

INSPECTION REPORT

Way to Work

09 December 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
- **learn**direct 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*

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Way to Work

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Way to Work is a not-for-profit recruiting and training organisation. It was established in 1983, and operates as part of the community education division of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (the borough). It specialises in assisting young people into employment in Richmond and the surrounding London boroughs. It provides a full recruitment service and ongoing support for learners while they are in employment. It also manages and quality assures the complex partnership arrangements between its supplier partners and employers. All training and assessment is provided by its supplier partners, which are subcontractors to Way to Work. The subcontractors are Capital Business Skills, Weir Training, Joint Assessment Centre for Childcare and Education (JACE), BPP Professional Education, Acton Training Centre and Metis Training.

2. Way to Work has six staff, including the manager, who also manages the Richmond Education and Business Partnership. It contracts with London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in business administration, accounting, customer service, early years care, and information and communications technology (ICT). Nearly 85 per cent of learners follow programmes in the first three areas. Learners on the accounting programme are predominantly adults and are already employed.

3. Most learners come from the borough and neighbouring London boroughs. Service industries are the largest employment sector across southwest London. In the borough, nearly 90 per cent of adult employment is in service industries. Unemployment in the borough is the lowest in London at 1.8 per cent, compared with the Greater London average of 4.5 per cent. In 2004, 55 per cent of school leavers in the borough gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, which is slightly above the national average. However, many of Way to Work's learners have not achieved any GCSE passes at grade C or above. The proportion of the local population in the borough from minority ethnic groups is 9 per cent and the proportion in the local travel to work area is 15 per cent. Twenty-nine per cent of Way to Work's learners are from minority ethnic groups.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity. The arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Provision is good in business administration and law but is inadequate in health, public services and care.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Self-assessment is a well-established and well-planned part of the quality improvement arrangements. The process of self-assessment is inclusive, with systematic use of questionnaires and meetings to collect feedback from all stakeholders. Findings are thoroughly discussed with them. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and detailed

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and its findings are used by Way to Work to plan improvements. Overall, the report is accurate in its assessments, although it underestimates the impact of some weaknesses.

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

Way to Work fully understands its weaknesses. Good arrangements and structures for quality improvement have brought about improvements in the quality of provision in business administration and law and in equality of opportunity. Managers and staff are realistic about what needs to be done, as part of their overall improvement plans, to improve the quality of provision in health, public services and care.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR WAY TO WORK:

- improve the quality of provision in early years care and education
- further improve the quality assurance overview of supplier partners for early years care and education
- further improve the delivery of key skills, especially on accounting programmes

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		3

Health, public services and care			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Early years		4	
Apprenticeships for young people	34	4	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Accounting and finance			
Apprenticeships for young people	101	2	
Administration			
Apprenticeships for young people	52	2	
Business management			
Apprenticeships for young people	1	2	
Customer service			
Apprenticeships for young people	15	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection reported on and graded Way to Work's provision in early years care, business administration, accounting and customer service. There were too few learners in ICT to report on and grade.

8. All subcontractors have their own contracts with the LSC, with the exception of BPP Professional Education. For this reason, inspectors did not visit supplier partners, except BPP Professional Education, or employers, and did not observe any teaching, learning or assessment activities.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	4
Number of learners interviewed	10
Number of staff interviewed	7
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of subcontractors interviewed	6
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **In business, accounting and customer service, retention and achievement are good** for many learners and have improved since the previous inspection. For example, in business administration, the completion of apprenticeship frameworks has improved from 40 per cent in 2001-02, to 71 per cent in 2003-04. Completion of frameworks in accounting are particularly good in recent years. In customer service, the proportion of apprentices who complete the framework has increased from 39 per cent in 2001-02 to 75 per cent in 2003-04.

10. **In business, accounting and customer service, learners make good progress.** They develop at least satisfactory vocational skills at work. In business administration, employers note the increasingly valuable contribution at work that learners make as they progress with their programmes. Many learners progress from the apprenticeship to the advanced apprenticeship.

11. **In early years care and education, completion of frameworks remains low,** in spite of some improvement since the previous inspection. On the apprenticeship programme there is most improvement, from 5 per cent in 2002-03 to 20 per cent in 2003-04, with just under a third of starters still in learning. However, for advanced apprentices, only 8 per cent of the 2003-04 starters have completed the framework. Retention rates for apprentices are satisfactory, but they are unsatisfactory for advanced apprentices. Learners

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achieve good standards of work.

The quality of provision

12. In all areas of learning, learners receive very good support and guidance. All stakeholders work closely together to provide effective initial advice and guidance and a high level of ongoing support. Recruitment is very well managed and learners are well prepared for their apprenticeship programmes. Initial testing to identify additional support needs is thorough. Learners who experience difficulties in the workplace or who are identified as making slow progress are offered higher levels of support.

13. In business, accounting and customer service, good training for learners is significantly aided by the very productive working relationships between Way to Work and employers. Employers are very much at the centre of helping to design programmes, and also review, assess and monitor the progress of learners. They match work tasks to training aims. In early years care and education, employers are well supported by Way to Work and contribute well to learners' overall programmes.

14. Accommodation and teaching resources for accounting are of a high standard, with good, well-designed computer suites. Other resources, including staffing, are at least satisfactory, with good and responsive staff development.

15. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory in all areas, with some particularly successful assessment practice for those learners using an electronic portfolio for their national vocational qualification (NVQ) programme. In business, accounting and customer service, learners have a good understanding of how their work and progress are assessed and the timetable for the completion of their programme. In customer service and early years care and education, many individual learning plans are only partially completed and do not include essential information to set targets and measure progress.

16. Key skills have not been appropriately integrated with the vocational work of accounting learners. Suppliers and Way to Work have now agreed a new strategy to implement key skills in early 2006 and staff development is in place to facilitate this.

Leadership and management

17. Strategic leadership and management are good. Way to Work objectives are complementary to those of the borough's community education division. There is a clear understanding by Way to Work staff of the strategic aims and objectives of the division and a willingness to make a significant contribution to the borough's strategy for 14-19 education.

18. Way to Work works very effectively in collaboration with external partners. Extensive external partnerships increase the numbers in apprenticeship training and the quality of training. Way to Work attaches great importance on its link work with local schools and employers and works diligently with the education and business partnership to promote and support projects for school pupils. They also work closely with employers, within and outside the borough, to advise and guide in helping them meet the needs of young people.

19. Internal and external communications are particularly good. There is a good range

of highly valued meetings with suppliers, employers and learners and external partners. Way to Work has a well-designed and informative internet website. Staff frequently discuss matters and exchange views and ideas and pass on information. Formal team meetings are supplemented with staff away days to review performance and revise procedures.

20. Way to Work is well managed and in business, accounting and law, effective leadership has improved provision. Operational management of suppliers is effective and staff have gained the respect and co-operation of suppliers' staff and of employers. Data systems are improving and data is used routinely to provide adequate information for quarterly reports on performance against targets. However, in some cases, achievement data is not readily accessible. Arrangements to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations are satisfactory.

21. The management of some key issues in early years care has been insufficiently effective. Although decisions to engage with new suppliers have brought improvement, achievement remains low and arrangements to ensure the full integration of key skills into the vocational training have not been put in place.

22. Way to Work has an organisational culture which greatly values equality and diversity and integrates these into the daily support and guidance of all learners. Since the previous inspection, Way to Work has successfully implemented new procedures to improve reinforcement of equality of opportunity and health and safety in learners' workplaces. It has also sought to raise learners' and employers' awareness of equality of opportunity. Way to Work staff receive training in equality and diversity and feel more aware and able to discuss these issues with suppliers and employers.

23. Arrangements to promote access into employment and training are particularly good. A high level of support is given to individual learners. Staff give considerable time and care to learners' personal and learning needs in order to sustain their employment and training.

24. Systems for the collection, analysis and use of equality and diversity data have improved since the previous inspection. Data is routinely compared with local equality and diversity profiles, in terms of ethnicity and disability.

25. Arrangements to help improve the quality of provision are good. There is a clear strategic and organisational focus on quality improvement. There are systematic reviews with implementation of effective monitoring of suppliers and routine target-setting as part of quality assurance. Since the previous inspection the performance in business administration and accounting has improved considerably. Retention, achievement and assessment have improved and aspects of equality of opportunity have been reinforced.

26. Staff training meets professional and corporate needs. There are observations of assessors and tutors, but observations have not been carried out on customer care assessments. Staff observations are part of the robust appraisal system.

27. A well-established system keeps staff informed of learners' assessments and enables close monitoring of their progress.

28. Way to Work does not evaluate verifiers' sampling schemes, nor does it routinely

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scrutinise suppliers' external verifier reports. Recent external verifier reports indicate that the assessment and verification arrangements of the suppliers meet the requirements of the awarding bodies.

29. Self-assessment is incorporated into the quality improvement arrangements as a continuous annual process. A wide range of evidence is used and all staff and stakeholders are involved and informed. The report is comprehensive and detailed. Overall, the report is accurate in its assessments, although it underestimates some of the weaknesses.

30. The development plans are insufficiently clear, as is the evaluation process. Quality improvement is guided by the annual quality improvement plan, but cross-referencing to aims in the three-year plans is weak. The monitoring and recording of progress across the various plans is incomplete and the documents are insufficiently coherent.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic leadership and management
- very effective collaborative working with external partners
- good leadership and systems to improve quality of provision
- particularly good internal and external communications
- particularly good arrangements to promote access into employment and training

Weaknesses

- insufficiently effective management response to issues with early years care provision
- insufficiently clear development planning and progress evaluation

Health, public services and care

Early years

Grade 4

Strengths

- very good support for individual learners
- good support for employers

Weaknesses

- poor achievement by apprentices
- insufficient use of information to ensure improvements in the quality of provision

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates for most learners
- good progression

- very productive working relationships with employers
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed arrangements for key skills in accounting
- insufficient monitoring of assessment standards

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WAY TO WORK:

- the friendly and helpful, but demanding, staff
- the way it works closely with supplier partners and employers to help learners
- 'it is always interested in what you do'
- the help it gives in finding and keeping jobs

WHAT LEARNERS THINK WAY TO WORK COULD IMPROVE:

- no improvements identified

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategic leadership and management
- very effective collaborative working with external partners
- good leadership and systems to improve quality of provision
- particularly good internal and external communications
- particularly good arrangements to promote access into employment and training

Weaknesses

- insufficiently effective management response to issues with early years care provision
- insufficiently clear development planning and progress evaluation

31. Strategic leadership and management are good. Way to Work's objectives are complementary to those of the borough's community education division. There is a clear understanding of the strategic aims and objectives of the division and a willingness to make a significant contribution to the borough's strategy for 14-19 education. The senior manager for lifelong learning at the local education authority has direct responsibility for Way to Work and has established good working relationships with the Way to Work manager and staff. Regular attendance at directorate meetings ensures that Way to Work's activities and progress against objectives are effectively reviewed.

32. Way to Work works very effectively with external partners. Extensive external partnerships increase the numbers in apprenticeship training, to meet the employment needs of the borough. Way to Work attaches great importance on its link work with local schools and employers and works diligently with the Richmond Education Business Partnership, to promote and support projects for school pupils. Way to Work staff support link projects to place year 10 and year 11 pupils into work experience, especially in cases where pupils are failing at school. They also work closely with employers, within and outside the borough, to advise and help them meet the needs of young people.

33. Internal and external communications are particularly good. There is a good range of scheduled meetings with suppliers, employers and learners and external partners, to strengthen partnerships and to provide a forum for stakeholders' views. The meetings are valued by all parties. However, a few employers are unaware of the meetings. Way to Work has a well-designed and informative internet website. There is good internal communication. Team members frequently discuss matters and exchange views and ideas and pass on information. Formal team meetings are supplemented with staff away days to review performance and revise procedures. Minutes of meetings and news bulletins are routinely circulated to keep staff fully informed.

34. Way to Work is well managed. Staff have a good understanding of each other's roles and they work cohesively and with mutual support. Operational management of suppliers

is effective and staff have gained the respect and co-operation of suppliers' staff and of employers, all of whom speak highly of their good working relationships with Way to Work. Data systems are improving, to provide complete and fully analysed data to help monitor performance and guide strategies for improvement. Data is used routinely to provide adequate information for quarterly reports on performance against targets, although in some cases, achievement data is not readily accessible. Arrangements to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations are satisfactory.

35. The management of some key issues in early years care has been insufficiently effective. Although decisions to engage with new suppliers has brought improvement, achievement remains low. The arrangements to ensure the full integration of key skills into the vocational training have not been put in place.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

36. Way to Work has an organisational culture which values equality and diversity and they are an integral part of learners' daily support and guidance. In all aspects of its work, including recruitment and selection, it aims to comply with the equality and diversity policy of the borough. Way to Work has created an environment in which learners and staff are valued and one in which they can expect to be treated appropriately.

37. Arrangements to promote access into employment and training are particularly good. A high level of support is given to individual learners. Staff take time and care to deal with learners' personal and learning needs to sustain their employment and training. Support for learners who have a medical problem is very good, with the provision of an occupational health assessment, and after-care by doctors. Assessments are thorough for those with additional learning needs. Very detailed evaluative reports are prepared which contain recommendations for learning support, including key skills.

38. Since the previous inspection, Way to Work has implemented new procedures to improve the reinforcement of equality of opportunity and health and safety in the workplace. It has also sought to raise learners' and employers' awareness of equality of opportunity. Equality and diversity are discussed with learners during their initial visit to an employer and further discussed as part of the induction programme and the reviews. Learners are fully aware of the grievance and complaints procedures. However, the paperwork to support this is not routine and confirmation of learners' satisfaction is largely through informal feedback.

39. Staff are trained in equality and diversity and are now more aware and able to discuss these issues with suppliers and employers. Equality and diversity is now a standing agenda item at staff meetings and at meetings with suppliers and employers. Questionnaires are routinely used to monitor and test employers' and suppliers' arrangements for equality of opportunity, including a knowledge assignment in supplier questionnaires. The suppliers' contract and the assessors' handbook do not contain explicit requirements for their staff to comply with legislation for equality and diversity, but there is no evidence of suppliers not meeting their obligations.

40. Way to Work uses the borough's policies and procedures for equality of opportunity, but recognises that they are not written for the context in which Way to Work operates. It has its own annual equality and diversity development plan which is still being implemented. Actions include improving access to advice and guidance, especially for

young people with a disability. As part of the plan, an information leaflet called 'equality and diversity explained' has been produced. The leaflet is aimed at young people and gives information on a range of issues and includes essential contact information in English and in seven other languages, to represent the main minority ethnic groups in the borough. An information booklet which is produced for employers includes contact details in the main languages of minority ethnic groups.

41. Systems for the collection, analysis and use of equality and diversity data have improved since the previous inspection. Data is routinely compared with local equality and diversity profiles, in terms of ethnicity and disability. Way to Work's recruitment from minority ethnic groups accounts for 29 per cent of its learners. Particular effort is taken to encourage applications from traditionally under-represented groups, such as young men into early years care.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

42. The leadership and systems are good and help bring about quality improvement. There is a clear strategic and organisational focus on quality improvement. Systematic reviews are carried out and the monitoring of suppliers and routine target-setting has become more effective. Way to Work has also revised the format of the quarterly reviews after learners identified that they were repetitive and of little value. As part of their strategy of managing improved performance, Way to Work provides suppliers and employers with support and guidance. This includes the effective use of an external consultant to evaluate the quality of training services and to make recommendations for improvement to suppliers. Since the previous inspection the performance in business administration and accounting has improved considerably. Achievements, retention and assessment have improved and aspects of equality of opportunity have been reinforced. So far, there is insufficient quality improvement in early years provision.

43. Staff training is good and meets individual and corporate needs. Consultants evaluate the assessors' and tutors' performance through a programme of observations of training. Written feedback is given with recommendations for staff development. Observations have not included customer care assessments to date. Staff observations are part of the robust appraisal system.

44. A well-established system is in place to keep staff informed of learners' assessments and progress, although this has not always been effective in early years care. Way to Work staff are quick to respond to problems and implement effective interventions to support learners and assessors.

45. Responsibility for the quality assurance of assessment practices lies with the internal verifiers of the supplier partners. Way to Work does not evaluate verifiers' sampling schemes nor does it routinely scrutinise suppliers' external verifier reports. Recent external verifier reports indicate that the assessment and verification arrangements meet the requirements of the awarding bodies.

46. Arrangements for self-assessment are satisfactory. Self-assessment is incorporated into the quality improvement arrangements as a continuous annual process. There is systematic use of questionnaires and meetings to collect feedback from all stakeholders, and findings are thoroughly discussed with them. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and detailed. Overall the report is accurate in its assessments, although it underestimates some

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weaknesses.

47. The development planning for quality improvement is insufficiently clear. There are development plans at strategic and operational level, but the monitoring and recording of progress is incomplete. The three-year development plan identifies strategic aims, but it does not include clear interim targets for improvement, with identified timescales and progress measures. Quality improvement is guided by the annual quality improvement plan, but cross-referencing to aims in the three-year plans is not fully developed. Additional annual development plans are produced for equality and diversity and for suppliers.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 4

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Early years</i> Apprenticeships for young people	34	4 4

48. There are 18 apprentices and 16 advanced apprentices in early years care. Way to Work contracts with two supplier subcontractors to provide training for learners in day nurseries. JACE was contracted, following the business failure of the previous supplier, in December 2003. JACE was inspected in 2003 when its provision in early years was judged to be good. A second supplier, Metis Training, was contracted in 2005. The contracts require the suppliers to provide the training, while Way to Work provides overall management and quality assurance of the scheme, manages recruitment and additional support for learners, such as pastoral care and additional learning support. All learners are employed. They are referred to Way to Work by Connexions, friends, employers or through recruitment activities by Way to Work.

Early years

Grade 4

Strengths

- very good support for individual learners
- good support for employers

Weaknesses

- poor achievement by apprentices
- insufficient use of information to ensure improvements in the quality of provision

Achievement and standards

49. At the previous inspection, poor framework completion was identified as a weakness and measures were being introduced to improve achievement rates. There is a little improvement on the apprenticeship programme, from 5 per cent in 2002-03, to 20 per cent in 2003-04, with just under a third of starters still in learning. However, only 7 per cent of the advanced apprentices who started in 2001-02 completed their framework, none completed in 2002-03, and only 8 per cent of the 2003-04 starters, have completed the framework to date. Retention rates are satisfactory for apprentices, at 73 per cent for 2003-04, but unsatisfactory for advanced apprentices at 46 per cent in 2003-04. Of the 2004-05 starters, 83 per cent of apprentices and 88 per cent of advanced apprentices remain in learning.

50. Way to Work relies on the external verification reports to provide assurance that standards of learners' work are satisfactory. JACE has received very satisfactory reports.

51. Attendance is very carefully monitored by Way to Work. The suppliers and employers

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and Way to Work follow up absenteeism from the workplace and off-the-job training.

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	8		13		18		15	100								
Retained*	7		6		8		10	67								
Successfully completed	0		1		0		1	7								
Still in learning	7		4		5		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	4		12		15		22	100	24	100						
Retained*	0		1		11		12	55	17	71						
Successfully completed	0		1		3		1	5	0	0						
Still in learning	4		10		4		0	0	0	0						

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

The quality of provision

52. As recognised in the self-assessment report, individual learners receive very good support from Way to Work. Following a very thorough recruitment process, learners are well prepared for their apprenticeship programme. Careful explanations of the requirements of the award, including key skills, are combined with information about health and safety and equality and diversity. Learners are prepared for their interviews with prospective employers and attend a two-day visit to the nursery. When employed, learners are closely supported through a three-week trial period, which culminates in an in-depth interview, to confirm suitability for the vacancy. Detailed individual learning plans are agreed, with individually negotiated targets for achievement. If necessary, the probationary period can be extended. On-going support for learners with social needs is provided throughout the programme. For example, a learner who had a history of school exclusion, was given extensive support which enabled him to achieve the NVQ at level 2 in 15 months. Tutors are available by e-mail, telephone or direct contact and are very responsive to learners' needs. Unsuccessful candidates for employment are given feedback and are encouraged to apply for further vacancies. There are good working relationships between learners and staff at Way to Work.

53. Employers are well supported by Way to Work. The recruitment process is highly valued by employers. Job descriptions are developed in partnership with employers and additional guidance and support is offered, such as a leaflet on the principles of interviewing apprentices. Employers find Way to Work responsive to their needs and those of the learners. Way to Work works closely with employers to develop learners' workplace

skills and to monitor their attendance. Employers value the ready access that their learners have to the borough's provision through Way to Work, such as occupational health and human resources advice. Regular meetings are held for employers, but few early years employers attend.

54. Both suppliers provide a structured programme of off-the-job training related to the technical certificate, key skills and NVQs. Key skills are included in the vocational training from the beginning of the programme and the suppliers are given additional support to help them improve the key skills training. Resources for learning are the responsibility of suppliers but Way to Work does provide some additional resources if a need is identified. For example, training consultancy has been funded by Way to Work. JACE has published a very good learning resource in the form of a comprehensive guide to the technical certificates, key skills and NVQ, including activities and links between the different components. It is available as a pack, including a CD-ROM. On- and off-the-job training were judged to be key strengths in the JACE inspection report of 2003.

55. Initial assessment of additional needs is satisfactory. Once in employment, learners complete a basic skills assessment as part of their induction. Way to Work employs an essential skills tutor who assesses and supports learners if they need it. Support tutors used to visit learners in their workplaces but the delivery has changed to individual support at a central location.

56. Assessment is the responsibility of the suppliers. External verification indicates that assessment is satisfactory. Way to Work maintains regular contact with the assessors who are employed by the suppliers. It also funds an external inspection of their assessment practice. However, there have been problems with the occupational competence of external consultants in early years, and although suppliers carry out their own internal review, this is not shared with Way to Work because of confidentiality issues. The supplier contract stipulates the frequency of progress reviews. Assessors are expected to carry out regular reviews and set targets and communicate the plan and outcomes to Way to Work. Failure to return documents is rigorously followed up. Some individual learning plans are incomplete and have inadequate records of target-setting.

Leadership and management

57. Relationships with suppliers are satisfactory overall. There is a good working relationship between Way to Work and JACE, with regular meetings and feedback. Monthly meetings follow a standard format, including health and safety and equality of opportunity and provide detailed feedback on individual learners. The links with Metis Training are developing, but are not as yet fully structured. The detailed application of the terms of the contract have been discussed and are being agreed.

58. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted by Way to Work staff, employers and suppliers. Although some men have taken childcare qualifications, currently all learners on the early years programmes are women and Way to Work has no specific targets to increase the number of men recruited.

59. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but considered that the extent of improvement since the collapse of the previous supplier was not as extensive as indicated. The self-assessment process is inclusive.

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60. Way to Work has experienced a number of problems in providing quality training in early years. The failure of a previous supplier hindered the learners' progress and there was a significant period of uncertainty. The learners' experience in the early period under the new supplier was unsatisfactory. These weaknesses are identified in the self-assessment report. Way to Work is still making insufficient use of data to assure the quality of provision. Methods used successfully in other areas of learning to assess learners' progress have not been extensively used. Internal verification is the responsibility of suppliers. Way to Work has requested copies of external verification reports but these have not been regularly sent or reviewed. Employers and learners find it difficult to attend focus groups and feedback is restricted to information from questionnaires.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Accounting and finance Apprenticeships for young people	101	2
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	52	2
Business management Apprenticeships for young people	1	2
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	15	2

61. There are 169 learners, of whom 88 are apprentices and 81 are advanced apprentices. All the learners are employed and most work in the local area. All young learners apply for vacancies through Connexions or the Way to Work website and are selected through a competitive recruitment system. Learners on the accounting programme are predominantly adults and are already employed. Apprenticeships are delivered by four contracted supplier partners, BPP Professional Education, Capital Business Skills, Weir Training and Acton Training Centre. They provide off-the-job training, and testing and assessment visits to the workplace. Way to Work provides the overall management and quality assurance of the scheme, manages recruitment and additional support for learners, such as pastoral care and additional learning support.

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates for most learners
- good progression
- very productive working relationships with employers
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed arrangements for key skills in accounting
- insufficient monitoring of assessment standards

Achievement and standards

62. Retention and achievement rates are good for many learners and have improved since the previous inspection. In business administration, the completion of apprenticeship frameworks has improved from 40 per cent in 2001-02 to 72 per cent and 71 per cent in 2002-03 and 2003-04, respectively. For the much smaller number of advanced apprentices, completion rates have improved from 33 per cent in 2001-02 to 55 per cent in 2003-04. Achievements in accounting are particularly good in recent years. In 2003-04 they are 73 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively. In customer service, the proportion of learners completing the framework has increased from 39 per cent in 2001-02 and 35 per cent in 2002-03 to 75 per cent in 2003-04. Retention rates for business administration and accounting are good, especially in recent years and for customer service, retention rates have remained relatively stable and at a satisfactory level since 2001. The achievement rate

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for advanced apprentices is satisfactory.

63. Learners make good progress and develop at least satisfactory vocational skills at work. In business administration, employers note the learners' increasingly valuable contribution at work as they progress with their programmes. They also comment positively on their improved social skills and levels of confidence. Learners' programmes and initial jobs often provide them with opportunities to develop their careers in ways they did not originally envisage. For example, one business administration learner intends to pursue professional qualification in human resources to support her junior management role in the personnel department of a local authority.

64. Many learners progress from the apprenticeship to the advanced apprenticeship. This takes place within component elements of the area of learning and across areas. For example, learners in business administration progress to customer service advanced apprenticeship programmes. Learners are encouraged to progress. For example, one learner who had substantial additional learning needs was provided with extensive support to achieve an apprenticeship. The learner wished to continue in learning and was encouraged to work toward a second apprenticeship in another occupational area.

65. Achievements in key skills tests are satisfactory. Since the start of 2004, the achievement of key skills has been 69 per cent. Learners are encouraged to consider taking key skills at a level above their framework requirement where they have the capacity to do so.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	34		38		65		22	100	15	100						
Retained*	0		4		38		17	77	9	60						
Successfully completed	0		4		25		12	55	6	40						
Still in learning	34		27		20		0	0	0	0						

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	43		67		84		48	100	62	100						
Retained*	0		20		69		36	75	37	60						
Successfully completed	0		19		52		30	62	26	42						
Still in learning	41		36		11		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

66. Effective training is significantly aided by the very productive working relationships between Way to Work, employers, and suppliers. They work in close partnership in the best interests of learners. Employers are very much at the centre of helping to design programmes, reviewing, assessing and monitoring the progress of learners. It is evident to learners that this is the case and that their learning and employment are fully integrated. Employers work hard to match work tasks to the needs of learners and their apprenticeships. They offer additional work-specific qualifications to learners as well as their main qualification. They also help to deal with learners' additional support needs as part of their commitment to overall support.

67. Learners receive good individual coaching and helpful advice. Assessors and tutors in accounting develop good working relationships with the learners and are sensitive to individual needs. Tutors keep detailed records of learners' progress. Accommodation and teaching resources for accounting are good with well-designed computer suites. Way to Work has effective systems to ensure that suppliers' staff, including assessors, have appropriate qualifications and occupational competence. All assessors attend a Way to Work induction and are supported to develop and maintain their skills and knowledge.

68. Support and guidance are very good. Potential learners apply for jobs with good range of employers. They are given a detailed outline of the job role and the skills required. Carefully matching learners to employers' needs, Way to Work arranges for learners to be offered an initial interview with the employer, followed by a half-day workplace taster to enable them and the employer to assess suitability. Learners receive constructive feedback on their performance and are encouraged only to accept jobs that meet their career aims. Learners have a three-week probationary period, during which they are provided with extensive support by Way to Work. Initial testing for learners' additional support needs is thorough. Learners who experience difficulties in the workplace or who are identified as making slow progress are offered higher levels of support. Staff meet with suppliers on a monthly basis to review each learner and to arrange additional support if it is needed.

69. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. All assessment takes place in the workplace at regular intervals. There is some particularly successful practice for the learners on the e-NVQ programme. Learners and employers identify that it is easier to recall information and records, when compared with paper systems. Learners have a good understanding of how their work and progress are assessed and the timetable for the completion of their programme. Many plan their next steps on the basis of this target. Way to Work has arrangements for the observation of assessment practice through an independent consultant, although no customer service assessments have been observed.

70. In customer service, many individual learning plans are only partially completed and they do not include essential information to set targets and measure progress.

71. As identified in the self-assessment report, key skills are not an integral part of the vocational training for learners in accounting. Suppliers and Way to Work have now agreed a new strategy to implement key skills in early 2006 and staff development is in place to facilitate this.

Leadership and management

72. This area of learning is well managed, through the effective partnerships between Way to Work, employers and suppliers. Way to Work managers and other staff expertly place learners at the centre of often complex discussions with suppliers and employers. Internal and external communications are good. Since the previous inspection, Way to Work has continued to review and improve its procedures and has introduced more formality to systems.

73. Quality improvement is good. Many aspects of the provision have improved since the previous inspection and learners' achievement is now good. The process of self-assessment is inclusive. Most of the judgements in the self-assessment report matched those given by inspectors.

74. Learners study and work in environments that value equality and diversity. Many of them are helped to achieve when their expectations of their own progress are low. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Way to Work has policies that are specifically designed for learners, under the borough's general policies, although it does not give them sufficiently detailed information on its own policies on equality, bullying and harassment and complaints procedures.

75. Way to Work does not make sufficient use of the quality monitoring information produced by suppliers on assessment practice. It does not routinely receive and analyse this information, or systematically use external verification reports from awarding bodies, to help monitor the quality of assessment and of their suppliers.

