

INSPECTION REPORT

KT Associates

24 February 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. KT Associates was formed in 1988. It is a private training and consultancy organisation based in Stockton-on-Tees. The largest part of its business is in providing privately funded training for large companies based on Teesside. Since 2003, it has been running national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in business administration and law funded jointly by Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the European Social Fund. Between September 2003 and August 2004 it also provided jointly funded courses in health and social care. Since September 2004, all health and social care learners have been funded entirely by the LSC as part of the employer training pilot (ETP). All learners are employed in regional businesses. They are recruited after nomination by their employers.

2. KT Associates has a head office and training centre, located in a shared office development on the edge of Stockton-on-Tees. The organisation is privately owned by two partners. One partner is responsible for management information and financial management and the other for marketing and operational management. They are supported by a senior associate who manages specific projects and delivery of training. There are two training associates, a marking associate and an administrator. KT Associates regularly uses the services of four self-employed assessors to deliver certain aspects of the training programmes on a part-time basis. It also makes occasional use of part-time assessors.

3. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Stockton-on-Tees is 2.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent. In December 2005 the unemployment rates in Tees Valley was 3.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.4 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management and the arrangements for quality improvement are good. There are satisfactory arrangements for equality of opportunity. Training is good in social care and in business management.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** All staff are consulted during the self-assessment process and feedback is also collected from learners and employers on an ongoing basis. This information is thoroughly reviewed and is used to identify strengths and weaknesses. There are good arrangements to exchange views between senior managers and more junior staff. The current self-assessment report correctly identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Some strengths were found to be no more than normal practice.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** It has a good quality improvement plan and is already taking improvement action on the main weaknesses identified during self-assessment. It responds quickly to feedback and suggestions for improvement from learners, staff and employers. It has highly effective

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procedures to monitor learners' progress and to sustain the good achievement and retention rates which it has obtained since 2003-04. All staff are fully involved in improvement work and take full responsibility for improving their contributions to learners' success.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR KT ASSOCIATES:

- promote equality of opportunity more thoroughly
- build on the new arrangements for providing literacy and numeracy support
- continue to increase the level of expertise in care
- maintain and further improve the high achievement rates
- build further on the strong links with employers
- cover all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework in self-assessment

GRADES

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

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

Health, public services and care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Social care</i>		2	
Employer training pilot	47	2	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Business management</i>		2	
Other government-funded provision	72	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Health, public services and social care, and business administration and law, were inspected in depth. There are only two learners in education and training and this area was not inspected.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	45
Number of staff interviewed	19
Number of employers interviewed	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **There are good achievement and retention rates in both areas of learning.** Since 2003-04, all learners who have completed the expected duration of their training programmes have successfully achieved their learning aims. Current learners are making good progress in both areas of learning.

9. **Learners in support services develop good workplace skills.** Their training is closely related to the jobs they undertake. Many gain additional qualifications in health and safety, food hygiene and emergency aid.

10. **Business management learners gain significantly improved skills in a wide range of management activities.** Many make good use of progression opportunities to higher-level courses and make greater use of their employers' internal training courses.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	0	1	1	0	2
Business administration and law	0	2	0	0	2
Total	0	3	1	0	4

11. **In health and social care, there is good involvement of employers in training.** Employers are positive about helping learners to gain new skills and achieve their qualifications. They provide learners with ample opportunities to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of their qualifications. **In business management, KT Associates engages well with employers who are committed to improving the management and administrative skills of their staff.** Learners have good progression opportunities and

training is often well linked to career development.

12. Learners in social care receive particularly effective personal and vocational support.

Many are on formal learning courses for the first time in many years. They receive a good induction to improve their self-confidence. Assessors work with them closely to explain what is required and provide effective help and support throughout the course.

13. Training in business management is delivered very flexibly. Assessors use different teaching and assessment methods to meet the needs of individual learners. They provide effective individual coaching, which is supplemented by group sessions, projects and exercises. They make good use of a wide range of resources including books, tapes and videos.

14. There is insufficient initial assessment in business management. Some learners may require additional support with literacy and numeracy, but these needs are not clearly identified.

Leadership and management

15. KT Associates has a good and productive relationship with employers. It mixes publicly and privately funded training very well to give a wide range of training options to many businesses. It also makes good use of links with external agencies to gain greater knowledge of particular industrial sectors where this will improve the training it provides.

16. There is particularly good development and training for KT Associates' staff. This is available to direct employees and freelance associates. They are given full support to undertake a wide range of internal training and external qualifications which benefit the experience of learners.

17. KT Associates uses highly effective methods to monitor learners' progress. It has good information about how much work each learner has completed and how much remains to be done. It uses this information well to provide additional support and resources wherever they are needed. It sets clear and challenging targets for retention and achievement and monitors these closely.

18. Feedback from learners, staff and employers is used well to improve the standard of training. There are good arrangements to collect views and comments and use them to introduce improvements in a responsive and professional manner.

19. There is insufficient preparation of some aspects of provision. Effective arrangements for identifying and supporting learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs have only recently been introduced. **There is a narrow range of expertise in care** and some learners currently receive part of their training from staff who do not have significant occupational experience in the area.

20. There is insufficient promotion of the wider aspects of equality of opportunity. KT Associates only covers the formal requirements of qualifications with learners. Other aspects of equality of opportunity are seldom raised with learners or employers.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good and productive working relationship with employers
- particularly good staff development and training
- highly effective methods for monitoring learners' progress
- good use of feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient preparation of some aspects of provision

Health, public services and care

Social care

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good development of workplace skills in support services
- good employer involvement
- particularly effective personal and vocational support for learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate range of staff expertise in care

Business administration and law

Business management

Grade 2

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- good development of management and administrative skills
- good engagement with employers
- highly flexible methods of delivery

Weaknesses

- insufficient initial assessment

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT KT ASSOCIATES:

- the flexible arrangements for training and assessment
- being able to work at their own pace
- getting a nationally recognised qualification
- the good support from their assessors
- knowing that their confidentiality will always be respected
- the tutors' clear explanation of complicated terms and jargon
- the regular assessor visits

WHAT LEARNERS THINK KT ASSOCIATES COULD IMPROVE:

- the consistency of advice on choosing the right level of course - some learners with the same skills do different levels of courses
- the opportunities to do key skills qualifications
- the amount of feedback on their overall progress
- assessors' understanding of the technical jobs
- the induction programme - 'it's too short'
- the opportunities to meet other learners doing the same course

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good and productive working relationship with employers
- particularly good staff development and training
- highly effective methods for monitoring learners' progress
- good use of feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient preparation of some aspects of provision

21. KT Associates has a good, long-standing and productive relationship with many employers across a wide range of industries. It provides a good mix of publicly funded and private training. The training is combined in flexible ways to meet the workforce development needs of large regional companies, the Teesside petrochemical industry, local authorities and support agencies. KT Associates has a good understanding of the priorities and needs of the industries in which it works. Before it engages with new employers it carries out background research into their industry in order to offer current and relevant training. Many employers have used KT Associates for long periods. Some assist KT Associates directly to train its own staff in the particular requirements of their business and industrial segment. KT Associates also makes good use of links with other external agencies to collect information and expertise when it requires specialist knowledge of particular sectors. Assessors make good use of their industrial knowledge to provide learners with useful information and advice about the most appropriate learning opportunities and courses available at their current employers.

22. KT Associates provides particularly good training and development for its staff, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The learning plan is closely linked to KT Associates' business plan. It is well designed to improve KT Associates' knowledge and skill base to help learners succeed. There is an effective staff appraisal process to identify staff training and development needs and how meeting these needs will improve KT Associates' performance. Training and development is delivered by regular internal coaching and through external qualifications. Training is frequently provided to freelance staff as well as direct employees. Significant resources are devoted to staff training, according to business needs. For example, one employee has achieved five different NVQ awards through KT Associates and others are undertaking degree-level courses. Some staff have been seconded to the care industry to improve their working knowledge of this sector as KT Associates expands its work in this area. Similarly, other recent training has been used to bring staff up to date with project management skills which they use in their work with learners.

23. KT Associates has effective arrangements for communicating business priorities to all its staff, including the freelance assessors. There are regular, well-recorded meetings. Progress with action points agreed at these meetings is always well monitored and

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reviewed. All staff fully understand their own roles and responsibilities and how these relate to the work of their colleagues. There is a clear sense of purpose and a well-understood strategy that concentrates on achieving success for learners.

24. There are sound procedures for controlling finances and managing resources. KT Associates has detailed and accurate information about its costs and reviews its long- and medium-term resource needs regularly. There is effective planning to ensure that additional resources are available where and when they are needed to support learners' progress.

25. There is insufficient preparation of some aspects of provision. Arrangements for providing literacy, numeracy and language support have not been well planned or co-ordinated. Within business management there are insufficient arrangements to reliably identify learners who may need this support. In health and social care, initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills does take place, but there are insufficient arrangements to deliver additional support to learners who require it. Similarly there is currently insufficient breadth of occupational experience in health and social care. This weakness is partially identified in the self-assessment report and improvement action is already underway. For example, KT Associates has just appointed a new member of staff with expertise in adult literacy and numeracy support and has recently purchased relevant new learning materials. Further training and work experience is being carried out to improve KT Associates' skill base in health and social care and an occupationally experienced assessor has recently been appointed.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

26. KT Associates has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy that describes its commitment to fair treatment for all learners irrespective of their background. It outlines KT Associates' aims and values in simple and straightforward language. It has been updated recently as part of KT Associates' policy review procedures and all staff were fully advised of the alterations. All staff have access to the policy and it is explained in full to new recruits during induction. The policy is fully supported by clearly written formal procedures for handling grievances and dealing with complaints, appeals or other issues.

27. Learners are aware of the appeals process and have a satisfactory understanding of how it works. Assessors remind learners of these procedures during their training, on an occasional basis.

28. Assessors are sensitive to learners' personal needs and preferences and adjust their methods of delivery accordingly. For example, special assessment methods were introduced for a learner with dyslexia and these procedures were agreed in advance with the relevant awarding body. There are satisfactory procedures to promote the safety and welfare of learners who receive effective protection from harassment and bullying during their learning programmes. Assessors promote a positive environment for learning. They fully respect learners' confidentiality and need for privacy. They respond sensitively to any personal barriers to progress that learners may identify while in the workplace.

29. Some of the NVQ courses that learners undertake contain elements and units that cover equality of opportunity. These are covered thoroughly during learners' time with KT Associates. There are some good case studies in learners' workbooks to provoke discussion and debate.

30. KT Associates' main training room is on the ground floor and there are satisfactory access arrangements for learners with mobility difficulties.

31. KT Associates has recently started to collect data on participation rates by gender, ethnicity and level of disability. A wide range of reports about the level of participation by different groups within areas of learning and on specific training programmes has recently been produced.

32. There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. There are insufficient targets to support and implement the equal opportunities policy in full, particularly in connection with widening participation in learning. There is little training or development for staff on the wider issues of diversity. Equality of opportunity issues are rarely discussed with learners beyond the formal requirements of their qualification. The provider's own values are not sufficiently explained to learners. There are insufficient actions to discuss and challenge learners' own views. KT Associates has not sufficiently explained its roles and responsibilities in promoting equality of opportunity to employers. Data is not sufficiently well used to monitor the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy or to set improvement targets or objectives. There are very few promotional leaflets or materials to attract under-represented groups to learning.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

33. KT Associates uses highly effective methods to monitor learners' progress and improve achievement rates, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Retention and achievement rates are good in both areas of learning and have been maintained at a high level since 2003-04 when the publicly funded training started. All staff have clear, realistic and challenging targets for learner retention and achievement. They are fully involved in setting these targets, assume full responsibility for achieving them and take pride in learners' success. There is comprehensive management information. Data about learners' progress is readily available to all staff. The data is well managed to provide useful, easy-to-understand information about how much progress learners have made and how much work remains to be undertaken. It is well used at monthly review meetings to monitor trends and patterns in achievement, retention and progress rates. Immediate and effective action is taken whenever a learner's progress is slower than planned and expected. Additional training, more workplace visits, different assessment methods, or other actions are all taken when needed. The management information system is also used very effectively to schedule sampling of learners' work for internal verification. There is a well-produced quality improvement plan that clearly shows what action is required to make further improvements to the provision. It includes clear success criteria and responsibilities for actions. Progress is regularly and critically reviewed on an ongoing basis.

34. KT Associates makes good use of feedback from learners, staff and employers. It collects comprehensive information about all stages of learners' progress from induction to exit. This information is thoroughly analysed to identify learners' satisfaction levels, examples of good practice, opportunities for improvement and any training needs for staff. Recent improvements introduced in line with feedback include simplifying the language used in learners' workbooks and giving greater choice to learners about whether training is delivered individually or in groups, in the workplace or at KT Associates' training centre. Improvements have also been made to the clarity of the paperwork that learners use to cross-reference their portfolios of evidence. In some cases, KT Associates has made

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particularly good use of information and communications technology to respond to feedback and requests from learners or employers. For example, it introduced video conferencing between assessors and learners for learners who work on oil rigs, and has also used e-learning for learners whose work involves periods of time spent abroad. There are effective procedures for observing training and learning. Staff who observe training are appropriately qualified and experienced. The feedback from observer to trainer is very constructive. It identifies areas for improvement and is based on critical, fair and evaluative observation.

35. There are satisfactory procedures for internal verification. Sampling takes place continuously throughout the learning programmes. Records are thorough and highly detailed. Verifiers provide good, constructive feedback to assessors and there are regular and effective standardisation meetings.

36. The self-assessment process is thorough. The views of staff, learners, employers and external verifiers, analysis of data and findings from internal audits and observations are all thoroughly evaluated. The self-assessment report correctly identifies most of KT Associates' strengths and weaknesses, although it also contains a large amount of unnecessary description and over-estimates some aspects of normal practice as strengths, particularly with regard to equality of opportunity.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Social care		2
Employer training pilot	47	2

37. There are 47 learners on ETP learning programmes in health and social care. Twenty eight learners are taking an NVQ at level 2 qualification in support services, and 19 are taking care qualifications. Sixteen care learners are taking an NVQ at level 2 and three an NVQ at level 3. Forty learners are women. Training is managed and delivered by a combination of directly employed staff and freelance assessors. All learners are employed and are recruited after nomination by their employers. They work for domiciliary and residential care organisations. Induction into learning is carried out with learners on an individual or group basis. Learners are allocated an assessor and are visited in the workplace for assessment and skills and knowledge building. Most training and assessment takes place on an individual basis, although there are occasional group work sessions.

Social care

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good development of workplace skills in support services
- good employer involvement
- particularly effective personal and vocational support for learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate range of staff expertise in care

Achievement and standards

38. Retention and achievement rates are good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Since 2003, all learners who have remained on programme for the expected duration of their learning programmes have successfully achieved their qualification. In the first two years of the programme, only 10 per cent learners left without achieving their learning aims. In 2003-04, retention and achievement rates were both 95 per cent and in 2004-05 were 88 per cent. Of those learners who started in 2005-06, none have left so far, although most have only been in learning for two to three months. Most are making good progress.

39. Learners on the support services training courses develop good workplace skills. They receive good training in the workplace and many gain additional certificates in health and safety, food hygiene and emergency aid. Training is closely related to learners' job roles and they gain a better awareness and understanding of their roles, responsibilities and the impact of their work on others. They gain much improved knowledge about how to do

their jobs well and why particular tasks need to be carried out in particular ways. They gain increased self-confidence about their personal development. Their motivation increases, their working relationships improve, and they acquire a greater willingness to undertake further training and development.

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														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	47		185	100													
Retained*	0		163	88													
Successfully completed	0		163	88													
Still in learning	47		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

Other government funded																	
Other government-funded provision	2003-04																
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	40	100															
Retained*	38	95															
Successfully completed	38	95															
Still in training	0	0															

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

The quality of provision

40. There is good employer involvement in training, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Learners work in establishments that provide good learning environments. Employers are very positive about the value of learning and ensure that learners can perform a good range of tasks to enable them to meet the standards required for their qualifications. Many employers have a good knowledge of the requirements of care and support services qualifications and act as very effective expert witnesses for learners' work and achievements. There is good communication between KT Associates and employers. KT Associates keeps employers well informed about learners' progress through verbal and written feedback. Many employers also regularly attend meetings and reviews between assessors and learners. They make valuable contributions to planning learning and assessment opportunities. The timing and frequency of assessors' visits to the workplaces are well planned to be convenient for employers and to fit in effectively with learners' shift patterns and assessment or coaching opportunities. Assessors also frequently visit learners' workplaces during the evening and at weekends.

41. KT Associates provides particularly effective personal and vocational support for learners. Assessors work flexibly to support learners according to their work experience and preferences. For some learners, working towards formal qualifications is a new and daunting experience. Induction is carried out on an individual basis or in small groups.

Assessors give clear explanations about the NVQ, portfolio-building, assessment procedures and timescales. In providing information and advice, they fully explain the value of qualifications to careers and employment in this occupational area. Assessors are friendly and positive and create a supportive environment in which most learners progress with confidence. They are always very willing to clarify issues that learners do not understand and use different delivery methods to meet the needs of individual learners. They agree meaningful short-term goals for learners and review their progress thoroughly. Most training is provided as individual coaching. Assessors give clear explanations of the theory and describe fully how this should be applied in the workplace. They work at a pace that is suitable for individual learners and pause frequently to check learning and understanding. Some well-planned training is conducted in small groups, particularly on the health and safety and equality of opportunity requirements of the qualification.

42. There is a good range of well-designed, detailed workbooks and other learning materials, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. These are well used during both individual and group work to illustrate learning points and improve learners' understanding and knowledge.

43. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessment. Assessment is generally well planned and learners understand how, when and where they will be assessed. Through discussions with assessors, learners agree realistic assessment plans. Assessors make effective use of direct observations and witness testimonies and work well with workplace assessors to use a good variety of assessment techniques. Learners receive comprehensive verbal and written feedback on their performance and the outcomes of assessment.

44. All learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills at the start of their learning programmes. Where needs are identified and learners express a wish to receive additional skills for life training, KT Associates plans to provide support through subcontracting arrangements with other training providers. KT Associates provides little positive encouragement for learners to take up this option and none have yet done so.

Leadership and management

45. There is good communication among all members of staff involved in this area of learning and with the workplace supervisors at learners' workplaces. Staff have individual targets relating to learners' success. Progress towards these targets is well monitored. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification. Standardisation meetings are held regularly and are well used to keep assessors up to date with the requirements for new awards and qualifications. Feedback from internal verifiers is very clear and developmental for assessors.

46. KT Associates collects regular feedback from learners and employers. The effectiveness of training is reviewed regularly and all staff share responsibility for introducing and delivering improvements. The self-assessment report provides a largely accurate description of the quality of provision in this area of learning.

47. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity issues. It is based closely on the formal requirements of the care standards and the values and principles which support them. Learners have a good awareness and understanding of their own rights and responsibilities and those of their clients in the workplace.

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48. The range of expertise to support the care programme is inadequate. There is only one full-time member of staff with appropriate occupational qualifications and experience. Some learners receive some of their training and assessment from staff who do not have directly relevant qualifications and expertise to deliver in the subject. KT Associates has identified this situation and is implementing a range of corrective actions. For example, staff development activities such as in-house training, coaching and shadowing people in residential and domiciliary settings are currently underway. Expert witnesses from employers are used to make judgements about the learners' performance and, increasingly, more part-time associates with the appropriate occupational expertise are being used to contribute to the delivery of the care programme.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business management</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	72	2

49. There are 41 learners working towards NVQs at level 4 in business administration and law. Of these, 14 are in management, 18 are in project management, eight are on the occupational health and safety practice course, and one is in administration. There are 22 learners working towards NVQs at level 3, of whom 10 are in management, five are in customer service and seven are in administration. There are nine learners working towards NVQs at level 2, of whom seven are following the team leadership award and two are in customer service.

50. All learners are employed. They are recruited after nomination by their employers. Many work as managers in the chemical or pharmaceutical industries and have worked for their current employers for many years before starting their training programmes. Employers provide learners with work experience and training. KT Associates provides training either at employers' premises or at their training centre. Induction takes place at employers' premises. Assessors meet learners at four-weekly intervals to conduct assessment and undertake progress reviews. Training is managed by a principal associate and a senior associate. There are four part-time self-employed assessors.

Business management***Grade 2******Strengths***

- good achievement and retention rates
- good development of management and administrative skills
- good engagement with employers
- highly flexible methods of delivery

Weaknesses

- insufficient initial assessment

Achievement and standards

51. Retention and achievement rates are good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Since 2003, all learners who reached the expected end date of their training programmes achieved their target qualification. Of the 92 learners who started in 2003-04, 85 per cent have already achieved their qualification and one learner is still on programme. Achievement rates were good across the full range of qualifications offered, ranging from 80 per cent in management to 84 per cent in health and safety practice to 94 per cent in administration and 100 per cent in customer service. Of the 104 learners who started in 2004-05, 63 per cent have so far achieved their qualification and 29 per cent are still on programme. Most of these remaining learners are making good progress towards their qualification. Only 8 per cent have left early. Of the 45 learners who started in 2005-06,

two have already achieved the qualification, two have left without completing and 41 are still in learning and making sound progress.

52. Learners develop a wide range of good management and administrative skills that are highly relevant to the businesses they work for and which improve their employability. They gain new and significantly improved skills in activities ranging from identifying and specifying the resources needed in technical projects, to making better use of information technology in office administration. Many learners grow in self-confidence. Many make good use of progression opportunities. For example, some learners now at NVQ at level 4 have already successfully completed NVQs at level 3. Others participate much more fully in their employer’s internal training and development programme after starting their publicly funded training programme.

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

Other government funded																	
Other government-funded provision	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	45		104	100	92	100											
Retained*	2		66	63	78	85											
Successfully completed	2		66	63	78	85											
Still in training	41		30	29	1	1											

*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

53. KT Associates engages well with local and regional employers. It selects and contracts with businesses that are firmly committed to enhancing their management practices through good NVQ training programmes. It designs the training programmes to meet employers’ and learners’ needs. Assessors build very effective partnerships with employers to ensure that learners have sufficient time to compile their portfolios of evidence and undertake learning activities. Employers provide good work experience to allow learners to obtain the necessary evidence to demonstrate competence. Assessors work closely with workplace supervisors to adjust or extend learners’ job roles so that learners can collect good and varied evidence to meet the requirements of their qualifications. In some cases, training and career progression are particularly well linked. For example, a learner who had been selected for possible future promotion to team leader was given a range of team leader duties in advance to enable her to gain the necessary experience to demonstrate competence for her team leadership NVQ award.

54. KT Associates uses highly flexible methods of delivery. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. Assessors provide effective coaching, training and assessment using different techniques according to the individual learners’ circumstances and the level of course. Assessors frequently visit most learners in their workplaces to review their progress, conduct assessments and deliver coaching. Some learners attend reviews at KT Associates’ training centres in preference to workplace visits to avoid too many distractions during their discussions with assessors. Coaching sessions concentrate effectively on new tasks which learners need to complete in the workplace. They improve learners’ understanding and knowledge of their job and how to perform it well. Assessors make good use of a wide

range of well-designed teaching resources. These include books, tapes, videos, learner exercises, support materials and visual aids. Individual coaching is supplemented by a good range of off-the-job training sessions. These are particularly well attended, especially by learners on level 4 NVQ courses. They are well planned, using projects and exercises which are relevant to learners' workplaces and encourage full participation in learning. They establish close links between business management theory and practice. For example, on one course, learners identify a range of project-evaluation methods. Subsequently, they assess the feasibility of using these techniques within their own organisations. Assessors use good questioning techniques to test the level of learning, understanding and attainment. Good use is made of syndicate exercises. Learners are well motivated and respond well to the teaching provided. KT Associates uses a wide range of assessment methods. These include extensive product evidence, expert witness testimonies by line managers, timely observations, comprehensive personal statements and wide-ranging discussions, many of which are recorded on tape. Assessment strategies for each learner are flexible and are well structured around their roles and responsibilities. For example, some learners follow a unit-by-unit route and others are assessed across a range of units simultaneously.

55. Assessors provide most learners with good, informal information and advice about their choice of course and optional units. They provide good information about how particular choices may help with particular career paths in the learners' current employer. They help learners to set realistic, challenging learning goals. At the end of learners' programmes, they provide further information about further training and qualification options.

56. There is insufficient initial assessment to identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs, a weakness partially identified in the self-assessment report. The provider is already implementing some improvement action. Very few learners take an initial assessment test and there is an over-reliance on learners' willingness to self-declare if they require additional help or support with these skills. There are inadequate arrangements for meeting literacy, numeracy and language needs should these be identified.

Leadership and management

57. There is good teamwork among all staff involved in delivering and supporting the training programmes. Staff clearly understand their own roles and those of their colleagues. Effective staff appraisals are conducted at yearly intervals and staff have measurable targets which are relevant to learners' progress. Extensive training is provided to keep all staff up to date with assessment methods and professional competence. Increased knowledge and expertise from staff training is well used to introduce improvements to the training programmes.

58. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification. Standardisation meetings are held regularly and ensure consistency in assessment decisions. Internal documentation is adequate and learner files are recorded effectively.

59. Feedback from learners, staff and employers is collected regularly and is used well during self-assessment. The self-assessment report correctly identifies most of the strengths and one weakness in this area of learning.

60. KT Associates provides learners with very little information or advice about equality of

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opportunity or diversity. The topic is not regularly raised or discussed with learners unless they raise specific difficulties or issues that they encounter in the workplace.

