

INSPECTION REPORT

TheLightbulb Ltd

16 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
- **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*

INSPECTION REPORT

TheLightbulb Ltd

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for TheLightbulb Ltd	1
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
Key Findings	3
What learners like about TheLightbulb Ltd	6
What learners think TheLightbulb Ltd could improve	6

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	7
Equality of opportunity	8
Quality improvement	9
Construction, planning and the built environment	11
Business administration and law	14

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. TheLightbulb Ltd (TheLightbulb) was established in May 2003 as a small, privately owned training provider. Based in Basildon, it offers a range of commercial training, people development and consultancy services throughout Essex. Since December 2003, TheLightbulb has contracted with Essex Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver vocationally related qualifications (VRQs) in team leading as part of the Employer Training Pilot programmes. Since July 2005, the provider has also offered national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in team leading and in specialised plant operations. TheLightbulb is directly responsible for marketing courses to employers and recruiting learners on to the programmes.
2. TheLightbulb has two directors and employs three full-time and three associate trainer/assessors. The specialised plant programme is subcontracted to Construction Card Manager Ltd, a construction assessment centre approved by the awarding body. TheLightbulb's vision is to 'add value to all, by making a positive difference, personally and professionally'.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Programmes in business management are good. The construction crafts programme, leadership and management, and equality of opportunity are satisfactory. However, TheLightbulb's quality improvement arrangements are inadequate.
4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** TheLightbulb is new to the self-assessment process. On confirmation of inspection, TheLightbulb conducted a quick analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. The results were good in that TheLightbulb's views matched many of the key points raised by inspectors, but the provider tended to grade its provision too highly.
5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** TheLightbulb is positive towards improvement. Inspectors were impressed with the level of commitment and communication. The provider is aware of most of its key weaknesses and is already working towards improvement in these areas.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THELIGHTBULB LTD:

- fully develop and implement quality assurance and internal verification
- sufficiently understand the NVQ process
- develop and implement literacy, numeracy and language skills support
- formalise arrangements with the subcontractor
- build on satisfactory outcomes of inspection

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Construction, planning and the built environment			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Construction crafts		3	
Employer training pilot	54	3	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Business management		2	
Employer training pilot	86	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. TheLightbulb offers training in team leadership and assessment in specialised plant operations. The inspectors carried out all inspection activities between 13 and 16 March 2006 and visited a range of sites across Essex.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	36
Number of staff interviewed	17
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of subcontractors interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **While national achievement rates for the team leader VRQs are generally good, the achievement rate at TheLightbulb is better still.** In 2004-05, all but one learner achieved the qualification and all learners passed the exam first time. For 2005-06, all learners are still on programme.

8. **Some learners on specialised plant programmes make slow progress in completing the NVQ.** Of all the learners starting programmes so far who have completed the programme or who are still in learning, 22 per cent have passed their scheduled completion date. However, a few learners have chosen to take on additional NVQ units and this has delayed their completion.

The quality of provision

9. **The planning of teaching is good on team leadership programmes and learning is good.** Tutors ensure that learners are fully involved and able to share ideas that they can adapt and use at work. Teaching resources are of high quality, teaching venues are good and tutors are very well experienced and qualified. The VRQ programme covers the needs of employers and includes an additional unit on equality and diversity.

10. **Personal support for learners is good on all programmes.** Tutors and assessors are very accessible and plan provision flexibly to accommodate learners' work schedules. Strong relationships are developed with learners who trust and value the support they are offered. Learners on team leadership NVQs are provided with additional support from a mentor, who is readily available to give advice and guidance. Employers are supportive of learners' training and assessments. Assessors give individual support to learners to develop their portfolios. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy is organised with other providers, but few learners take advantage of the provision.

11. **Assessment for learners on specialised plant programmes is rigorous.** Both assessors are well qualified and experienced. Learners and employers have a high regard for the assessors, who are very flexible in meeting the assessment needs of learners. Assessments are thoroughly checked for the learners' knowledge using both oral and written questions.

12. **Employers' engagement is good on the team leaders' VRQ programme,** and is generally effective elsewhere. Employers' needs are included in the planning of the programme. Employers greatly appreciate the support and advice they receive from TheLightbulb. Communications are good and employers can state the positive changes they have seen in their learners, and how this has benefited the business. Some employers buy additional training from TheLightbulb to support their business aims.

13. TheLightbulb is new to managing NVQs and does not fully understand the process. The company recognises this as a weakness in its self-assessment report and is working to improve its knowledge. It has introduced additional resources to support the team leadership learners. Completion dates have not been adversely affected.

Leadership and management

14. **The directors provide strong leadership and have successfully promoted TheLightbulb's vision.** Strategic objectives are focused on the organisation's capabilities and on making a positive difference to learners and staff.
15. **Management is open and consultative.** Staff feel, and are, very valued. They are responsive to the needs of the business. There is close teamworking, which significantly improves the quality of the learners' experiences.
16. Through their extensive experiences and networking, directors and staff have a good understanding of the local training environment. **They work well with a wide range of other organisations to promote learning and training.**
17. **TheLightbulb has no policy or strategy for skills for life,** the government's initiative on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed and support is arranged with other providers, but the management is insufficiently active in this area. TheLightbulb has no strategy to promote and encourage learners to take up additional support, and many do not do so.
18. Learners are well supported. **However, the procedures that apply to monitoring equality of opportunity and diversity are not in place for learners on the specialised plant programme.** The subcontractor has a system available but this is not fully implemented.
19. The provider's commitment to quality is strong. **However, recent improvements to quality assurance are not yet fully established, as TheLightbulb recognises.** TheLightbulb does not formally monitor the performance of subcontractors for crucial aspects of training. It aims to introduce a quality assurance process that will link an international quality standards scheme to the quality assurance measures based around the Common Inspection Framework. This is in the early stages of development.
20. **Internal verification is inadequate.** In both of the areas of learning inspected, while assessment is satisfactory or better, there are no consistently applied arrangements for sampling and standardisation.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong leadership enabling a shared sense of common purpose
- open and consultative management
- wide range of productive partnerships

Weaknesses

- no skills for life strategy
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity and diversity on specialised plant programme
- insufficiently established quality assurance
- inadequate internal verification

Construction, planning and the built environment

Construction crafts

Strengths

- rigorous assessment
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards completion by some learners
- insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements

Business administration and law

Business management

Strengths

- good achievement on VRQ programme
- good learning and planning of teaching
- good support for learners
- good engagement of employers on VRQ programme

Weaknesses

- insufficient understanding of NVQ processes

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT THELIGHTBULB LTD:

- the quality of training and training methods
- the teamworking, interaction and role-play on team leaders' programmes
- getting a nationally recognised qualification
- the support from employers
- the knowledge, support and expertise of assessors
- developing confidence and being more assertive on team leaders' programmes
- being able to link studies with work

WHAT LEARNERS THINK THELIGHTBULB LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- feedback to line managers/employers from TheLightbulb
- being informed about literacy and numeracy skills assessment results

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- strong leadership enabling a shared sense of common purpose
- open and consultative management
- wide range of productive partnerships

Weaknesses

- no skills for life strategy
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity and diversity on specialised plant programme
- insufficiently established quality assurance
- inadequate internal verification

21. The company's two executive directors provide strong leadership. Strategic objectives and targets are clear, with full explanation of what is to be achieved, by when and by whom. Business planning is thorough, with a clear recognition of the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and risks for the company. For example, directors are clear that the current contribution to total revenue by LSC payments is larger than they would wish. The directors have successfully promoted TheLightbulb's vision. They share a strong sense of common purpose with their small team of staff to promote learning and to make 'a positive difference, personally and professionally' to learners and staff.

22. Management is open and consultative. Directors routinely share their thinking with staff, either informally through regular daily working contacts, or more formally in team meetings. Staff feel, and are, very valued. Their contributions to discussion and the positive response of directors are an essential element of the way TheLightbulb works. All of this engenders close teamworking, which significantly improves the quality of the learners' experiences. Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, but they discuss them with each other and change these in the light of external influences and the needs of the company. A range of essential meetings is held to support strategic and day-to-day management. Data is used effectively to help set and monitor progress towards strategic and operational targets.

23. The company works well with a wide range of other organisations to promote learning and training. It works well with employers, other private sector organisations, public sector agencies, charities and colleges. Through their extensive experiences and networking, directors and staff have a good understanding of the local training environment. They skilfully blend their work on behalf of the company, such as developing and promoting new training programmes, with extending the overall opportunities for learning and development in the area. The company is innovative in providing additional learning and progression opportunities for learners who have completed their previous programme. The information, advice and guidance provided for learners is largely informal, but is satisfactory.

24. Staff training and development opportunities are readily available for TheLightbulb's staff. Directors take a broad view of the training that they will support. The annual staff appraisal scheme contributes to determining specific training needs. The value and outcomes of training are fully evaluated.

25. Resources to support learning are at least satisfactory. Training materials are particularly good for team leadership programmes. The plant used by specialised plant learners is well maintained and one company hires additional plant to aid assessment. Trainers and assessors are appropriately qualified and experienced.

26. TheLightbulb has no skills for life strategy or policy. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is insufficiently active. All learners take basic initial tests to help determine their literacy and numeracy support needs. Records of the outcomes are maintained and learners are often advised if the assessments indicate the need for support. TheLightbulb has arrangements for the provision of support with other training organisations. However, it has no strategy to promote and encourage learners to take up additional support, and many do not do so.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

27. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The company has a strong culture of valuing individuals and having respect for learners and staff. This belief is headed by one of the directors, who regularly and successfully delivers privately funded equality and diversity courses to local organisations such as the local council. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of equality. TheLightbulb has a clear mission and policies on equal opportunities. These policies are shared with employers and learners involved with the team leaders' programme. Team leadership learners' have the opportunity to complete a pre-course analysis questionnaire. This gives learners' the chance to make staff aware of any individual sensitive issues before the course starts. However, this questionnaire is not available to specialised plant learners.

28. Recruitment of learners for the team leader programmes has generally been through employers' introduction and until recently, TheLightbulb has had little influence on the balance of learners recruited. However, TheLightbulb is quick to respond to weaknesses as stated in the self-assessment report, such as insufficient activity in widening participation. The analysis of data has much improved recently and the company is actively using the information to plan for improvements. TheLightbulb monitors ethnicity, gender and learners aged over 45 years, but not learners with recognised additional learning needs. It has targeted companies mainly staffed by women to increase their opportunities to take advantage of the team leadership programme. Examples include cleaning firms and call centres. This action has had a positive outcome and increased the proportion of learners who are women from 17 per cent to 34 per cent. Marketing materials avoid stereotyping.

29. The raising of awareness for learners on the team leadership programmes is good. TheLightbulb has introduced an extra unit that is specific to the development of learners' understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace. This unit is over and above the needs of the qualification.

30. Health and safety checks are completed for all employers, although equality of opportunity is not formally included in these checks. TheLightbulb has supported some

small employers in developing their own equal opportunities policies. Equality of opportunity is not a standard item in team minutes and little reference is made to the subject. A complaints procedure is in place, but not all learners are fully aware of it.

31. During the inspection, employers and most learners were very positive about the training and support offered by TheLightbulb. However, there is insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity and diversity for learners on the specialised plant programme. The subcontractor has an equal opportunities assessment monitoring form, but this is not fully established. TheLightbulb's policies and procedures are not shared and there is limited awareness raising and checking of equality of opportunity for learners and employers.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

32. The company has a strong commitment to quality and is working hard to introduce effective quality assurance practices, but its arrangements are insufficiently established. The arrangements do not provide for a rigorous review of quality or a sufficiently reliable basis for quality improvement. The self-assessment report recognises that arrangements are 'incomplete'. A quality manager was appointed in September 2005. The company is introducing quality improvement arrangements embracing the internal audit of processes and procedures for a scheme of international standards, and quality measures based around the Common Inspection Framework. There is no overall plan for the introduction or integration of these strands. Recent work has largely responded to the need to prepare for inspection. Some steps have been taken to develop the quality manual for the internal audit process, with a target to achieve scheme registration by September 2006. However, there is no written guidance for the Common Inspection Framework elements.

33. A learner development database, designed to summarise the ongoing progress and achievements of learners, has recently been introduced. Learners' views are collected and evaluated. The outcomes of these evaluations are discussed monthly as part of the review of progress against company targets.

34. TheLightbulb does not formally monitor the performance of subcontractors for crucial aspects of training. Inspectors identified a number of weaknesses in areas of learning, such as the slow progress of NVQ learners and inadequacies with internal verification, of which TheLightbulb was not aware. A scheme for the observation of teaching and learning has recently been introduced, but there have only been some six observations so far. There is no written guidance for observers. They have not been trained to observe and their judgements are not moderated.

35. Internal verification is inadequate. In both of the areas of learning inspected, while assessment is satisfactory or better, there are no consistently applied arrangements for sampling and standardisation.

36. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The company produced its first self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. It intends that self-assessment should form the basis for the quality assurance system. Although unskilled in the process of self-assessment and with very little time to develop and write a report, the company now has a useful starting point for quality improvement. All staff, including representatives of subcontractors, are involved in the development of the report. Development plans cover actions to be taken and are updated in the light of progress. The latest development plan, with many planned actions completed, tends to imply that overall improvement is greater than it is. Inspectors

THELIGHTBULB LTD

identified many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report, but did not always give the same grades.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction, planning and the built environment

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts Employer training pilot	54	3 3

37. There are 54 learners in construction working towards a level 2 NVQ in plant operations. All learners are employed in a range of companies which operate plant, most of which operate within the construction sector. Most learners specialise in one item of plant from the wide range offered including dumper tucks, forklifts, lorry-mounted concrete pumps and excavators. TheLightBulb recruits learners on to the team leader programme. Assessment is carried out in the workplace by a subcontractor, Construction Card Manager Ltd. The employers are responsible for on- and off-site training.

Construction crafts

Strengths

- rigorous assessment
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards completion by some learners
- insufficiently developed quality assurance arrangements

Achievement and standards

38. Ninety-one learners have started the course since its introduction in September 2005. Of these, 37 have successfully completed their NVQ and none have left the programme early. In-year retention is good and the achievement rate to date is encouraging. Over 80 per cent of learners on the programme have already been assessed as competent under previous schemes and are taking the NVQ to update their qualifications. These learners would be expected to complete the NVQ in a short period of time. However, some learners are making slow progress in achieving their qualification. Of the learners who have completed, 27 per cent did so beyond their planned completion date. Of the current 54 learners, 18 per cent are already beyond their planned completion date. Some learners have delayed completion of the NVQ until they have completed additional units for other items of plant.

39. The standard of learners' work observed is good and meets industrial and NVQ requirements. Learners' portfolios are well presented and contain a good range of evidence, including assessors' observations, witness testimonies, background knowledge questions and answers, and other evidence provided by learners and their employers. The evidence presented clearly displays the learners' competence.

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	91	100	69	100												
Retained*	0	0	0	0												
Successfully completed	37	41	69	100												
Still in learning	54	59	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. Assessment is rigorous and effective. Initially, one experienced assessor worked with all the learners. A new part-time assessor has recently been recruited by the subcontractor to meet the demand resulting from the increased number of learners on the programme. Both assessors are well qualified and experienced. Learners and employers hold the assessors in high regard. Assessors make at least two visits to observe the learner's competence directly in the workplace. In addition to ensuring through their own observations that the learners are practically competent, the assessors check the learners' knowledge thoroughly using oral and written questions. Written feedback following assessments is clear, and items that the learner may be required to complete before the next assessment visit are clearly identified. These are kept in the portfolio, which the assessor retains. Without this written information, learners forget what they have to do and do not always collect work-based evidence when it is available. This frustrates learners and slows their progress.

41. Learners receive good support. Assessors have a very flexible approach to the timing and location of assessment observations. They do this to suit the needs of learners and employers. Assessors offer good support to learners to develop their portfolios. Employers go out of their way to provide experience of using plant for those learners who need it. Where learners would benefit from having further items of plant accredited to their qualification, this is arranged with the support of their employer. To date, 16 learners have acquired or are working towards recognition of their competence in more than one item of plant. Most employers are fully engaged in the NVQ process and help their learners collect evidence to complete their NVQ.

42. Learners receive no formally recorded initial assessment of their work or their experience against the requirements of the NVQ. The assessors use their experience and judgement when they induct the learners into the programme to ensure they work towards the appropriate units. The learners' experience and work are matched well to the requirements of the NVQ. Where off-the-job training is required, TheLightbulb works with the employer to find a suitable course and training provider. Where a training need has been identified, it has always been met. Learners use industry-standard plant and appropriate attention is paid to health and safety.

43. At the start of a learner's programme, they are assessed to identify their levels of literacy and numeracy. Of those assessed, over 37 per cent have low skill levels in literacy

or numeracy. Support is offered but take-up so far has been minimal. Little formal reviewing and recording of learners' progress takes place against a learning plan with milestones.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management of the area of learning are satisfactory. There are good and effective working relationships between the TheLightbulb, the subcontractor, learners and employers. The relationships tend to be informal and built upon mutual trust. Agreements are general and do not fully specify individual roles and responsibilities. Communication lines are good, and frequent contact and updating of activities takes place.

45. Quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently developed. Data on learners' progress is not routinely collected and analysed to identify any emerging trends, such as if completion times for the NVQ vary between different items of plant or employer. The subcontracting agreement does not formalise all the arrangements needed to monitor the quality of the assessment process. For example, there is no statement to order that all external verification reports and any resulting action plans are immediately copied to the provider. Internal verification takes place but there is no sampling plan. This was a weakness identified in the most recent external verifiers' report and has still to be rectified. Meetings of verifiers and assessors take place but no meetings have been held so far to standardise assessors' decisions.

46. The self-assessment report generally identifies the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. However, the report attempts to predict retention and completion rates and uses these as a key strength.

47. Equality of opportunity is covered in the induction to the NVQ and some learners are aware of the assessment appeals procedures and who to contact for assistance. However, there is little formal monitoring or promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity in the workplace.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business management</i>		2
Employer training pilot	86	2

48. TheLightbulb delivers an externally accredited introductory certificate in team leading and a level 2 NVQ in team leading to potential and operational team leaders in employment in Essex. The provider has 58 VRQ learners, working in 22 locations, and 28 NVQ learners working in 10 locations. Training is delivered by the company's own staff and its associates. The VRQ programme began in January 2004 and the NVQ programme began in September 2005.

Business management*Strengths*

- good achievement on VRQ programme
- good learning and planning of teaching
- good support for learners
- good engagement of employers on VRQ programme

Weaknesses

- insufficient understanding of NVQ processes

Achievement and standards

49. The achievement for VRQ learners is good. In 2004-05, of the 141 learners enrolled, only one did not achieve the qualification. All learners passed the examination at their first attempt and completed the qualification within the set timescale. In 2005-06, of the 87 learners who started on both programmes, only one NVQ learner has left.

50. Learners develop their skills and understanding of team leading practices and use these very effectively at work. Some learners have been promoted following their training, and all learners interviewed reported positive changes in their team working. Learners gain improved self-confidence and some are motivated to seek progression to higher-level management courses with the provider.

51. The standard of VRQ learners' work is good. The range and standard of evidence contained in learners' NVQ portfolios is satisfactory. Attendance at teaching sessions is very good and is closely monitored.

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	87	100	141	100												
Retained*	0	0	0	0												
Successfully completed	0	0	140	99												
Still in learning	86	99	0	0												

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

The quality of provision

52. Learning and planning of teaching the programmes are very good. Teaching sessions are lively, interactive and highly learner-focused. Tutors use a good range of teaching methods including effective group work and role-play. Learners very much enjoy interacting with their peers from other organisations and this enriches their learning. Sessions are well structured and clearly focused on the learners' team leading roles. The learners value the opportunities for lively debate and the exchange of ideas and experiences. Key teaching points are contained within a well-produced learners' handbook, and additional learning materials and teaching resources are of a high quality. The VRQ training course has been extended to include highly relevant sessions on diversity and health and safety. This was carried out in direct response to employers' feedback. TheLightbulb offers a flexible programme to meet employers' needs. NVQ learners are offered a four-day management training course that develops their team leadership skills. Learners highly value the 'train, assess, train' approach as it offers them an opportunity to develop their vocational skills before assessment. Tutors are very experienced, well qualified and have direct management experience which increases their credibility with learners. Training venues are well placed, offer good teaching environments and are carefully chosen for good access.

53. Personal support for learners is good. Tutors and assessors build strong relationships with their learners, who trust them and value the support they offer. Tutors and assessors are very accessible and plan flexibly to accommodate learners' work schedules. NVQ learners are provided with additional support from a mentor who is readily available to give advice and guidance. TheLightbulb has recently recruited extra staff to ensure that NVQ learners are able to complete their qualification in a timely way. Learners' evaluations of the quality of training and support are consistently very positive.

54. Employers' engagement is generally effective, but particularly so on the VRQ programme. Employers value the personalised service and advice on wider training matters they receive from the provider. Employers quickly see the positive changes that the VRQ training makes to their staff and frequently request further privately funded training courses. The programme is planned to include employers' needs. Communications between TheLightbulb and employers are good.

55. TheLightbulb's learners and employers have an insufficient understanding of the requirements of NVQs. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. The provider has only recently introduced the NVQ in team leading and this is the first NVQ that it has

managed. Quality assurance processes are insufficiently developed. Observations of assessments have not yet taken place, the internal verification strategy is incomplete and the systems for monitoring and recording assessments and support visits are weak. Some assessment practices are poor and some learners' assessment records are inaccurate. Learners have little understanding of NVQ terminology and how they can take charge of completing their portfolio. Employers are insufficiently involved in the planning of the learners' NVQ programmes and this causes some learners difficulties in collecting evidence. A small number of learners are on an inappropriate NVQ programme for their job roles. However, TheLightbulb has recognised this and has developed a procedure to assess the skills and job roles of new learners, although these have not been tested. The provider does not systematically record or manage learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs.

Leadership and management

56. Management of the VRQ programme is good, but the introduction of the NVQ was not well planned. TheLightbulb has made improvements and learners are making better progress towards achieving their learning goals. Communication is good and staff manage the programmes with commitment and energy. Staff are receptive to ideas on continuous improvement from learners, associates and external tutors. Formal quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently developed, although the observation of teaching has recently been introduced. The self-assessment report is good and recognises most of the strengths and weaknesses identified during inspection. Learners have a good understanding and awareness of equality, diversity and health and safety.

