work closely together to identify key strengths and weaknesses.



67. Strategies for internal verification and assessment are good. Staff development for business administration assessors is good. One unqualified assessor and one internal verifier are working towards the necessary qualifications.

68. Staff have a good awareness of the equality of opportunity and diversity policy. It is effectively communicated to learners, employers and staff. As well as being part of the induction programme it is covered during a session in the technical and key skill workshops. As part of a widening participation project supported by the LSC, riverside training is offering a level 1 business administration course to a group of school students.

### ***Business management***

### ***Grade 2***

#### ***Strengths***

- very good retention rates for apprentices
- good achievement rates
- very good links with employers
- good acquisition of additional work skills
- good support for learners

#### ***Weaknesses***

- no key weaknesses identified

### **Achievement and standards**

69. The retention rate for apprentices is very good. The number of learners on the programme is small, but very few leave before the end.

70. Achievement rates are good in business management. In 2003-04 one learner started the programme, and one achieved the qualification. There were no learners in previous years and it is too early to judge subsequent years. The achievement rate for advanced apprentices was 62 per cent in 2001-02 and 67 per cent in 2003-04, but it fell to 29 per cent in 2002-03.

71. Learners are making very good progress and the work in their portfolios is good. Learners have very good communication skills, and they have developed their ICT and administrative skills. During their programme, they gain confidence and become more professional in their dealings with the public.

72. Learners acquire very good additional work skills. Employers provide very good training and development for learners in the workplace, and many learners have attended short specialist courses specific to their organisations. Some learners have been given additional responsibilities and others have been promoted in their employment.



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	1	100	6		14	100	8	100								
Retained*	0	0	4		8	57	6	75								
Successfully completed	0	0	4		4	29	5	62								
Still in learning	0	0	2		1	7	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									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		12		1	100	0	100								
Retained*	0		2		1	100	0	100								
Successfully completed	0		2		1	100	0	100								
Still in learning	2		9		0	0	0	100								

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

## The quality of provision

73. There is good support for learners. Staff provide very effective learning and pastoral support to all learners and learners can contact them for advice at any time. Learners benefit from the individual coaching that staff provide in the workplace and also from the off-the-job training for the technical certificate and key skills. Employers are actively involved in learners' progress reviews and most support off-the-job training. There are good facilities at the training centre and learners have access to computers and internet facilities. Most learners' jobs include a good range of tasks to ensure their skills are developed. Learners can go into the provider's training rooms after work to access computers and individual support.

74. The arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. All learners have an initial assessment as part of their induction, and are given additional individual support where required. The informal coaching given during assessment sessions is not recorded. Some learners are receiving additional support in numeracy and communications.

75. There are very good links with employers. Many of the employers have provided work placements for several years, and understand the programmes. All supervisors and line managers are familiar with the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks and can fully support the learners. Most of the learners are employed. There is a very effective selection process, and most learners are placed successfully with employers who match their individual employment needs. Employers can select from four or five applicants.

76. Supervisors usually work closely with the provider to offer opportunities for learners to

practise their skills and collect evidence for their qualification. The provider works well with many of the employers to provide specialist short informal training courses on the employers' premises. In customer service there has been additional training in telephone techniques for 15 telesales personnel at a travel company, and customer care training for 45 school staff in Hereford. Communication between the employers and the assessors is very good.

77. Assessment is satisfactory. For most learners assessment takes place every two weeks. Assessors are well organised, and use their time effectively and efficiently. Learners' progress is monitored well using reviews, monitoring documents and feedback from employers. Most assessors set clear targets and follow up on previously agreed action points. They give learners specific timebound tasks to complete, and provide them with good written feedback. However, some review documents do not make it clear what tasks the learner has to complete, and some contain actions that are not measurable. Assessors use a wide range of appropriate assessment methods, and learners' portfolios contain a comprehensive range of evidence. Some professional discussions are very brief and are poorly recorded. In some observed assessment reports there is little evaluation of learners' competence.

78. There is a good two-week induction programme for trainee assessors. They are supported well by a mentor and their internal verifier, and they have good opportunities to watch qualified and experienced assessors during their first three months in post.

79. The internal verification process focuses on feedback to assessors about the appropriateness of their assessment methods. Internal verification is being used effectively to train and develop assessors, ensure standardisation, and make improvements to assessment practice. Internal verification is planned to sample learners' portfolio evidence every six months. Some learners' portfolios are only sampled once near the end of their programmes. The internal verifier is alerted to any potential assessment problems early in the programme through the caseload review and the monthly assessor meetings. There is not enough internal verification of assessments carried out at the workplace.

80. riverside training has pleasant and well-equipped training rooms, and learners have access to a small number of recommended business administration learning resources.

### **Leadership and management**

81. The changes in personnel during the past two years have not affected the learners. Managers ensure that staff have the necessary skills and experience to meet learners' needs. The strong links with employers ensure that there are good work placements for the learners. Communication between managers and staff is effective. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and work well together. The self-assessment process is well established and staff work closely together to identify key strengths and weaknesses. Strategies for verification and assessment are good.

82. Staff have a good awareness of the equality of opportunity and diversity policy, and it is effectively communicated to learners and employers. As well as being part of the induction programme, it is covered during a session in the technical and key skill workshops.

**Customer service****Grade 2***Strengths*

- very good retention rates for apprentices
- good achievement rate
- good acquisition of additional work skills
- good support for learners
- very good links with employers

*Weaknesses*

- no key weaknesses identified

**Achievement and standards**

83. The retention rate for apprentices is very good. It rose from 57 per cent in 2001-02 to 74 per cent in 2003-04. All the learners who started in 2005-06, and 91 per cent of those who started in 2004-05, are still in learning.

84. The achievement rate for apprentices in customer service is good at 57 per cent in 2001-02 and 54 per cent in 2002-03. The achievement rate for advanced apprentices dipped from 48 per cent in 2001-02 to 38 per cent in 2002-03.

85. Learners are making very good progress and there is a good standard of work in their portfolios. Learners have very good communication skills, and they have developed their ICT and administrative skills. During their programme, learners gain confidence and become more professional in their dealings with the public.

86. Learners acquire very good additional work skills. Employers provide very good training and development for learners in the workplace, and many learners have attended short specialist courses, specific to their organisations. Some learners have been given additional responsibilities and others have been promoted in their employment.

87. Many learners progress from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. Several have been able to progress between administration and customer service when their job roles have changed.

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>Advanced apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		13		47	100	58	100								
Retained*	0		6		22	47	39	67								
Successfully completed	0		5		18	38	28	48								
Still in learning	5		4		1	2	1	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	3		31		19	100	26	100	7	100						
Retained*	0		11		14	74	18	69	4	57						
Successfully completed	0		7		7	37	14	54	4	57						
Still in learning	3		21		6	32	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

88. There is good support for learners. Staff provide very effective learning and pastoral support to all learners and learners can contact them for advice at any time. Learners benefit from the individual coaching that riverside training's staff provide in the workplace, and also from the off-the-job training for the technical certificate and key skills. Employers are actively involved in progress reviews and most support off-the-job training. There are good facilities at the training centre and learners have access to computers and internet facilities. Most learners' jobs include a good range of tasks to ensure their skills are developed. Learners can go into the provider's training rooms after work to access computers and to get individual support.

89. The arrangements to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are satisfactory. All learners are given an initial assessment as part of their induction, and receive additional individual support when they need it. The informal coaching during assessment sessions is not recorded. Some learners are receiving additional support in numeracy and communications.

90. There are very good links with employers. Many of the employers have provided work placements for several years, and understand the programmes. All supervisors and line managers are familiar with the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks and can fully support the learners. Most of the learners are employed. There is a very effective selection process organised between the employers, Connexions and riverside training. Employers can select from four or five applicants, and most learners are placed successfully with employers who match their individual employment needs.

91. Supervisors usually work closely with staff from riverside training to offer learners opportunities to practise their skills and collect evidence for the qualification. The provider works well with many of the employers to provide specialist short informal training courses on the employers' premises. Additional training in customer service has included telephone techniques for 15 telesales personnel at a travel company, and customer care training for 45 staff at a local school as part of an in-service training day. Communication between the employers and the assessors is very good.

92. Assessment is satisfactory. For most learners, assessment takes place every two weeks. Assessors are well organised, and use their time effectively and efficiently. Learners progress is monitored well through reviews, monitoring documents and feedback from employers. Most assessors set learners clear, timebound targets and follow up previously

agreed action points. They give learners good written feedback. However, in some cases it is not clear what tasks the learner has to complete and some of the actions are not measurable. Assessors use a wide range of appropriate assessment methods, and most learners have a comprehensive range of evidence in their portfolios. Some professional discussions are very brief and poorly recorded. In the reports of some observed assessments, there is little evaluation of the competence demonstrated by learners.

93. There is a good two-week induction programme for trainee assessors. They are supported well by a mentor and their internal verifier, and for the first three months they are in post, have good opportunities to watch qualified and experienced assessors.

94. The internal verification process focuses on feedback to assessors about the choice and appropriateness of assessment methods. Managers are using internal verification effectively to train and develop assessors to ensure standardisation and improvements in assessment practice. Internal verification is planned to sample learners' portfolio evidence every six months. Some learners' portfolios are only sampled once near the end of their programmes. The process is not allowing learners' work to be reviewed at an early stage before decisions have been made. The internal verifier is alerted of any potential assessment problems early in the programme through the caseload review and monthly assessor meetings. There is too little internal verification of assessments carried out in the workplace.

### **Leadership and management**

95. There have been some changes in personnel during the past two years but they have not affected the learners. Managers ensure that staff have the necessary skills and experience to meet learners' needs. The strong links with employers ensure good work placements for the learners. Communication between managers and staff is effective. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and work well together. The self-assessment process is well established and staff work closely together to identify key strengths and weaknesses.

96. Strategies for assessment and internal verification are good. Staff development for business administration and customer service assessors is good. One assessor and one verifier are still unqualified, but they are working towards the necessary qualifications.

97. Staff have a good awareness of riverside training's equality of opportunity and diversity policy. One customer service assessor has been appointed to co-ordinate the policy. It is effectively communicated to learners, employers and staff. As well as being on the induction programme, it is the subject of a session in the technical and key skill workshops.

