

REINSPECTION REPORT

Middlesbrough Council Reinspection

28 June 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** 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.

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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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Middlesbrough Council's (MC) work-based learning section is part of the community education service within the directorate of children, families and learning. MC provides an Entry to Employment (E2E) training programme at three learning centres, Thorntree, Grove Hill, and Coulby Newham. Almost half the wards in the area are within the most deprived 10 per cent of wards in the country. Over 11 per cent of 16-17 year olds are not in formal education, employment or training.
2. The work-based learning contract manager is supported by a quality improvement co-ordinator who provides direct management of the E2E programme. There are three full-time training officers, one full-time administrative officer, a work-experience placement officer, and several part-time members of staff who provide key skills and basic skills training as well as induction to the programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Reinspection Grade 3

3. At the previous inspection of MC in April 2005, the foundation programme was judged unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and quality improvement were unsatisfactory but equality of opportunity was satisfactory.
4. At the end of the reinspection process all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory or better.
5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The process involves staff members, and inspectors agreed broadly with the findings, both in the area of learning and in leadership and management. The report is mostly self-critical enough, although the quality of teaching and learning is overstated, and the report does not always sufficiently explain the strengths or weaknesses.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection there has been significant improvement to the overall quality of the provision. MC has successfully dealt with all the key weaknesses in leadership and management and the area of learning, and the areas that were weak are now at least satisfactory. Achievement and progression are improving and are slightly above the national average. The current management structure has managed change well, and is well designed to make further improvements.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Foundation programmes			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Employability/employment training</i>			4
Entry to Employment	21	4	

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Foundation programmes			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Employability/employment training</i>			
Entry to Employment	20	3	

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

7. At the previous inspection in April 2005, the E2E programme was reported on. This formed the basis for the reinspection. MC subcontracts business administration training and this was not reported on or graded separately. However, it contributed the judgements on leadership and management. Inspectors spent a total of eight days on the reinspection process. This included two reinspection monitoring visits and a final two-day reinspection visit.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	8
Number of staff interviewed	14
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8
Number of visits	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Learners at MC achieve well**, both in terms of formal progression and in individual and personal development. Learners' rate of progression into recognised outcomes is good.

9. At the previous inspection, learners achieved good personal and social skills, and this remains a strength. Learners gain particularly in self-confidence and self-esteem. Communication skills and personal behaviour improve significantly. Learners show a good awareness of issues to do with health and safety and equality and diversity.

The quality of provision

10. Learners at MC receive **particularly strong personal support** on their programme. MC has extremely good relationships with the youth and community service, giving learners access to a range of support services. These range from counselling to advice on alcohol and drug misuse.

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Sessions benefit from structured planning, with appropriate aims and objectives. Unusually, most lesson plans are cross-referenced to the national literacy and numeracy curriculum, although insufficient use is made of this in actual sessions. The teaching profile shows most sessions as being satisfactory.

12. Induction is satisfactory. It is given over a four-day period in a venue suitable to the learners. It satisfactorily covers health and safety and equality of opportunity as well as the main features of the programme.

13. Progress reviews, the use of the E2E Passport, and the setting of targets, are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, MC has done much work to improve target-setting and planning generally. Reviews focus on what the learner has learnt and what can be achieved.

14. Information advice and guidance are satisfactory. On entry and throughout the programme, learners have the opportunity to discuss their career choices with their training officer. The relationship with Connexions is good and learners have appropriate access to this service.

15. The range of the programme is satisfactory. Learners have access to a well-developed programme to meet their social and personal needs, with some good enrichment activities

like residential visits and art projects. The vocational strand is wider than at the previous inspection with a range of employability packages which MC provides through open college accreditation.

16. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, **insufficient attention is given to the specific needs of learners either in planning sessions or in teaching them.** In the better sessions, particular planning for the needs of learners ensures that more active and challenging learners are kept motivated by different activities from those of the other learners. In most sessions, some learners had difficulty with the activity being asked of them while others were not sufficiently challenged.

17. Learners' literacy and numeracy are insufficiently developed. Much has been done since the previous inspection to improve the overall quality of programme planning and the programme offer, but target-setting in literacy and numeracy is still weak, and there are too few links between literacy, numeracy and the other parts of the programme. Course materials are not routinely checked for readability and trainers make too little use of the results of initial assessment to design their teaching sessions. For learners in work placements, there are insufficient links between the specific skills they need in employment, and their individual progress in literacy or numeracy.

18. Target setting in learning plans is particularly weak for literacy and numeracy. Insufficient links to other parts of the programme are made. Where learners are in employer placements insufficient links with the specific skills they need in employment and their individual progress in literacy or numeracy are made.

Leadership and management

19. Since the previous inspection, there has been **good management intervention to improve the provision.** The head of service provides good strategic direction for the E2E programme, and it now features prominently in the strategic plan. A stable management team has been able to deal with many of the issues identified during the inspection.

20. The E2E programme is now subject to effective quality monitoring, although this is still in the early stages. The setting and monitoring of targets has improved, and there is a strong focus on learners' performance. The monitoring of progress towards the post-inspection action plan has been good.

21. **Staff development at MC is good.** All staff benefit from a wide range of external training and in-house events given by the corporate training department. Training is targeted well to meet the needs of the programme.

22. **MC's promotion of equality of opportunity is good.** The provider actively recruits learners from deprived wards and works with challenging learners who have high levels of social need. The centres where the programme is provided are in these communities, attracting learners who are not willing to travel to other parts of the town. Learners are familiar with the youth centres, having used them for previous sporting or social activities. For many learners this removes a barrier to their participation in training.

23. The management information system was a key weakness at the previous inspection but is now satisfactory. Reliable and timely information is now collected and used by managers and staff to monitor performance and make decisions. The data collected is

used to monitor learners' progress, compare centres, identify learners' destinations and compare results between the genders.

24. Communications across MC are satisfactory. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and communications between the three teaching centres and the administrative centre are better than at the previous inspection. All staff meet regularly, and meetings follow standard agenda items which are appropriately minuted and actioned.

25. The monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace, previously a key weakness, is now satisfactory. Better information is now made available to employers, and staff who visit employers use questionnaires to check their understanding. MC ensures that learners are being well treated and are in a safe environment, and progress reviews now have a better emphasis on the monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity.

26. The arrangements for quality improvement are now satisfactory. A comprehensive post-inspection action plan has been put into effect and monitored well, and the provision has improved considerably since the previous inspection. There is now a comprehensive range of procedural documents, which covers all aspects of the programme, and a quality monitoring programme that ensures compliance.

27. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It involves all staff members, and inspectors' findings broadly matched MC's both in the area of learning and in leadership and management overall. Most of the self-assessment report is sufficiently self-critical, but the quality of teaching and learning is overstated, and the supporting text in the report does not always sufficiently explain strengths or weaknesses.

28. Despite many improvements to the provision there has to date been **insufficient action-planning to improve teaching and learning** beyond a satisfactory level. Improvements to the system of observations of teaching and learning have given MC a clearer idea of the quality of teaching and learning, but there has been no detailed action plan to improve it further.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic and operational management which has significantly improved the provision
- effective range of staff development activities
- good promotion of equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- insufficient action-planning to further improve teaching and learning

Foundation programmes

Employability/employment training

Strengths

- good achievement
- particularly strong personal support

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to the individual needs of learners
- insufficient development of learners' literacy and numeracy

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic and operational management which has significantly improved the provision
- effective range of staff development activities
- good promotion of equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- insufficient action-planning to further improve teaching and learning

29. Since the previous inspection there has been good management intervention to improve the provision. The head of service provides good strategic direction for the E2E programme, and this now features prominently in the strategic plan. A stable management team has been able to deal with many of the issues identified during the inspection. There has been an effective restructuring of management to give much clearer lines of management and reporting, and the appointment of a quality improvement co-ordinator has brought much-needed expertise to the organisation. The E2E programme is now subject to effective quality monitoring, although this is still at an early stage. The setting and monitoring of targets has been improved, and there is now a strong focus on learners' performance. MC's progress towards achieving its post-inspection action plan has been monitored well.

30. Staff development at MC is good. All staff benefit from a wide range of external training and in-house events provided by the corporate training department, and training is well targeted to meet the needs of the programme. MC is supporting teaching staff to gain recognised teaching qualifications. Staff have also received a range of health and social awareness training to help them support learners, and specialist equality and diversity training to develop their understanding of different cultures. Staff have been trained in setting targets for learners, an area that was a weakness at the previous inspection. The appraisal process is now being used to identify individual training needs.

31. The management information system was a key weakness at the previous inspection, but is now satisfactory. Reliable and timely information is now collected and used by managers and staff to monitor performance and make decisions. Data is collected on learners' progress and destinations, and comparisons are made between centres and genders. All staff meet regularly and the data is reviewed closely at structured team meetings. The handling of data is now sufficiently reliable to cope with a growth in the number of learners.

32. MC relies less on subcontractors than it did at the previous inspection, but it now has satisfactory arrangements to monitor the quality of the service they provide. There are formal service level agreements that specify roles and responsibilities and MC's expectations of its subcontractors. Regular meetings are held between MC and its subcontractors to review progress and performance in line with these agreements.

33. Communications across MC are satisfactory. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and communications between the three teaching centres and the administrative centre have improved. All staff meet regularly, and meetings follow standard agenda items which are appropriately minuted and actioned. MC has links with a number of external partners, and is represented on the local E2E provider group as well as liaising with external agencies such as Connexions and the Youth Offender Service.

34. Despite many improvements to the provision, there has been insufficient action-planning to improve teaching and learning beyond a satisfactory level. Improvements to the observation of teaching and learning have given MC a clearer understanding of the quality of its teaching and learning, but there remain areas for further development, particularly in the planning of teaching to respond better to learners' individual needs. Literacy and numeracy support are not yet sufficiently developed, with poor target-setting in learning plans for this aspect of work being a key feature identified. This is recognised by MC and recent developments are beginning to deal with this weakness.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

35. MC's promotion of equality of opportunity is good. MC actively recruits learners from deprived wards within the community, working with challenging learners who have extensive social needs. The centres the programme are run at are in these wards, attracting learners who are not willing to travel to other parts of the town. Learners are familiar with the centres, having used them for previous sporting or social activities. For many learners this removes a barrier to their participation in training.

36. There is a positive culture and approach to equality and diversity, and learners demonstrate a good understanding of equal opportunities. There is sufficient emphasis on equal opportunities during induction programmes, and one recent initiative involved learners producing equality and diversity posters for general display in centres.

37. Arrangements for staff training in equality of opportunity are good. All staff have received diversity training, including specialist training, for example to develop specific cultural awareness. The participation rate of learners from minority ethnic communities is representative of the town, and MC is opening a centre in a local Asian community venue specifically to increase participation rates. Promotional materials are being printed in languages spoken in this community.

38. The monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace, previously a key weakness, is now satisfactory. Better information is now made available to employers, and staff who visit employers use questionnaires to check their understanding. MC ensures that learners are being treated well and are in a safe environment, and progress reviews now have a greater emphasis on the monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity.

39. MC is now producing data which can be used to analyse the performance of learners from different groups. Although in its early stages, this identifies performance by gender, for example. MC sets specific performance targets relating to equality and diversity, and these are satisfactorily monitored at management team meetings.

Quality improvement**Contributory grade 3**

40. The arrangements for quality improvement are now satisfactory. A comprehensive post-inspection action plan has been monitored and implemented well, and the provision has improved considerably since the previous inspection.

41. There is now a comprehensive range of procedural documents, which cover all aspects of the programme, and a quality monitoring programme ensures compliance. The observation of teaching and learning is now satisfactory. Staff from MC's adult education service have conducted lesson observations and produced evaluative reports. However, there is no action plan to further improve the quality of teaching.

42. MC's arrangements for collecting feedback from learners and employers are now satisfactory. Feedback is collected at several stages of the programme, and employers are asked to complete a questionnaire. For the first time there are now monitoring visits to the workplace to assess the quality of progress reviews. The arrangements to monitor subcontractors are now satisfactory, with both parties having in place joint policies and agreements.

43. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is inclusive and involves all staff. Inspectors' findings broadly match those in the self-assessment report both in the area of learning and in leadership and management. The report is self-critical enough, although the quality of teaching and learning is overstated, and the report does not always sufficiently explain strengths or weaknesses.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability/employment training</i> Entry to Employment	20	3

44. There are 20 learners on the E2E programme, of whom 16 are women, all are white British and three have some form of disability or learning difficulty. Learners are referred to the provision through Connexions, or recruited by MC's own publicity or by word of mouth. All learners have a four-day induction in which their literacy and numeracy skills, individual learning styles and career preferences are identified. All the training centres offer literacy and numeracy support as well as providing employability skills. The personal and social skills training available includes drugs awareness, citizenship, and managing stress and anger. Learners can follow learndirect packages, achieve national qualifications in literacy and numeracy, key skills awards, and a range of open college accreditation. Initial assessment lasts for six weeks after which learners choose an appropriate programme and placement options. The average length of stay on programme is 28 weeks.

Employability/employment training

Strengths

- good achievement
- particularly strong personal support

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to the individual needs of learners
- insufficient development of learners' literacy and numeracy

Achievement and standards

45. Learners at MC achieve well, both in terms of formal measurements of progression and of their individual and personal development. The rate of progression into recognised outcomes is now good at 60 per cent. In addition, qualification rates are showing a steady upward trend. For instance, in 2004-05, only 10 per cent of learners gained literacy or numeracy qualifications. In the current year, 28 per cent of learners have already gained such qualifications. In addition, all learners gain some form of qualification in life skills or employability skills through open college accreditation. At the previous inspection, learners were gaining good personal and social skills, and this remains the case. In particular, their self-confidence and self-esteem improve, and their communication skills and personal behaviour reflect this. Learners show good awareness of health and safety and equality and diversity.

The quality of provision

46. Learners at MC receive particularly strong personal support on their programme. The provider has extremely good relationships with the youth and community service, giving learners access to a range of support services from counselling to advice on alcohol and drug misuse. Both this internal network and the close working relationship with Connexions allow learners with specific problems like homelessness or pregnancy to get help quickly and confidentially. Centre managers in youth work venues know the young people well individually, and continue to offer them good support outside the E2E programme. MC has continued its good work in providing luncheon and breakfast clubs for the learners. At these, they not only benefit directly from the nutritional meals, but also learn about healthy eating. Learners are given clothing to wear at their work placements, and travel is arranged to get them to work. In one case, a learner would not remove her coat in class. Counselling revealed that she had a significant negative body image problem. Training officers handled this sympathetically, while setting some individual targets for the learner so that she eventually removed her coat. A training officer then took her shopping for some appropriate but flattering workwear. The learner is now happy in her work placement.

47. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Sessions benefit from structured planning, with appropriate aims and objectives. Unusually, most lesson plans are cross-referenced to the national literacy and numeracy curriculum, although insufficient use is made of this in actual sessions.

48. Induction is satisfactory. It is given over a four-day period at a venue suitable to the learners. It satisfactorily covers health and safety and equality of opportunity as well as the main features of the programme. The multimedia presentations are colourful and lively and interest the learners. However, the materials given to learners are in black and white, and are written in over-complex language.

49. Progress reviews, the use of the E2E Passport, and the setting of targets are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, MC has done much work to improve target-setting and planning generally. Reviews focus on what the learner has learnt and what can be achieved. The targets set are generally specific and measurable and there are some good examples of soft skills target-setting to improve behaviour such as punctuality, language or behaviour in class. However, there are still examples of less measurable target-setting and too many targets still list tasks rather than measuring skills learnt. There are too few targets for literacy and numeracy.

50. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners have the opportunity to discuss their career choices with their training officer, on entry and throughout the programme. The relationship with Connexions is good and learners have appropriate access to this service. However, information on the E2E programme, is insufficiently developed. Learners get some information at induction but are not given an overall programme. Learners express frustration at not knowing how their programme is designed or even where they will be at any given time.

51. The range of the programme is satisfactory. Learners have access to a well-developed programme for social and personal needs, with some good enrichment activities like

residential visits and art projects. The vocational options are wider than at the previous inspection, with a range of employability packages provided through open college accreditation. In addition, since the previous inspection, MC has appointed a work-placement officer and she actively sources long- and short-term placements. Literacy and numeracy support is given by a specific member of the team. She is working with the adult education service to further incorporate literacy and numeracy into the provision.

52. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory, insufficient attention is given to the specific needs of learners either in planning sessions or in teaching them. In the better sessions, particular planning for the needs of learners ensures that more active and challenging learners are kept motivated by different activities to the other learners. In most sessions, some learners had difficulty with the activity being asked of them while others were not sufficiently challenged. Little active use is made of initial or formative assessment activity to design sessions that involve all learners at the right levels for them. Sessions are seldom varied enough to stimulate all learners, and written materials are not routinely assessed for readability. Some written materials are poorly photocopied and insufficient use is made of coloured hand-outs.

53. Much has been done since the previous inspection to improve programme planning and the programme offer, but the literacy and numeracy element of the E2E programme is still insufficiently developed. All learners are now assessed using the basic and key skills builder, and all who need it are given specific support. The support worker has completed a teaching qualification and is to begin another in numeracy teaching. Another member of staff has been identified to train in the future. MC recognises that this part of the programme needs more work and has brought in the adult education service to help. Some work has been done to incorporate literacy and numeracy teaching into the other parts of the curriculum but this is at a very early stage of its development. Target-setting in learning plans is particularly weak for literacy and numeracy, and there are too few links to other parts of the programme. Where learners are in work placements, there are insufficient links between the specific skills they need in employment and their individual progress in literacy or numeracy. Materials are not routinely checked for readability and trainers make insufficient use of any information from initial assessment to design their wider programme sessions.

Leadership and management

54. Some good quality-improvement measures have been introduced to resolve many of the weaknesses seen at the previous inspection, although some of these have yet to affect the provision. Staff training and development are good. Staff are regularly appraised and their training needs identified. Individual staff are now aware of their targets for retention, achievement and progression. More staff training is planned to develop this. The management structure has been clarified and communications much improved. Staff meet at least weekly. A new system has been established to ensure staff coverage at all sites. The programme itself has been much improved with better vocational training and improvements in literacy and numeracy, although this is not yet complete and staff are to have further specific training in this area. Staff are working more productively as a team across the sites.

