

REINSPECTION REPORT

E.Quality Training Limited Reinspection

20 July 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. E.Quality Training Limited (E.Quality) is a private training provider based in Newcastle-under-Lyme in north Staffordshire. It provides Entry to Employment (E2E) training courses for young people aged 16 to 19. This training is funded by Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In conjunction with other local training providers, E.Quality also participates in a pre-E2E training programme which commenced in December 2005. It has eight learners on this programme, which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund and the LSC. The E2E programme accounts for over 95 per cent of E.Quality's income.

2. At the time of the previous inspection, E.Quality used three training centres. It no longer uses one of these locations. Since the previous inspection, the provider has opened a day nursery for young children. This is run as a separate business from the training activities, but some E2E learners attend the nursery for their work experience.

3. E.Quality is owned and run by two directors. One takes responsibility for finances and business planning, while the other concentrates on managing the training and the curriculum. They are supported by an E2E co-ordinator, four full-time tutors, one part-time tutor, an office manager and a nursery manager.

4. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic communities is 2.4 per cent in Staffordshire and 2 per cent in Newcastle-under-Lyme, compared with 9.1 per cent in England and Wales. In May 2006, the unemployment rate was 1.8 per cent in Newcastle-under-Lyme and 1.9 per cent in Staffordshire, compared with an average of 2.6 per cent in England.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Reinspection Grade 3

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is now satisfactory.** At the previous inspection in June 2005, the provider's leadership and management and quality improvement were both inadequate. Arrangements for equality of opportunity were satisfactory. E2E provision was inadequate. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of provision reinspected are satisfactory.

6. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Staff involvement in gathering information and reaching judgements is satisfactory. All staff are aware of the main challenges facing E.Quality. The most recent self-assessment report provides an accurate assessment of the current standard of E.Quality's provision.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection, learners' retention, achievement and progression rates have all improved significantly. E.Quality has restructured the teaching programme and improved its management of training. Learners now receive better teaching and participate in a much more effectively co-ordinated range of activities. New vocational

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qualifications are offered and many learners are already taking advantage of these to prepare themselves more effectively for further learning or the world of work.

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	62	4	

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Foundation programmes			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Employability/employment training</i>			3
Entry to Employment	45	3	

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

8. The reinspection took place over three visits. One inspector attended for one day in January 2006 and one day in May 2006. Two inspectors then attended for three days each in July 2006. The first two visits concentrated on the effectiveness of E.Quality's post-inspection action plan in rectifying the weaknesses and consolidating the strengths found during the previous inspection. The final visit reinspected all aspects of E.Quality's leadership and management and E2E training programme against the full requirements of the Common Inspection Framework. As learner numbers are small, the pre-E2E training programme was not inspected or graded in its own right.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	32
Number of staff interviewed	13
Number of employers interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	3
Number of visits	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **Rates of retention, achievement and progression show strongly improving trends.**

Far fewer learners now leave the E2E programme in the early stages, compared with in previous years. Almost half of all learners now move on to further education or mainstream work-based learning or gain employment when they leave the training programme. They have increasing opportunities to obtain vocational qualifications during their time with E.Quality. A significant number of learners have already completed such qualifications and others are working steadily towards them.

10. **Learners gain good personal skills.** They develop greater self-confidence, become better at working in teams and gain the skills they need to make them attractive to potential employers or to be able to progress into further education or training.

The quality of provision

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners follow a well-designed scheme of work which meets their needs. A suitable range of relevant and lively activities is available. Most of the time, learners work in small groups and are well supported. There is a constructive atmosphere in which all learners feel welcome, safe and secure.

12. Learners have a satisfactory range of learning options and a choice of childcare or general employability skills qualifications. Many also attend taster days for other areas of learning. They are given fair and impartial advice to help them to make informed choices.

13. Learners have ample opportunity for work experience with a wide range of local employers, particularly in childcare, but also in retail, hairdressing and other areas.

14. Learners who need help with reading or writing are provided with discreet and sensitive additional support as they work through their training programme.

15. **Target-setting for learners is weak.** During progress reviews, the targets set for learners are not sufficiently well linked with learners' overall personal aims and objectives. Targets are often vague and general, stating only that learners should continue to attend or should complete the next training module.

Leadership and management

16. **The E2E training programme is well co-ordinated.** It is designed well to meet local needs in north Staffordshire. It provides training for young people for whom there are few opportunities elsewhere in the area. E.Quality co-operates effectively with other agencies working with young people to provide an overall support and training package.

17. **E.Quality is highly effective at engaging and supporting disaffected learners.** It welcomes learners from all backgrounds and promotes very positive attitudes of tolerance, respect and inclusion. Learners gain significantly from these values and help each other to succeed in their training and to make progress in their lives.

18. **E.Quality has insufficient arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of the action it is taking to improve quality.** It currently has a large number of activities underway, but does not have sufficient information about which are working well and which need modification.

19. Access to facilities at one training centre are poor for people with restricted mobility. The centre does not have level access routes or toilet facilities specifically adapted for people with disabilities.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good co-ordination of provision to meet local needs
- good engagement and support for disaffected learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient evaluation of quality improvement actions
- poor access facilities for learners with restricted mobility

Foundation programmes

Employability/employment training

Strengths

- strongly improving trends in rates of retention, achievement and progression
- good development of personal skills

Weaknesses

- weak target-setting for learners

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good co-ordination of provision to meet local needs
- good engagement and support for disaffected learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient evaluation of quality improvement actions
- poor access facilities for learners with restricted mobility

20. E.Quality's E2E training is well co-ordinated to meet local needs. This strength is fully described in E.Quality's self-assessment report. As at the previous inspection, E.Quality has strong links with partner organisations such as Connexions, community support agencies for young people and other training providers. It is active on local strategic groups and organisations including the E2E steering group and the 14 to 19 curriculum planning group for north Staffordshire. It uses these links well to plan and co-ordinate its training programme to complement other local provision. For example, the pre-E2E programme has been developed collaboratively with other training providers to help particularly vulnerable young people who need intensive support before being able to meet the demands of the full E2E training course. There is effective sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources between the partners. Since the previous inspection, E.Quality has established a day nursery which gives it good control over the timing and availability of work placements for learners pursuing childcare qualifications. It has good relationships with local employers in other occupational areas such as retail, hairdressing and sport and leisure. It uses these links very effectively to provide a good range of work placements for learners who are unsure about their preferred occupational area. Resources are well managed.

21. As at the previous inspection, E.Quality's arrangements for staff development and training are good. Staff have regular performance reviews. They are encouraged and supported to achieve relevant qualifications and to attend other courses which assist their professional development and ability to help learners. A programme of occasional team training days keeps staff informed of and involved with changes within E.Quality. Those staff with additional responsibilities as well as teaching, such as communicating with employers, are given sufficient time and support to meet these responsibilities. There is good communication about these objectives, which are supported by the whole teaching team. At the previous inspection, management of training was weak, with little cohesion between different aspects of learners' training programmes. This has now been resolved. There is a simple, well-understood and easy-to-follow structure for learners' progress from their entering to leaving the programme. Their journey through the different programme stages is well managed. Learners' recruitment is now co-ordinated much more effectively. Their potential start dates are well planned in advance to coincide with the expected peaks and troughs in demand. Staff are deployed effectively to manage the flow of learners at different phases of the training programme. Learners now work in well-established teaching groups, largely with the same tutor during their initial stages.

22. Internal communications are satisfactory. There are regular, well-minuted staff meetings at which issues affecting E.Quality are discussed. These meetings are also used effectively to monitor the progress of learners and to share relevant information confidentially among the training team.

23. E.Quality has satisfactory arrangements to provide additional literacy, numeracy and language support for learners who require it. All learners undergo initial assessments during their induction period. Additional tuition is then provided for learners who need it throughout the training programme.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

24. As at the previous inspection, E.Quality is highly effective at engaging and supporting disaffected learners. This strength is also identified in the self-assessment report. E.Quality is particularly sensitive to the needs of learners who have been disillusioned during their secondary education and face multiple personal barriers to making progress in their lives. It has a very strong relationship with Connexions, with which it co-operates closely to provide opportunities for those young people who are most at risk of remaining outside education, employment or training. It works very closely with external support agencies working with young people facing homelessness, drug or alcohol misuse or young parenthood to provide cohesive, well-co-ordinated and inclusive support and training. It also makes good use of its positive relationships with these agencies to promote the value of the E2E training programme to their clients. E.Quality encourages and welcomes the referrals of the most difficult to help young people. It is particularly flexible in adapting the requirements of phase one of the E2E programme to allow learners facing particularly burdensome external pressures to participate fully. For example, it renegotiated the terms of E2E attendance with the LSC for one learner facing exceptional personal difficulties at the start of the training programme. In conjunction with partner organisations, E.Quality worked to resolve these difficulties over an extended period and the learner subsequently participated fully in the training programme. The provider adopts a very non-judgemental approach and provides good encouragement and guidance to all learners to adopt the same positive and tolerant views. These views are quickly reflected in learners' behaviour. Learners provide good peer support to help each other to overcome personal challenges in their lives.

25. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity is now reinforced effectively in teaching sessions at all stages of the training programme. Staff have received appropriate training in tackling stereotyping and discrimination. They integrate these themes into activities for learners which challenge prejudice and promote the value of diversity. Some learners also attend external activities, such as drama workshops on diversity, to further develop their understanding of these issues and their respect for different cultures and lifestyles.

26. E.Quality monitors participation and achievement rates for learners by gender, ethnicity and level of disability. Achievement and progression rates are similar across all groups. The provider takes particular care to find work placements which are suitable for learners with learning difficulties. Progression rates for this group are comparable to those for the main body of learners. Although there are currently no learners from minority ethnic communities on the E2E programme, as at the previous inspection and over the year as a whole, the ethnic make-up of learners reflects that of the local community.

E.Quality is sensitive to the needs of different groups within the local community. For example, it recently participated in a promotional workshop to highlight the benefits of work-based learning as a whole, including E2E, to potential learners from minority communities.

27. Access to facilities for learners with restricted mobility difficulties is poor at one training centre. At the time of the previous inspection, one training centre had excellent facilities, but this location is no longer in use. One of the remaining training centres does not have easy, level access routes and has no specifically adapted toilet facilities.

E.Quality has no action in hand to resolve these difficulties. The other training centre is currently undergoing refurbishment and building work which is planned to include satisfactory access routes and facilities.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

28. E.Quality now has a satisfactory framework for quality improvement. Most procedures affecting the learners have been well documented. There is clear guidance on managing the learners' journey from recruitment to exit. This guidance has been well communicated to all staff. Sufficient arrangements are in place to consult staff about potential improvements. The provider's approach to quality improvement is now more inclusive. Staff are able to make and implement suggestions. They are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for particular activities. For example, all staff have contributed significantly to improving the scheme of work and lesson plans used during phase one of the E2E programme and to increasing the opportunities for work placements for learners. All staff have a good understanding of the key challenges facing E.Quality and support the actions that are being taken to make improvements. The company has a detailed quality improvement plan which contains a very wide range of improvement actions, with appropriate target dates for completion. Since the previous inspection, most improvement action has concentrated on relevant themes designed to improve learners' retention, achievement and progression rates. Appropriate targets have been set for these objectives and performance has improved significantly in all three areas.

29. E.Quality has effective arrangements for observing teaching. All teaching staff are observed, at least annually. Observations are now graded and tutors receive clear feedback which concentrates on the potential improvements they can make. At the previous inspection some teaching sessions were not challenging enough for learners. This weakness has now been resolved. New vocational qualifications in childcare and employability skills have been introduced over the past 12 months. Procedures for the assessment and internal moderation of these new qualifications are effective and set appropriate standards.

30. E.Quality makes much better use of management information than at the previous inspection. It has a new database and produces a range of reports about learners' progress. Appropriate data is now available to measure the proportion of learners achieving key milestones such as completing phase one of the E2E training programme and starting work placements. Staff are set meaningful targets to help learners to achieve these milestones. The same database also provides useful information about trends in learners numbers across the year and is used effectively to monitor the recruitment programme.

31. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. All staff contribute their views through

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written feedback and open discussion. The most recent self-assessment report was produced in May 2006. It draws heavily on the previous inspection report as well as E.Quality's own views on how the service has improved over recent months. It provides an accurate assessment of the current standard of E.Quality's training. All grades in the self-assessment report are correct.

32. E.Quality has insufficient arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of all the action it is attempting to implement to improve quality. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. Most actions in the current improvement plan do not include sufficiently well-defined measures of success to assess their effect on learners. Many different actions are currently underway. In most cases it is not sufficiently clear which actions are successful, which need further work and which need significant modification. For example, following the previous inspection, E.Quality introduced new procedures to improve target-setting for learners. Internally, it has not identified that this action is not yet effective. Similarly, E.Quality collects extensive feedback from learners' questionnaires which it analyses numerically. However, the information gathered is not evaluated sufficiently to identify the right action to take to further improve standards for learners.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability/employment training</i>		3
Entry to Employment	45	3

33. E.Quality has 45 learners on the E2E programme, of whom 41 are women. All current learners are white British, nine have a learning difficulty and one has a physical disability. Learners are recruited after referral by Connexions sometimes after they have completed the pre-E2E course. They are all drawn from the Newcastle-under-Lyme and north Staffordshire area.

34. The training programme is arranged in three phases. Phase one lasts for eight weeks. Phase two and phase three may last up to 12 months in total, with considerable variability for different learners. Phase one consists a series of training modules on topics such as team-building, equality and diversity, healthy lifestyles and coping with conflict. Some learners also begin to work towards key skills qualifications during phase one. They all work in small groups. Each group has a key tutor who delivers most of the programme for that group throughout phase one. The second phase involves further work on key skills qualifications, vocational qualifications and short courses in subjects such as first aid, basic food hygiene and child protection. Learners also take part in work experience, particularly in childcare. Phase three then concentrates on helping learners to find positive progression routes. They receive support for jobsearch, help with making applications for mainstream training and guidance on interview techniques and self-presentation.

Employability/employment training

Strengths

- strongly improving trends in rates of retention, achievement and progression
- good development of personal skills

Weaknesses

- weak target-setting for learners

Achievement and standards

35. At the previous inspection, learners' progression rates into further training, education or work were poor. Many left early and very few achieved vocational qualifications. Retention, achievement and progression rates are now all showing strongly improving trends. During 2004-05, 115 learners enrolled on the programme and 36 per cent left within the first eight weeks. So far in 2005-06, there have been 61 enrolments for whom at least eight weeks has elapsed, and the proportion of learners leaving during this period has fallen to 20 per cent. During 2004-05, no learner achieved a level 1 vocational qualification. So far in 2005-06, 62 learners have entered phase two of the E2E

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programme where these qualifications are now offered. To date, 24 have achieved a qualification and 18 are still in learning and working towards such qualifications. During 2004-05, only 26 per cent of the 109 learners who left the programme went onto mainstream training or into employment. So far in 2005-06, 77 learners have completed the programme and 47 per cent have entered mainstream training or started work. Of the 62 learners who were in learning during the previous inspection, 30 have so far moved on to positive destinations and three are still in learning.

36. The development of learners' personal skills is good. This strength is partly recognised in the self-assessment report. Phase one of the programme fully equips learners with the skills they need to gain full benefit from later phases of the course and their work experience. Many of E.Quality's learners are particularly disadvantaged, with multiple barriers to overcome. They all show significant gains in self-confidence, ambition, the ability to work with others, tolerance, respect and motivation. They learn to overcome personal anxieties and nervousness about speaking in groups and taking on new work and challenges in unfamiliar surroundings. Their understanding of teamwork and how they can contribute and gain from working towards common goals increases. Many learners' confidence in reading and working with written information also improves. Learners are well prepared to move forward at the end of their course, with a good understanding of the world of work and how to meet employers' needs in the industries in which they are interested. They also have a much greater understanding of the potential long-term value of qualifications to their employment and life prospects.

The quality of provision

37. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. At the previous inspection, many of the teaching sessions were insufficiently challenging. This weakness has now been resolved. Teaching activities are chosen to be relevant and interesting for learners. The level of challenge and expectations placed on learners increases progressively as they move through the training programme. The momentum for further learning is maintained at all stages. Teaching sessions are appropriately planned and delivered. Tutors use a suitable range of activities to motivate learners and retain their interest. They engage learners effectively and use a variety of methods such as discussion, practical activities, individual research and group work. Learners participate well in teaching sessions and develop sound working relationships with tutors. Classroom management is effective. Simple resources such as handouts and flipcharts are well used to promote learning. Class sizes are small and staff give effective individual learning support to learners.

38. E.Quality provides a satisfactory range of learning options. Individual learning programmes are planned to meet learners' individual preferences. There is a well-chosen mix of generic and optional activities with a clear well-structured timetable. E.Quality specialises in offering childcare as a vocational option, but also provides an employability skills qualification for those with interests in other occupational areas or who are uncertain about what area to work in. It arranges useful taster days with other E2E providers in activities such as tractor driving, horticulture and small animal care so that learners can make informed choices about transferring to other providers if they so wish. The employability skills training programme provides vocational learning in a number of areas including hairdressing, retail, and sport and recreation, as well as childcare. E.Quality provides a wide range of work-placement opportunities with local employers in these areas. Learners who require additional support with literacy and numeracy are given

discreet additional tuition during the training programme to help them meet the needs of the qualification they are working towards and to increase their skills.

39. E.Quality provides wide-ranging pastoral support for learners. Depending on their needs, E.Quality provides effective personal support for learners to attend medical appointments, receive specialist support from external agencies, find secure housing, attend job interviews and overcome other barriers to progress. Tutors quickly build positive relationships with learners, who trust them as sources of unbiased and confidential advice on many issues. Personal support is augmented by easy access to impartial information and advice about learning and work. Tutors listen carefully to learners' views about potential work or training choices and gently correct any misconceptions. Tutors make sure that learners' views are realistic and that they are aware of all options that are available to them. More in-depth careers-related guidance or personal support is also readily available from Connexions staff, who visit the training centres frequently.

40. Target-setting for learners is still weak. This is not identified in the self-assessment report. Targets agreed in reviews are not linked to planned individual learning activities or to learners' personal objectives for the E2E programme. They are often vague and do not explain the benefits that different actions will bring to learners. Many are too general and bland, stating only that learners should continue to attend or should complete the next training module. Progress reviews do not give an overall assessment of the learner's progress on the programme. Some E2E objectives set in the passport documents are not personalised to each learner. The learning objectives recorded in the Connexions referral document are not always reflected in the E2E documents.

Leadership and management

41. Since the previous inspection, E.Quality has strengthened its leadership and management of the E2E training programme. Staff are now more involved in decision-making. The programme has been redesigned to more effectively meet the needs of learners. An E2E co-ordinator has been appointed to manage the training on a day-to-day basis and to co-ordinate quality assurance and improvement. Monthly team meetings are held to monitor new developments and plan future improvements. All staff now have monthly performance meetings with their line manager to discuss their individual contribution to the programme. All tutors are observed at least once a year. The grade profile awarded to teaching sessions by E.Quality accurately reflects the observations made during inspection.

42. Satisfactory arrangements for internal verification fully meet the awarding body's requirements. Frequent standardisation meetings are held. Portfolios are appropriately sampled. Work submitted for the new vocational qualifications is thoroughly checked. Portfolios which do not meet the required standards are returned to the relevant tutor with appropriate and supportive feedback.

43. Equality of opportunity is promoted throughout the programme. Staff protect the wellbeing of learners. They create a safe environment in which learners develop practical skills and the self-confidence to learn effectively.

