INSPECTION REPORT

Central Training Group

30 March 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Central Training Group

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Central Training Group (Central Training) is a limited company based in Southend-on-Sea which offers work-based learning for young people in hairdressing and Entry to Employment (E2E). Since May 2004, Central Training has provided its own E2E programme. Before this, the provision was subcontracted to another provider. The provider also delivers employer training pilot (ETP) programmes for adults in customer service, administration, and business management. Central Training also provides national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing through its collaborative partnership with South East Essex College in Southend-on-Sea. The provider works with local schools and other agencies to deliver hairdressing and graphics training to pupils aged 14-16 years. Training is offered in six training centres in Essex and London. Central Training also has a subcontract arrangement to deliver E2E for Springboard Islington in Central London and subcontracts hairdressing to Falltricks in Romford.

2. Central Training's business operations are controlled by the managing director and a board of directors. The provider employs 125 staff, 22 of whom occupy management positions and 77 carry out training, assessment and the internal verification of government-funded programmes. The remainder of the staff work in finance, administration, mentoring, reviewing and reception.

3. Central Training is funded through a contract with the London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and by London Central and Essex LSC through a partnership of training providers. The highest proportion of employment in Essex and the Southend-on-Sea area in particular is in the wholesale and retail trade sector. In February 2006, the unemployment rate for Essex was 1.9 per cent, and for outer London it was 2.9 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent and a London average of 3.5 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 2.9 per cent of the population of Essex according to the 2001 census. The average for the outer London region is 25.4 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS **Grade 2**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Central Training's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. The training provisions in hairdressing, employability training, administration, business management, and customer service are good.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process involves all of Central Training's staff, learners, partners and employers. Central Training collects and analyses feedback from employers and learners regularly. The process for the production of the self-assessment report is clear. The judgements in the self-assessment report closely matched those of the inspection team. The self-assessment report is suitably evaluative and of very good quality. Most sections of the report contain sufficient detail to support the judgements. In some sections, Central Training does not identify the key strengths and key weaknesses sufficiently. In these

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sections, the report presents a list of related judgements.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Central Training has successfully implemented improvement strategies since it was inspected in October 2002. Its post-inspection action plans have been effective. Standards of the provision have improved. Central Training regularly reviews its provision and has introduced new areas of learning and withdrawn from others. It has improved much of its accommodation and places a strong emphasis on quality improvement. The provider has maintained and developed most of its strengths from previous inspections. Its current development plan identifies specific actions to make further improvements to the low level of apprenticeship framework completion in hairdressing. Improved methods of monitoring learners' progress and providing support have been established. Overall retention rates have improved. Achievement rates on most programmes have improved, and more hairdressing learners are completing their apprenticeship frameworks. Central Training has made significant improvements to the provision and achievement levels in key skills training.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CENTRAL TRAINING GROUP:

- continue to improve framework completion rate in hairdressing
- maintain the good levels of progression from E2E programmes
- continue to improve the overall quality of provision
- maintain the good relationships with employers
- improve the management of literacy, numeracy and language support
- develop further learners' understanding of equality of opportunity

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Retail and commercial enterprise		**2**
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Hairdressing		***2***
Apprenticeships for young people	673	2

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Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Employability training		***2***
Entry to Employment	28	2

Business administration and law		2
Contributory areas:	**Number of learners**	**Contributory grade**
Administration		
Employer training pilot	5	2
Business management		
Employer training pilot	6	2
Customer service		
Employer training pilot	5	2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection took place between 27 March and 30 March 2006. The inspection judged the effectiveness of Central Training's leadership and management and graded those contributory areas of learning where there were sufficient learners to provide a firm evidence base. These areas were hairdressing, employability training, administration, business management, and customer services. There were no pre-inspection visits.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	72
Number of staff interviewed	45
Number of employers interviewed	19
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	30
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Learners make good progress in hairdressing.** They regularly complete NVQ units before their scheduled assessment dates, and complete their work to a very good standard. Many learners have already achieved their key skills qualifications.

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9. **Progression rates from E2E programmes are very good.** In 2004-05, 70 per cent of learners progressed to employment or further training. Of the five learners who completed programmes in 2005-06, four have progressed to employment or further training.

10. **E2E learners make good progress in developing their personal and social skills.** Many of them have achieved significant improvements in their interpersonal and time-keeping skills. Learners demonstrate good interpersonal skills when dealing with members of the public.

11. **Retention and achievement rates are very good for most ETP programmes in administration, business management and customer service. The development of learners' confidence and workplace skills is good.**

12. Overall, learners' achievements are satisfactory in E2E. Most learners make suitable progress in working towards qualifications in hairdressing or graphic design.

13. **The completion rate of apprenticeship frameworks is low in hairdressing.** Of the learners who began their apprenticeships in 2003-04, only 25 per cent completed the full framework and 25 per cent remain in training. Learners who have begun the programme since 2004-05 and those still in training have made good progress towards completing their frameworks.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	1	2	0	3
Preparation for life and work	1	3	1	1	6
Total	**1**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**9**

14. **Support for learning is effective in hairdressing.** Central Training provides good levels of regular literacy and numeracy support to its learners in the training centres and the workplace. Learners apply their improved literacy and numeracy skills well at work. Those learners who make slow progress receive good levels of individual training and assessment support.

15. **Good training is given on E2E programmes to develop learners' personal, social and vocational skills.** Tutors actively support learners in developing their skills. The activities are well paced and learners participate in lively discussions. Progress reviews are particularly thorough and effective in E2E. Learners clearly understand their targets and are aware of the progress that they make.

16. **The planning of training and assessment is good** on ETP programmes in administration, business management and customer service. Assessors use their time effectively and efficiently to support and assess learners in the workplace. Assessment and individual coaching sessions are planned well. Assessors set clear targets for learners. Central Training monitors learners' progress well through regular progress reviews, monitoring documents and feedback from employers.

17. **Excellent opportunities exist for all hairdressing learners to add to their learning**

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experience. Learners regularly attend shows and seminars. Many opportunities exist for learners to demonstrate their skills and to promote their work to the industry.

18. **Central Training has established very good links with employers for the E2E and ETP programmes.** Staff work hard to secure E2E learners suitable work placements. Care is taken to establish that employers follow acceptable health and safety procedures and that they are prepared before they take on learners. On ETP programmes, Central Training works closely with many companies to identify new learning opportunities. All supervisors and line managers well understand the requirements of the programme.

19. **Learners on E2E programmes receive good personal support.** Staff support learners well in dealing with a wide range of personal, social, health and welfare issues. Tutors offer very good support before and during work placements and maintain contact with those learners who have gained jobs.

20. Overall, standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory in hairdressing. Tutors plan their sessions well and link the sessions closely to assessment opportunities.

21. Generally, arrangements for initial assessment are satisfactory. All learners receive an initial assessment in literacy and numeracy, the results of which contribute to individual learning plans. Central Training also assesses learners' learning styles. Learners on ETP programmes also complete a training needs analysis.

22. Additional learning support is satisfactory in E2E programmes. Many learners' literacy and numeracy needs are identified at an early stage in the programme to enable Central Training to arrange for additional support.

23. Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory in hairdressing. Internal verification regularly checks assessment practice and provides clear feedback to all assessors. Learners receive feedback which clearly shows what they need to do to improve their skills and knowledge.

24. Personal and pastoral support is satisfactory in hairdressing. Mentors support learners through a range of personal difficulties, which enables them to remain in learning.

25. Overall, arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. In hairdressing and E2E, learners receive sufficient information and advice about the programme from tutors and Connexions personal advisers. On E2E, Connexions advisers organise group sessions and learners receive a good deal of information and advice in the final stages of their programmes. Central Training discusses the ETP programme details with the employers and potential learners at their places of work.

26. **Learners do not receive sufficient written feedback about their work in E2E.** Not enough feedback is given for some assignments and longer pieces of work.

27. **Literacy and numeracy skills are not integrated sufficiently with vocational skills in E2E.** Many literacy and numeracy worksheets and activities are unrelated to vocational contexts and learners do not develop their literacy and numeracy skills sufficiently through vocational activities.

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28. **Not enough individual support is given for specific literacy and numeracy needs on ETP programmes.** Assessors provide informal support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs during assessment sessions, but some learning materials and assessment questions are difficult for some learners to understand. Learning materials do not develop learners' existing literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment does not correct some basic spelling and punctuation errors.

Leadership and management

29. **Communications are particularly good.** Central Training organises its meetings schedules well. All staff understand the mission statement, aims, objectives and the most recent operational priorities. **The provider has given clear emphasis to raising retention and achievement rates.** It sets targets for the organisation as a whole and for individual staff, who well understand the importance of the targets. Central Training produces a regular newsletter and has published two high-quality magazines to acknowledge the achievements of its learners. The provider maintains good contacts with all employers, subcontractors and partners.

30. **Central Training enjoys very good relationships with employers and partners.** Employers speak highly of Central Training and identify that administrative support and support for the learners are particularly good. Central Training visits employers regularly. Much good practice is shared between Central Training and the local training provider partnership. Effective relationships exist between Central Training and its subcontractors. Monitoring and co-ordination are good.

31. **Equality of opportunity is promoted well.** Central Training demonstrates its commitment to equality of opportunity through its comprehensive equal opportunities policy. Marketing and recruitment activities aim to attract under-represented groups. Publicity material promotes positive images of learners from a variety of cultural and minority ethnic backgrounds. Central Training sets and analyses closely its targets for recruitment, retention and achievement by gender, ethnic background and disability. Central Training promotes equality of opportunity well with employers and other training providers. Central Training offers a lot of staff training in equality and diversity.

32. **Central Training has implemented comprehensive arrangements for quality improvement.** It has resolved most of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspections. The provider has produced an extremely detailed and thorough quality improvement policy. Three quality improvement teams review all activities closely. Central Training uses feedback from learners and employers well to make quality improvements.

33. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning promote improvements. Feedback to trainers contains a lot of detail and identifies training needs or opportunities to share good practice.

34. The self-assessment process is thorough and includes the views of all staff, learners and employers. The findings of the self-assessment report generally matched those of inspectors. The report is suitably evaluative and of high quality.

35. Staff appraisals are well organised and include clear targets and training needs. Staff are well qualified, and have suitable experience. Management information systems are

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now used more effectively to support decision-making.

36. Access to premises for learners with restricted mobility is satisfactory. Central Training has improved access to some of its premises and has recently moved into two new premises where access is good. Some of the provider's premises still have restricted access.

37. Central Training has suitable child protection arrangements. It has designated a member of staff to deal with child protection matters.

38. Learners demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity and how they apply to the workplace. Central Training has devised a set of useful questions to reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and health and safety at progress reviews. The use of these questions at progress reviews varies considerably.

39. Clear policies exist to deal with harassment and bullying and learners know how to raise complaints. Central Training resolves learners' complaints effectively.

40. The arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. Appropriate paperwork is used and the records are complete and current, with useful comments to assist assessors to improve their performances.

41. **The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is not well established.** Central Training has produced a policy document which outlines the overall strategy for such support. This policy has no clear targets for the number of staff to be trained in literacy and/or numeracy support. The policy does not set targets for the integration of literacy and numeracy with training sessions, and it does not set minimum entitlements for all learners.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly good communications
- very good relationship with employers and partners
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- strong arrangements for quality improvement

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established management of literacy and numeracy support

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good progress by learners

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- very effective support for learning
- excellent opportunities for additional learning
- successful strategies to improve retention and achievement rates

Weaknesses

- low level of framework completions

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- very good progression rates
- good teaching to develop personal, social and vocational skills
- very good links with employers
- good personal support for learners
- good operational management

Weaknesses

- insufficient written feedback about learners' work
- insufficient integration of literacy and numeracy skills with vocational skills

Business administration and law

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates on most programmes
- good development of learners' confidence and workplace skills
- good planning of training and assessment
- very good links with many employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient individual support for specific literacy and numeracy needs

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WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CENTRAL TRAINING GROUP:

- 'I have the confidence to speak to my supervisor now'
- 'the assessor makes you think more about your job'
- the high standard of training
- the good support
- the responsiveness to problems
- the additional learning opportunities
- the fact that assessment takes place at work for most learners

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CENTRAL TRAINING GROUP COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of events for learners
- the range and number of hairdressing models for off-the-job training

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DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT **Grade 2**

Strengths

- particularly good communications
- very good relationship with employers and partners
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- strong arrangements for quality improvement

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established management of literacy and numeracy support

42. Communications are particularly good. Central Training has maintained this strength and recognises it in its self-assessment report. Meeting schedules are well organised. The minutes contain a lot of detail, with clear action points which are reviewed at the next meeting. Training teams meet at the same time as the administration teams and then all teams meet together to share issues before meeting with the board of directors. Central Training holds separate meetings for the standardisation of internal verification, lesson observations, and other quality improvement measures. In addition to the formal scheduled meetings, the provider encourages frequent individual meetings and a lot of informal communication. Three conferences take place each year and all staff are expected to attend. All staff members understand the mission statement, and the aims and objectives of Central Training, as well as the current operational priorities.

43. Effective communications involve all staff in contributing to the provider's overall strategy. Central Training clearly focuses on raising retention and achievement rates. Targets are set for the organisation as a whole as well as for individual members of staff. All staff understand the importance of these targets. Central Training produces a regular newsletter and has recently published two high-quality magazines to acknowledge the achievements of learners. Central Training maintains good contacts with all employers, subcontractors and partners.

44. Central Training enjoys very good relationships with employers and partners. Employers speak highly of Central Training and state that the administrative support and support for the learners are particularly good. Central Training takes responsibility for the assessment of all learners. Employers are visited each month to check on learners' progress and welfare, as well as keeping the employers up to date. Much good practice is shared between Central Training and the training provider partnership. Effective relationships exist between Central Training and its subcontractors. Monitoring and co-ordination are good, with regular meetings and quality assurance visits. Central Training is a member of a number of strategic collaborative partnerships.

45. Support for staff is good. Staff appraisals are well organised and include targets set through negotiations with line managers as well as the identification of training needs. Opportunities for continuing professional development are good. The provider offers internal training courses and access to courses in local colleges and other organisations.

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46. The management of resources is good. Central Training has refurbished some of its poor accommodation to a high standard and property has been secured to provide new training rooms and better facilities in London and Southend-on-Sea. Staff are well qualified with suitable experience.

47. The management information system has been improved and is now very effective. Data is shared throughout Central Training and is used in strategic planning.

48. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is not well established. Central Training has produced a policy document which outlines the overall strategy for such support. However, this policy has no clear targets for the number of staff to be trained in literacy and/or numeracy support. It does not identify the level of qualification to be achieved by staff. The policy does not set targets for the integration of literacy and numeracy in training sessions. It does not set minimum entitlements for all learners. For some learners, literacy and numeracy support is not integrated sufficiently with the vocational skills provision.

Equality of opportunity **Contributory grade 2**

49. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Central Training identifies this in its self-assessment report. Central Training demonstrates its commitment to equality of opportunity well through its comprehensive equal opportunities policy. It shares its values and beliefs with learners and staff through a range of high-quality documents which includes a detailed equality of opportunity booklet and specific leaflets which promote employees' rights and responsibilities. Marketing and recruitment activities aim to attract under-represented groups. Central Training has run a successful three-year campaign to attract men into hairdressing. Through its 'real men do hair' publicity material, Central Training has increased the representation of male learners to 14 per cent. Publicity material promotes positive images of learners from a variety of cultural and minority ethnic backgrounds.

50. The current representation of learners from a minority ethnic background in training is high in east and central London and close to the local proportional representation in Essex. Central Training sets and analyses closely its recruitment, retention and achievement targets by gender, ethnic background and disability. The provider implements actions identified in its three-year development plan to achieve annual improvements.

51. Central Training promotes equality of opportunity well to employers and to other training providers. It conducts thorough pre-placement checks to ensure that each company has a suitable equal opportunities policy. The provider shares much of its equality of opportunity material with other providers and has a bank of useful training resources which are effective in promoting diversity and the legal framework. Central Training offers a great deal of equality and diversity training to its entire staff through regular conference events. Topics have included disability and diversity awareness, fair trade promotion, and working with learners with specific disabilities and/or learning difficulties. However, some of the material has not been updated to reflect new legislation and the use of some words is inappropriate.

52. Central Training's premises provide satisfactory access for learners with restricted mobility. The provider has improved the access to some of its premises and has recently

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moved into two new premises where access is good. There are still some premises where access is restricted. In these cases, Central Training makes suitable alternative arrangements. The provider has suitable child protection arrangements and has designated a member of staff to deal with child protection matters. Most staff have received training about child protection.

53. Learners demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity and how they apply in the workplace. Learners are aware of their rights as employees and learners. Central Training has devised a set of useful questions to be used in progress reviews to reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and health and safety. However, the use of these questions at progress reviews varies considerably. The promotion of diversity features in some training sessions. In hairdressing, learners complete a key skills project about working with, and responding to, a range of very different clients. Clear policies exist to deal with harassment and bullying and learners know how to make complaints if necessary. Central Training resolves learners' complaints sensitively and promptly.

Quality improvement — Contributory grade 2

54. Central Training has implemented comprehensive arrangements for quality improvement. The emphasis on quality improvement is strong throughout the organisation. Central Training has successfully resolved most of the weaknesses identified in previous inspections. The provider has produced an extremely detailed and thorough quality improvement policy. A comprehensive range of procedures covers all aspects of the work-based learning provision. Three quality improvement teams carefully review the learners' experiences, personnel and management information systems, and audits. Central Training constantly reviews its policies and procedures. It has established a very good document control system which ensures that only the latest versions of documents are available to staff.

55. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning promote improvements. This was previously identified as a strength. Central Training has implemented a sampling schedule for the forthcoming year, which ensures that each member of staff is observed once, unless they are new in post or there is a particular concern, in which case they are observed more frequently. Feedback to tutors contains much detail and identifies training needs or opportunities to share good practice. Central Training monitors the grades for these observations and checks for consistency at the quarterly standardisation meetings.

56. Central Training employs an external auditor who attends six times each year to review systems and advise in the use of training documents. The auditor checks that all documents are completed to the correct standard. This complements the internal audit work carried out by Central Training. The provider completes health and safety checks for each employer and follows these up at subsequent visits. Checks are also made on employers' equal opportunities policies.

57. Central Training uses feedback from learners and employers well to make quality improvements. It has replaced the written feedback from employers with telephone interviews to help remedy the low questionnaire completion rates. The response rate has improved and is now very good.

58. The arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. Central Training has

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reviewed its systems following an unsatisfactory judgement in one area of learning from the inspection in 2002. Improvements have been made with a particular focus on recruiting suitably qualified staff. Appropriate paperwork is used and the records are complete and current with useful comments to help assessors improve their performances.

59. The self-assessment process is thorough and includes the views of all staff, learners, partners and employers. Each team completes a self-assessment exercise which the managing director and the quality improvement manager collate. The most recent full report was compiled in December 2005 and updated in January 2006. Central Training has identified key strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment report matches most of the judgements made by inspectors and is largely accurate, suitably evaluative and of high quality. Central Training places strong and appropriate emphasis on raising retention and achievement rates. The provider reviews and updates action plans regularly.

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AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise — Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hairdressing		***2***
Apprenticeships for young people	673	2

60. Central Training offers hairdressing training in central and east London, and in Romford, Essex, through a subcontractor, and in Southend-on-Sea. Central Training recruits learners by referral from employers, by applications from the learners themselves and through the Connexions service. At the time of inspection, 673 learners were in training, 49 of whom were men. Of these learners, 647 were apprentices, working towards the NVQ at level 2 in hairdressing and key skills qualifications. Twenty-six advanced apprentices were working for the NVQ at level 3 and key skills qualifications. All the learners are employed in salons. Central Training works with 212 employers. Central Training also offers hairdressing training to 49 school pupils aged 14-16 years. Thirty-seven employers and supervisors currently act as work-based assessors and seven are working for an assessor qualification. Training is co-ordinated by the Southend-on-Sea training centre, the London centre, and the subcontracted provider. Central Training has a team of staff who carry out the remainder of all training and assessment, either in the salons or at one of the training centres. Most learners receive their training and assessment at work. Central Training assesses all learners' literacy and numeracy skills at induction, and conducts formal progress reviews every six weeks.

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good progress by learners
- very effective support for learning
- excellent opportunities for additional learning
- successful strategies to improve retention and achievement rates

Weaknesses

- low level of framework completions

Achievement and standards

61. Learners make good progress. They regularly achieve NVQ units before their scheduled assessment dates, and many have achieved basic units within a very short timescale. For example, most learners achieve shampooing, reception and health and safety units within three months of beginning their training. Learners' standards in practical skills are often better than the standards required by the NVQ. Some learners complete work to a very good standard. Most learners work proficiently with foils and meche while colouring, and all learners and trainers work with due regard to health and safety. They consistently wear personal protective equipment when carrying out chemical treatments.

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Learners display good customer care and communication skills when dealing with clients. Most learners have developed their practical skills entirely at work in situations where clients and products are familiar to them. Learners complete their portfolios to a satisfactory standard. The range of evidence is current and appropriate.

62. The rate of completion of apprenticeship frameworks is low in hairdressing. This was a weakness in previous inspections and Central Training recognises this in its self-assessment report. Of the learners who began their apprenticeships in 2003-04, only 25 per cent completed the full framework and 25 per cent remain in training. Of the 20 advanced apprentices who began in the same year, none have completed the full framework. Nine remain in training. However, learners who have begun the programme since 2004-05, and those still in training, make much better progress. According to Central Training's own data, the level of framework completions has risen significantly. The provider has now claimed three times the number of framework completions than at the same period in the previous year. In 2004-05, of the 238 leavers, only 19 per cent completed the full apprenticeship framework. In 2005-06, of the 233 leavers, 50 per cent had completed the framework. Central Training has also increased its achievement rate for key skills qualifications. All learners now achieve their key skills qualifications within the first year of 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	**2005-06**		**2004-05**		**2003-04**		**2002-03**									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		35		20		39	100								
Retained*	0		4		4		14	36								
Successfully completed	0		2		0		8	21								
Still in learning	6		11		9		0	0								

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	**2005-06**		**2004-05**		**2003-04**		**2002-03**									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	230		564		402		163	100								
Retained*	1		31		189		64	39								
Successfully completed	1		28		100		54	33								
Still in learning	208		346		93		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

63. Support for learning is very effective. Central Training identified this strength in its self-assessment report. Good levels of literacy and numeracy support are given to learners who need it and to learners who request it during their training period. Central Training provides this support regularly in the training centres or in the workplace. Learners and

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employers value this support highly. Learners can demonstrate improvements in their numeracy skills and work more efficiently and confidently when handling money and making appointments in the salon. Several learners have received support with their literacy skills and have then achieved their key skills qualification in communication. Central Training has established a profile action team which identifies and supports learners who are making slow progress. This team offers learners good levels of individual tuition and assessment support until they meet the targets in their individual learning plans.

64. Learners have excellent opportunities to add to their learning experience. Central Training has identified this strength in its self-assessment report. The provider works with many award-winning, inspirational employers and artistic teams who have become very positive role models for young hairdressers. Central Training ensures that all learners can take advantage of these opportunities. Learners regularly attend shows and seminars which demonstrate the skills of these employers and teams. There are many opportunities for learners to demonstrate and promote their own work. Central Training produces a magazine which profiles learners' work. Learners enter and win high-quality photographic competitions and their work receives a lot of attention in newspapers. Some learners work alongside employers who are stylists on television, and some learners work in London fashion shows. Central Training organises well-attended 'Protégé' events to promote its learners' work to the hairdressing and fashion industry.

65. All learning sessions observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better. Trainers plan their sessions well and link the sessions closely to assessment opportunities. Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory. Internal verification regularly checks assessment practices and provides clear feedback to all assessors. Learners receive feedback which clearly shows what they need to do to improve their skills and knowledge. Central Training has produced a useful pocket progress tracker to keep learners aware of their progress towards achievement of the NVQ. This enables them to plan their assessments. All assessors use a group monitoring record, which keeps employers and trainers up to date with learners' progress.

66. Personal and pastoral support for learners is satisfactory. Mentors support learners through a range of personal difficulties, such as housing and work-related problems. All learners have access to their trainers outside working hours. Central Training makes good use of text messages to maintain contact with its learners. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receive clear information about Central Training before they begin their training. Close links exist with Connexions to support those school pupils who progress to full-time training with the provider.

Leadership and management

67. Strategies to improve retention and achievement rates are successful. Central Training has introduced many strategies to improve the retention and achievements of its learners. The number of learners completing the apprenticeship framework has risen significantly in 2005-06. Central Training has improved its monitoring of learners' progress. The management information system promptly identifies learners who are making slow progress. The provider also ensures that these learners receive additional support from the profile action team. Learners receive certificates from the provider when they achieve a range of elements of their NVQ. The management of key skills training has improved considerably. Central Training has adopted a standardised approach to the delivery of key skills training and uses vocationally relevant materials.

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68. Communications between learners, staff and employers are good with regular visits to the workplaces and regular progress reviews. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities. Management of the subcontracted provision is good. Staff have appropriate qualifications and many of them are hairdressing practitioners. Resources are managed well. The training salons are of a high standard and investment in resources is good.

69. Central Training makes regular use of questionnaires to obtain feedback from learners and employers. The provider analyses this information closely to contribute to its quality improvement arrangements. However, most employers and learners are unaware of the effects of their feedback. Teams meet regularly throughout the three geographical areas to share good practice and to standardise working practices. Some staff are seconded to other geographical areas to introduce and develop new systems.

70. The self-assessment process involves employers, learners and all staff and includes their views. The findings of the self-assessment report closely match those of the inspectors.

71. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is developed during their learning programmes. Their understanding of these issues is checked against a set of questions during their progress reviews. However, the use of these questions varies considerably. Strategies to recruit under-represented groups have been successful. For example, the 'real men do hair' campaign was designed in collaboration with an employer to encourage more men to enter hairdressing. Partnerships with local schools have increased the number of learners aged 14-16 years in hairdressing training.

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Preparation for life and work — Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Employability training		***2***
Entry to Employment	28	2

72. Central Training has enrolled 33 learners on the E2E programme since August 2005. Twenty-eight of them remain in training. Of these, 23 are women and all are aged between 16 and 18 years. The Connexions service refers most applicants to Central Training. Learners may join the E2E programme at any time of the year, and most of them receive vocational training in hairdressing. A small group of learners train in graphic design. Learners attend one or more of three training centres for two full days of training each week. Most of them attend their work placement for the remainder of the week. Learners without a work placement work in the training salon. The average length of stay on the programme is 22 weeks.

Employability training

Strengths

- very good progression rates
- good teaching to develop personal, social and vocational skills
- very good links with employers
- good personal support for learners
- good operational management

Weaknesses

- insufficient written feedback about learners' work
- insufficient integration of literacy and numeracy skills with vocational skills

Achievement and standards

73. Progression rates from E2E programmes are very good. Central Training has maintained this strength since the 2002 inspection and acknowledges this in its self-assessment report. In 2004-05, 70 per cent of learners progressed to employment or further training. Of these, 46 per cent progressed to apprenticeships, 37 per cent to full-time employment and 8 per cent to further education. In 2005-06, four of the five learners who completed the programme progressed to one of these outcomes. Retention during 2004-05 was satisfactory at 65 per cent. The retention rate for the current year is very good, at 96 per cent.

74. Learners make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. For example, learners who had previously demonstrated very little confidence now volunteer to make presentations to other learners. Many learners make significant gains in the interpersonal skills that they need for work. Many of them demonstrate good skills when dealing with customers. A significant number of learners have improved their time-keeping skills.

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75. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall. Most learners make appropriate progress in working towards achieving the level 1 NVQ in hairdressing or graphic design. Learners on work placement develop the practical skills that they need for employment. They also make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, but do not have the opportunity to work towards national tests in literacy or numeracy. Central Training recognises this situation in its self-assessment report and plans to give learners the opportunity to take national tests.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment	**2005-06**		**2004-05**		**2003-04**											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	33		20	100	70	100										
Progression[1]	4		14	70	53	76										
Achieved objectives[2]	4		0	0	9	13										
Still in learning	28		0	0	0	0										

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training
2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

The quality of provision

76. Standards of teaching to develop learners' personal, social and vocational skills are good. Most of the sessions observed were good or better. Tutors actively support learners to make good progress in developing these skills. Learners experience a wide range of well-paced activities. For example, in one session, learners examined forms of scalp conditions through a microscope and participated in lively discussions. The tutor then used a presentation to review the key points. Learners consolidated their learning by responding to quiz questions. Tutors and learners make effective use of resources to support learning, such as up-to-date computers and software packages to develop learners' graphic design skills.

77. Progress reviews are particularly thorough and effective. Tutors monitor learners' progress against appropriate targets and negotiate new targets with their learners. The tutors make effective use of praise and encouragement and supplement formal four-weekly progress reviews with daily feedback. Learners clearly understand their targets and are aware of the progress that they are making. They participate actively in progress reviews. Tutors, employers and learners participate in progress reviews in the workplace. Tutors and employers evaluate learners' progress in the workplace with considerable care and attention to detail. Learners are coached and mentored effectively during progress reviews of their work placement. They develop their knowledge and understanding of work practices during these sessions.

78. Central Training has established very good links with employers. The provider has identified this strength in its self-assessment report. Staff work hard to find learners suitable and supportive work placements. They take care to ensure that employers follow acceptable health and safety procedures, and prepare employers to take learners from the E2E programme. Employers are very supportive of the learners, many of whom have

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emotional, behavioural or other personal difficulties. Tutors and employers work closely together in planning on- and off-the-job training. Employers value the support that Central Training's staff offer to themselves and to the learners.

79. The personal support provided for learners is good. Central Training has maintained this strength since the 2002 inspection. Staff support learners well in coping with a wide range of personal, social, health and welfare issues. For example, on several occasions, staff have escorted learners to hospital, or to doctors' surgeries, or have contacted learners' social workers to help learners deal with complex emotional problems. Central Training invites speakers from external agencies to talk to learners about matters such as sex, drugs awareness and mental health. Tutors offer very good support to learners before and during work placements. They also visit learners who have progressed to ensure that their transition to paid employment or further training is as smooth as possible. Central Training has acknowledged this strength in its self-assessment report.

80. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners receive initial assessments in literacy and numeracy, followed by diagnostic assessments. Learners discuss the results with the essential skills co-ordinator, who then passes relevant information to all E2E tutors. The literacy and numeracy trainer negotiates appropriate targets with the learners. Central Training also assesses learners' learning styles.

81. Additional learning support is satisfactory. Many learners' literacy and numeracy needs are identified at a sufficiently early stage in the programme to enable Central Training to arrange for additional support. The literacy and numeracy tutor offers good support for learners in some vocational sessions. However, in some vocational sessions, learners with low ability levels in literacy do not receive sufficient support in understanding textual material. Central Training identifies and makes suitable provision for learners with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, but these learners do not receive specialist assessment or support. Central Training has identified this weakness in its self-assessment report.

82. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receive sufficient initial information and advice about the programme from tutors and Connexions personal advisers. Information and advice is given relating to progression in the final stages of their programmes and when they leave. Connexions advisers organise group sessions with learners during which they emphasise the effort and work that learners need to put in if they are to achieve their personal goals.

83. Tutors do not provide sufficient written feedback about learners' work. Some of the work in learners' folders is marked, but some tutors have not marked learners' work thoroughly enough. Not enough feedback is given on some of the assignments and more substantial pieces of work. Tutors do not often identify learners' literacy errors. Central Training did not identify this weakness in its self-assessment report.

84. Literacy and numeracy and vocational skills are not integrated sufficiently. Many literacy and numeracy worksheets and activities are not related to vocational contexts and learners do not develop their literacy and numeracy skills sufficiently through vocational activities. Some of the worksheets, handouts and presentations provided by Central Training exceed the level of many learners' literacy skills.

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Leadership and management

85. The operational management of E2E programmes is good. Managers and staff communicate well with each other and with the learners. Regular team meetings complement the more informal sharing of views, concerns and ideas. E2E staff demonstrate high levels of commitment to the programme. Staff feel valued and able to contribute to the decision-making process throughout the organisation. Staff at all levels attend a good range of training and development programmes. Central Training encourages staff to work for training qualifications. Some tutors work for the level 4 certificate in adult literacy or numeracy for subject specialists.

86. The management of quality improvement is good. Managers and tutors use information collated from learners' evaluations of each session to plan further learning opportunities. Observations of teaching and learning provide the E2E manager with useful information to identify and support the development needs of staff.

87. Accommodation is comfortable and spacious at some of the training centres. Sufficient information and communications technology and multimedia equipment is available. Learners use a satisfactory range of worksheets and printed resources.

88. Staff in the E2E programme actively promote equality and diversity. Learners discuss equal opportunities issues with staff at induction and before attending work placements. Learners also attend sessions intended to raise their awareness of equality and diversity issues.

89. All staff contribute to the self-assessment report. The report's findings match most of the strengths identified by inspectors, but it does not identify all of the weaknesses.

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Business administration and law — Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Employer training pilot	5	2
Business management Employer training pilot	6	2
Customer service Employer training pilot	5	2

90. At the time of the inspection, five learners were completing the NVQ at level 2 in administration, five were following the NVQ at level 2 in customer service, and six were completing the NVQ at level 2 in team leading. Central Training works with a range of employers in commerce, sport and leisure, visitor attractions, retailing, the motor industry, councils, distribution outlets and pharmaceutical companies throughout Essex and east London. Employers are initially engaged by telephone, recommendations, or through Business Link. The programme details are discussed with the prospective employer and the learners in their workplaces. Learners can begin their training at any time and are employed for a minimum of 16 hours each week. All learners are aged 19 years or more. Initial assessment and induction take place in the workplace on an individual or very small-group basis. Assessors visit learners every two weeks.

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates on most programmes
- good development of learners' confidence and workplace skills
- good planning of training and assessment
- very good links with many employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient individual support for specific literacy and numeracy needs

Achievement and standards

91. Retention and achievement rates are very good on most courses. Central Training identified this strength in its self-assessment report. The retention rate for administration courses was 83 per cent in 2004-05, and 78 per cent in 2003-04. In business management, in 2004-05, it was 81 per cent. The achievement rate on business management courses in 2004-05 was 81 per cent. In administration, it was 67 per cent in 2004-05 and 72 per cent in 2003-04. In customer service during this period, 98 per cent of retained learners achieved their qualification. The current learners are making good progress. The standard of work in portfolios is satisfactory. They contain a suitable range of evidence.

92. Learners' development of confidence and workplace skills is good. They demonstrate increased confidence and apply their new skills well in dealing with members of the public. Learners value their jobs and recognise the personal growth and the independent working

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skills that they achieve. They develop good team-leading, team-working and customer service skills. According to Central Training's data, approximately 70 per cent of learners have taken on additional responsibilities, or have been promoted in their existing employment, or have gained jobs in other companies.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	**2005-06**		**2004-05**		**2003-04**		**2002-03**									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		33	100	68	100	12	100								
Retained*	0		27	82	45	66	3	25								
Successfully completed	0		25	76	43	63	2	17								
Still in learning	16		0	0	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

93. The planning of training and assessment is good. The provider identified this strength in its self-assessment report. Central Training has allocated assessors a good deal of time to spend in the workplace in order to assesses and verify learners' work. Assessors are very supportive of learners, and are well organised and use their time effectively and efficiently. Assessors visit learners regularly, every two weeks. Assessment and individual coaching sessions in the workplace are planned well through detailed schemes of work. Assessors respond quickly to individual learners' needs. Assessment plans are discussed regularly between the learner, the assessor, and the internal verifier. Assessors include good equal opportunities and health and safety training in the individual programmes. They set clear targets for learners, which they monitor at each progress review. Learners regularly complete specific tasks within agreed timescales. They receive good, written feedback. Central Training monitors learners' progress well through regular progress reviews, monitoring documents and feedback from employers. Employers are included in progress reviews.

94. The provider's links with many of the employers are very good. Central Training works closely with a lot of companies to identify new learning opportunities for the employees. All supervisors and line managers well understand the ETP programme's requirements and demonstrate their full support to learners. Central Training works closely with the employers to extend learners' job roles by identifying more demanding tasks and duties. Communications between the employers and the assessors are very good. Central Training encourages employers to share in celebrating learners' achievements through regular presentation events.

95. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Central Training discusses the programme details with the employer and potential learners in their workplaces. Assessors and supervisors guide learners to the most appropriate qualification according to their job role and developmental needs. Supervisors and line managers participate in the induction of new learners. Arrangements for initial assessment are satisfactory. Central Training identifies learners' individual learning styles, conducts a thorough training needs analysis and assesses learners' literacy and numeracy skills. The

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provider refers those learners who need to improve their overall literacy or numeracy skills to other local providers.

96. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the awarding body's requirements for planning and sampling. Feedback to assessors is clear and prompt actions are taken when necessary. The internal verification process is used well to monitor learners' progress against their individual action plans and targets.

97. There is not enough individual support for learners' specific literacy and numeracy needs. Central Training has partly recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report. Assessors provide informal literacy and numeracy support during assessment sessions. However, some of the learning materials and assessment questions are difficult for some of the learners to understand. Learning materials do not develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, learners who need to keep a log of customer service contacts do not present this information in a format that would develop their understanding of proportions. Assessment does not correct some basic spelling and punctuation errors.

Leadership and management

98. Staff are well qualified and use their experience well to meet learners' needs. Communications are very effective. The provider has worked successfully with employers to increase their involvement in the ETP. Staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and work well together. Staff development opportunities for administration, business management, and customer service assessors are regular and appropriate.

99. The self-assessment process is good and includes the views of employers, learners and staff. The findings in the self-assessment report closely match those of the inspectors. Central Training makes good use of learners' views to make improvements.

100. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the equality of opportunity and diversity. Assessors promote and reinforce equality of opportunity well in the workplace. They ask learners specific questions during assessments and progress reviews. Many learners demonstrate a strong awareness of diversity and have applied this awareness in their jobs.

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