

INSPECTION REPORT

Bedfordshire and Luton Education Business Partnership

11 May 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
- **learn**direct 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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Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Bedfordshire and Luton Education Business Partnership	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Bedfordshire and Luton Education Business Partnership	7
What learners think Bedfordshire and Luton Education Business Partnership could improve	7

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	9
Quality improvement	11
Preparation for life and work	13

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bedfordshire and Luton Education Business Partnership (EBP) has a contract with the Bedfordshire and Luton Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver work-based learning. It operates throughout Bedfordshire and Luton. It has provided an entry to employment (E2E) programme for the past three years and has recently started to provide apprenticeship programmes in childcare, learning and development. The new apprenticeship programme is delivered by the provider, but the E2E programme is delivered through six subcontractors. In addition to the publicly funded contract for the LSC, EBP offers a range of services to support stronger links with schools, higher education and businesses.

2. EBP is a non-profit making organisation that is limited by guarantee. It has a board of directors with representatives from the local community, businesses, training and education. EBP has an executive director, deputy director and three managers, including the work-based learning manager. EBP is accredited with the Investors in People standard, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

3. The unemployment rate in March 2006 for Luton was 3.6 per cent and 1.8 per cent in Bedfordshire, compared with the national rate of 2.6 per cent. Youth unemployment during the above period was 16.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 17.9 per cent.

4. The proportion of school leavers in these areas achieving five general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above is 49.9 per cent in Luton and 52.8 per cent in Bedfordshire, compared with the national average of 56.3 per cent.

5. According to the census of 2001, minority ethnic groups make up 8.1 per cent of the population in Luton and 6.7 per cent in Bedfordshire, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** More specifically, the leadership and management of the EBP, the provision in E2E and the arrangements for quality improvement are good. The approach to equality of opportunity is outstanding.

7. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is part of the annual cycle of quality assurance and is well established. It includes the views of all main stakeholders such as staff, subcontractors, referral agencies and learners. It uses a broad range of evidence to support its judgements, except for data on positive outcomes. It accurately identified its strengths and weaknesses. The inspectors gave the same grades in the main area of learning and leadership and management. The report is critical and very detailed. The development plan and

monitoring arrangements are comprehensive. There are clear and detailed plans to consolidate the strengths and improve the weaknesses.

8. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.

Retention and achievement rates have improved in all years except one. EBP has made very good progress since the previous inspection in September 2002 and reinspection in October 2004. It has managed the growth of the programme in two very different geographical areas. The management and support for subcontractors is excellent. EBP has maintained good standards of learning in E2E, the main area of learning and has also expanded the programme to include apprenticeship programmes. Its quality improvement processes are working effectively and improving the provision on an ongoing basis. The inspectors awarded higher grades to the contributory area of equality of opportunity.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON EDUCATION BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP:

- consistently provide positive outcomes for learners
- maintain the good provision
- continue to offer open access to all learners to ensure equality of opportunity
- ensure good teaching throughout the provision
- provide accreditation for literacy and numeracy for all learners
- further embed the quality improvement processes
- improve the accuracy of performance data

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		1
Quality improvement		2

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Employability training		2	
Entry to Employment	107	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

9. A team of four inspectors inspected the provision in May 2006. They inspected preparation for life and work and leadership and management. The inspection team did

not grade the provision in health, public services and care as the provision has only been developed in the past four months. There are 15 learners in this area and inspectors gathered evidence from them for leadership and management purposes.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	11
Number of learners interviewed	72
Number of staff interviewed	22
Number of employers interviewed	3
Number of subcontractors interviewed	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8
Number of visits	14

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

10. **Learners develop their skills very well and achieve positive outcomes** such as employment, further education or work-based learning. The skills include literacy, numeracy, self-confidence and employability skills.

11. **Learners achieve a good range of qualifications.** For example, 80 per cent of the current learners have gained one or more national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1 or equivalent qualifications in attic insulation, information technology (IT) and childcare. This is in addition to short qualifications such as food hygiene, health and safety and manual handling. The standard of learners' work is excellent. Their folders and portfolios are very well organised and include well-researched work.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Preparation for life and work	0	7	1	1	9
Total	0	7	1	1	9

12. **Teaching is good, particularly in small-group sessions.** Most of the teaching takes place in small groups and on an individual basis. Tutors prepare their lessons well, based on the detailed knowledge of individuals. The training is activity-based and tutors make learning fun. They set challenging targets with the learners. However, tutors do not properly plan a small minority of group sessions. Some of the activities in such sessions do not engage or challenge the learners.

13. **EBP offers a wide range of programmes to interest learners and meet their vocational needs.** They cover a broad range of curriculum areas such as the loft insulation programme, music technology, IT, sports, driving theory courses and apprenticeship programmes in childcare. Learners progress very well from the 'No to NEET' (not in

education and training (N2N) programme which is a preparatory course to E2E. The range of work placements and vocational tasters is good.

14. **The support for learners is excellent.** They have prompt and effective pastoral support and advice to help them deal with their personal difficulties. The support for study is also outstanding. Advice and guidance sessions are very good. Progress reviews are thorough and detailed and keep learners focused by monitoring their progress effectively.

Leadership and management

15. **The management of the programme is good.** Staff are well qualified and supported fully by their managers. Communications are very good, as is staff training. Tutors work effectively to improve the learners' experience. Managers use data effectively to monitor the learners' participation and achievement. The provider celebrates achievement of learners well. There is a culture of respect and dignity throughout the organisation. Quality improvement is good. The tutors share good practice effectively in their teams and with subcontractors' staff.

16. **EBP provides excellent support and management for its subcontractors.** This includes a good range of training for staff, additional funding to support learners, and carrying out thorough health and safety checks at placements and at subcontractors' premises. The support visits are very frequent and useful. EBP effectively monitors the performance of subcontractors on a regular basis by looking at performance measures. The managers put together effective action plans to improve the learners' experience at each of the subcontractors. Contracts are terminated for underperforming subcontractors.

17. **The promotion of equality of opportunity at EBP is outstanding.** The organisation has a clear vision and mission. Staff at all levels have a very high level of commitment to making a difference to the lives of many disadvantaged learners. This strategy is backed up by substantial resources for training staff, including subcontractors' staff and learners.

18. **EBP provides excellent support for learners.** The subcontractors support the learners when statutory and family networks fail the learners.

19. **The provider has very good partnerships** for joint working. The provision is developed around the needs and interests of the learners. Some partners offer training in alcohol awareness, driving theory and first aid. These programmes have changed the lifestyle habits of young people, particularly young pregnant women. EBP has worked hard to develop the capacity of the subcontractors.

20. **Learners have a thorough induction to the programme and the partnership, with a very strong emphasis on equality of opportunity and health and safety.** They are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. Equality of opportunity is further reinforced during progress reviews. Employers and work-experience providers are also made fully aware of their responsibilities towards the learners.

21. **The learning environment is welcoming and supportive in all centres** including a women-only centre in one town. In all centres, inspectors identified a culture of respect and celebration of diversity.

22. The promotion and reinforcement of equal opportunities in lessons is exceptional.

Learners carry out projects to demonstrate that they have fully understood the concept. All subcontractors celebrate learners' achievement exceptionally well.

23. The provider effectively identifies and targets underachieving groups. Managers carry out a very careful analysis of data to identify participation levels and design programmes to attract non-participants. Some examples include an exceptionally successful programme, to increase the numbers and achievements of disabled and Black Caribbean men. Similarly strong plans are in place to attract the under-represented Asian groups. EBP is successful at meeting and exceeding its targets for positive outcomes well in excess of national averages. Most learners find direction to their lives, jobs and careers, and continue with lifelong learning.

24. EBP has made very good progress towards developing a comprehensive set of quality policies and procedures in conjunction with the subcontractors. This covers all aspects of the learners' experience. Well-established teaching and learning observations cover training sessions, induction and progress reviews. Observations are moderated and demonstrate improvements in teaching. The grades are consistent with the inspectors' findings. A variety of feedback and audit systems are also well established and substantial improvements have been made in the training.

25. The self-assessment process is good. EBP produces the overall self-assessment report on the basis of thorough subcontractor reports. The development plan is clear and identifies priorities and timescales and allocates responsibilities.

26. Internal and external verification are not yet necessary, but relevant plans are in place.

27. EBP has not taken sufficient action to introduce qualifications in literacy and numeracy across the whole provision. All learners are assessed for their literacy and numeracy needs and many are receiving good support and making substantial improvements in their skills. Many of the learners are ready to achieve qualifications but they have not had sufficient opportunities so far.

28. EBP collects a broad range of data and uses this effectively to monitor the performance of subcontractors. However, the company counts positive outcomes on an annual basis rather than by intake. Managers were unable to supply accurate performance data in preparation for inspection, and are not in a position to compare themselves accurately with other providers of E2E training.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- excellent management and support for the subcontractors
- outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity
- particularly good use of data to engage hard-to-reach learners
- good development of comprehensive quality systems to enable quality improvement

Weaknesses

- inaccurate use of data

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- very good development of skills
- good teaching, particularly in small groups
- wide range of courses to meet the learners' needs
- excellent support
- good programme management

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON EDUCATION BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP:

- much better than at school - 'I learnt a lot in very short time'
- 'great teachers'
- 'a lot of help, advice and guidance'
- 'I like this place and that is why I recommended my best mate to come here'
- 'making friends, being with people of same age'
- 'practical activities such as sports, making a CD and insulating lofts'
- 'getting certificates such as food hygiene and first aid'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON EDUCATION BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP COULD IMPROVE:

- 'nothing - they are doing a great job'
- 'the opportunity to take part in sports and music without having to take qualifications'
- classroom-based teaching in one centre - 'we want more outdoor activities'
- 'more pay'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- excellent management and support for the subcontractors
- outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity
- particularly good use of data to engage hard-to-reach learners
- good development of comprehensive quality systems to enable quality improvement

Weaknesses

- inaccurate use of data

29. EBP supports and manages the performance of subcontractors very well. It carries out thorough health and safety checks at placements and at subcontractors' premises. It provides a wide range of training including safety regulations and manual handling, and very effectively involves external organisations and subcontractors to promote work-based learning. The organisations have helped by providing training, work placement and progression opportunities for learners. The staff share good practice effectively with subcontractors. EBP has successfully secured additional funding to support initiatives and staff development. For example, EBP provides extra support for new subcontractors. The support visits are frequent and the subcontractors find them useful.

30. EBP closely monitors the performance of subcontractors. For example, EBP managers meet with managers and trainers from the subcontractors on alternate months to monitor their performance and to support them. EBP provides each subcontractor with challenging targets for recruitment, achievement and progression and closely monitors their performance on a monthly basis. It gives feedback to each subcontractor on how well they are performing against other providers. The monitoring visits have a clear agenda and performance is evaluated. The managers put together action plans for subcontractors that do not provide a good standard of training for learners. For example, the provider identified that too few learners were entering work-based learning apprenticeships, and this has now improved. Subcontractors that do not provide sufficiently for learners have their contracts terminated. The managers carry out regular audits on the learners' files to check that the quality of information is consistently good. EBP keeps good records of formal meetings and visits, although it does not check actions clearly for completion. EBP keeps records of the subcontractors' staff qualifications and training. EBP's own employees also have good regular staff development.

31. Communications are good. EBP produces a monthly newsletter to keep subcontractors aware of developments and events and detailed records are kept. EBP informs its subcontractors fully about its business development plan which is clear and contains appropriate targets. It sets a clear direction for the business and sets it in the context of national and local priorities. Financial systems are satisfactory. EBP keeps careful records of income from the LSC, overall and at individual learner level. It rigorously monitors payments made to each subcontractor and the overall financial position every

month.

32. EBP has not taken sufficient timely action to introduce literacy and numeracy qualifications across all subcontractors. Learners have made rapid and substantial progress in increasing their level of literacy and numeracy, but many have not had the opportunity to be accredited for this learning. EBP has taken some recent measures to rectify this situation. The company now has a strategy which clearly identifies the processes for initial assessment, diagnostic testing and the provision of literacy and numeracy support, and has employed peripatetic tutors who help learners with additional literacy and numeracy support in a variety of ways.

33. EBP collects a broad range of data and uses it to monitor the performance of subcontractors. However, the company counts positive outcomes on an annual basis rather than by intake. This method gives an inflated view of the positive outcomes. Managers were unable to supply accurate performance data in preparation for inspection, and are not in a position to compare themselves accurately with other providers of E2E training.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

34. The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding. The organisation has a clear vision and mission to reach underachieving learners through a partnership approach. All staff, including the directors, have a high level of commitment to making a difference to the lives of many disadvantaged learners through encouraging them into lifelong learning. They have backed up this strategy by allocating substantial resources for training to develop all staff, including subcontractors' staff and learners. It has also made investments in resources such as a DVD and has made extensive use of booklets for all learners very effectively. In the previous year the provider invited an American tattoo artist to run a training programme for staff and learners. He identified how appearances can be very deceptive. He was able to make people aware of how they should look beyond the skin colour and taught them lessons in communicating sensitively. All staff, learners, subcontractors' staff and directors display a very high level of awareness of equality and diversity and communicate very sensitively.

35. The provider has very good partnerships with colleges, schools, employers, hospitals and social services. All the subcontractors are carefully chosen for their expertise in curriculum offer, geographical location and commitment to equality of opportunity. The learners have a broad choice of sports, music, IT and attic insulation training in their locality. The subcontractors also have partners and they also have an input into the training. For example, the police federation has offered courses such as driving theory and first aid. Other partners have offered courses in alcohol awareness that have changed the lifestyle habits of young people, particularly young pregnant women. EBP has worked very hard to substantially build the capacity of the subcontractors, some of which are voluntary groups. The provider has an excellent track record of providing services for learners. One programme, N2N, is an excellent example of how the provider can deliver suitable programmes for learners at risk. The provider has been asked by the local LSC to put together a joint bid for 450 places with 14 partners including three colleges, for a programme to substantially reduce the number of E2E candidates from 14-16 year old learners. The work-based learning manager is represented on various boards locally and works hard at strategic level to influence changes.

36. EBP provides well-managed and excellent support for learners. Some of the subcontractors' staff have personal experience of what the learners face. They have great empathy with the learners and go out of their way to help them. The support covers homelessness, offending, care, and counselling with agencies such as 'help in hand'. For many learners the centres and the staff within them are their only sources of help. For example, in response to a very serious incident, one provider has decided to stay open over the holiday period so that the learners have somewhere to go to in case of difficulties. Some of the learners have become mentors. The subcontractors support the learners when statutory and family networks fail them.

37. EBP provides a thorough induction which has a very strong emphasis on equality of opportunity and health and safety. The provider has produced equality of opportunity policies and procedures in an easy to understand format. The learners are fully aware of the notion of treating everyone with respect and fairly. They have developed greater sensitivity towards others and are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.

38. The promotion and reinforcement of equal opportunities through lessons is exceptional. Learners carry out projects to demonstrate that they have fully understood the concept. Inspectors identified many examples of excellent work demonstrating learners' knowledge of equality. One example was a menu for equality of opportunity that showed their understanding of bigotry, prejudice and discrimination.

39. The provider further reinforces equality of opportunity most effectively in progress reviews. Learners are asked pertinent questions of whether they are being treated fairly and achieving well. They are prepared well for work experience and are familiar with their rights and responsibilities at work. Employers and work-experience providers are also made fully aware of their responsibilities towards the learners.

40. The provider is aware of the need to encourage learners into non-traditional roles. To this effect it has promoted men into caring and women into construction, through posters and displays. For example, it has provided a miniature bricklaying resource that is used in the classrooms to construct a wall. This has encouraged young women to learn more about construction work. The learning environment is welcoming and supportive in all centres. Access to premises is good in all except one centre. One subcontractor has responded very effectively by providing a women-only centre in town to encourage women from various minority groups.

41. All subcontractors celebrate learners' achievement exceptionally well. In all centres, inspectors saw wall displays of achievements from various groups as well as of different religions, faiths and communities.

42. EBP makes good use of data to identify and target underachieving groups. The provider, in conjunction with the LSC, has established very specific, time-bound and challenging ethnic diversity impact measures and has made excellent progress towards meeting them. In some cases it has exceeded them.

43. The provider has carried out an analysis of data to identify who is not participating in learning. It has established an exceptionally successful programme to deal with it. Some of the other successful examples include learners who are at risk of exclusion from school, and challenging targets to increase the numbers of disabled and Black Caribbean men. The

provider designed a programme, carried out thorough research and spoke with relevant workers to meet this need and attract learners. It was successful in engaging this group of learners and has exceeded its own challenging targets of recruitment and achievement. Similarly, it identified that the Asian groups were under-represented in the programme and has made very solid plans to target Asian groups in Luton. It set itself the target of raising the achievement levels of disabled learners by 10 per cent, from 40 per cent to 50 per cent, and has met them in a year. The learners participating on programmes accurately reflect the numbers in the local community, including the number of women on the programme. The provider has set itself challenging targets to increase the number of teaching staff from minority ethnic groups to reflect the local community. It analyses data at subcontractor level and sets them challenging targets for recruitment and positive outcomes, including qualifications.

44. All the provider's efforts are channelled into raising the achievement levels of its learners. It is successful at meeting its targets set by the funding agency. In addition, it has been able to make a substantial difference to the lives of many learners. Some of the immeasurable targets include much improved self-confidence and self-esteem, improved relationships with their families and learners improving their lives. Most learners find direction to their lives, jobs, careers and continue towards lifelong learning.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

45. EBP has made very good progress since the previous inspection in establishing the quality systems and vastly improving the standards of learning. Notable improvements include standards of teaching and learning, much more effective reviews, increased levels of support, excellent investment in resources, an extension to the range of programmes and establishment of a women-only centre.

46. A comprehensive set of quality policies and procedures are now in place covering all aspects of the learners' experience. The quality strategy is very clear and, in conjunction with a documented quality cycle, it explains how it will assure and improve the quality of the provision. Subcontractors are fully involved in developing these procedures and sometimes extend the minimum specifications required by EBP. Updates on the quality systems are sent on CD-ROMs to subcontractors. Service level agreements are clear and include the responsibilities for each party. Teaching and learning observations are now well established and improvements have been made in the standards of teaching. The provider and the subcontractors' staff observe all tutors at least once a year including training sessions, induction and progress reviews. The provider has made good progress in helping subcontractors take responsibility for observing their own staff. The managers now moderate observations to ensure that the standards of learning and grading are consistent throughout the provision. The provider offers very clear feedback and support to tutors who achieve satisfactory or unsatisfactory grades. The managers observe the tutors again after support to check that the standards have improved. Analysis of grades shows that the quality of teaching has improved. The grading of sessions is generally accurate. However, in a few cases, managers have not given sufficient emphasis to learning.

47. EBP has fully established processes to seek feedback from learners. Learners complete surveys after induction and when they leave. EBP meets with individual learners from each provider to obtain feedback in informal settings. EBP uses focus groups very effectively to obtain learners' views on a range of issues. It analyses the results and takes prompt and effective action to instigate improvement. The managers inform the subcontractors of the

outcomes and ask for responses and actions. The programme has improved substantially. However, the managers do not compare successive surveys to evaluate improvements in learners' satisfaction. They publish the results of the meetings in the newsletter, but do not report the results of the surveys to learners.

48. Subcontractors adhere to a minimum of the EBP quality procedures and policies. In addition, they supplement the requirements with their own policies and procedures. EBP carries out thorough annual audits to check that subcontractors' own procedures comply with their requirements and the procedures are working effectively. EBP promptly informs subcontractors about non-conformance and they make the required changes to meet the standards.

49. The self-assessment process overall is well established. Subcontractors produce detailed and accurate individual reports by taking into account data and the views of all interested parties. EBP supports them fully in drawing up the report. EBP takes responsibility for the production of the overall self-assessment report. It does not, however, share its final report with the subcontractors. Although the self-assessment report is generally accurate, a few weaknesses are over-emphasised. The provider did not use all the evidence it had to back up the judgements. The development plan is clear and identifies priorities and timescales with responsibilities allocated. EBP monitors progress on a regular basis.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i> Entry to Employment	107	2 2

50. EBP has a contract with the local LSC to provide E2E and apprenticeship programmes in children's care, learning and development for young people in the area. The E2E provision is subcontracted to six providers throughout Luton and Bedfordshire. A European Social Fund (ESF) programme, N2N, was introduced in May 2005. This is a pre-E2E programme for 16-18 year old learners facing an even greater degree of disadvantage than E2E learners do. It employs eight full and part-time staff for E2E, N2N and apprenticeship programmes, as well as a part-time consultant to help on quality improvement matters.

51. At the time of inspection, 107 learners are on the E2E programme. All learners are referred by Connexions personal advisers. Of the 107 learners, 56 are men and 34 are from minority ethnic groups. E2E learners attend a minimum of 16 hours a week for an average of 22 weeks. Eleven learners are on the ESF-funded N2N programme. Nine of these learners are women and three are from minority ethnic groups. N2N learners attend for an average of 10 weeks for a minimum of 16 hours a week.

52. All E2E learners receive an initial assessment for literacy and numeracy and attend an induction at the start of their programme. Induction covers an introduction to health and safety, equal opportunities and general information about the provider. All learners are offered additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The programme includes social, drug and alcohol awareness, jobsearch and, for some, an outdoor activities course. They may also receive training in music, information and communications technology, hairdressing and beauty therapy, sport, parenting, loft insulation and childcare. Learners can gain accreditation in sports leadership, the Duke of Edinburgh's award, millennium volunteers, computer literacy, parenting and a number of national Open College Network awards. Some of the subcontractors also offer qualifications such as first aid, health and safety, basic food hygiene and manual handling to enhance employability.

53. A full-time manager is responsible for the programme through the six subcontractors. She is supported by a work placement/health and safety officer and a data administrator. EBP has employed two staff who travel to subcontractors' sites to support learners. One of the staff is a specialist in literacy and language and the other is a numeracy specialist. In addition, two consultants also work with EBP to develop these programmes.

Employability training

Strengths

- very good development of skills

- good teaching, particularly in small groups
- wide range of courses to meet the learners' needs
- excellent support
- good programme management

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications

Achievement and standards

54. Learners develop their skills very well. All learners acquire good personal, study and vocational skills. They learn very quickly what vocational area they want to work in and concentrate on developing appropriate skills including English and mathematics. Learners also develop excellent employability skills such as getting to work on a regular basis, punctuality, listening, project planning, improved behaviour and teamwork. Two of the learners have become mentors to the rest of the groups. Dismissals through poor behaviour are also down on the previous year.

55. The learners achieve a range of positive outcomes including employment, further education or work-based learning. The rates have been consistently satisfactory at 53 per cent, 47 per cent and 44 per cent for 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 respectively. Learners who have additional learning or social needs make up 39 per cent of the total number of learners and their positive outcomes are above average at 50 per cent.

56. Learners achieve the NVQ at level 1 or equivalent qualifications well. The achievement rates have almost doubled from 20 per cent in 2004-05 to 39 per cent in the current year. For example, 80 per cent of the current learners have gained one or more NVQs at level 1 or an equivalent qualification in attic insulation, IT and childcare. Some learners achieve more than two qualifications in addition to short qualifications such as food hygiene, health and safety and entry level qualifications for working in the care sector. Even those learners who do not achieve a positive outcome gain qualifications. For example, 30 per cent of the unemployed learners have gained qualifications. These qualifications enhance learners' confidence, improve their self-esteem and give them the chance to enter apprenticeship programmes. Many of the learners have had poor experiences of learning, including bullying.

57. All the 'young mums to be' learners have also achieved a level 1 equivalent qualification in childcare, but they are not counted towards a positive outcome. They have gained extremely valuable skills of parenting which they expect to use to bring up their children. They have high expectations of joining the childcare sector after their children are born. This programme has changed lives dramatically for many of the learners on this programme.

58. The standard of learners' work is good. They insulate lofts to a high standard under supervision. In care work and IT their level of attainment is high with very good study and research skills. Their folders and portfolios are very well organised and include well-researched work. Inspectors identified many excellent examples of work that had been produced after careful research, particularly the curriculum vitae.

59. The learners do not have sufficient opportunities to gain qualifications in literacy and numeracy. All learners have improved their skills in literacy and numeracy at least by one level. Some of the examples of good skills development include improved financial literacy on issues such as taxation, working out VAT, averages, fractions, decimals and percentages. Attic insulation learners, for example, are now more capable of working out the area of a building for costing the materials. Their spelling, reading and writing have improved. Many of the learners report that they have made better progress on the programme than at school. All of them have greater confidence in their own ability to deal with literacy and numeracy skills. They produce a good standard of work. However, they have not been offered accreditation as yet. This impairs their ability to enter further education and get a positive advantage when applying for jobs.

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

Inspection:

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	143		264	100	200	100	201	100	199	100						
Progression ¹	18		115	44	94	47	107	53	38	19						
Achieved objectives ²	12		58	22	49	24	106	53	48	24						
Still in learning	107		0	0	0	0	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

60. Teaching is good particularly in small-group sessions. Most of the teaching takes place in small groups and on an individual basis. Tutors prepare their lessons well, based on detailed knowledge of individuals. The tutors offer a variety of well-paced activities that involve all learners very effectively. More able learners work on additional extension activities. Tutors make very good use of practical activities and games to make learning fun. All learners have a thorough initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and a diagnostic assessment as well as a learning styles assessment. All learners are fully aware of their learning style and use it regularly to set the pace of their learning. Record-keeping and progress monitoring is thorough. The tutors set challenging learning targets with the learners and review them on a regular basis to ensure that all learners are making the progress expected of them. However, tutors do not properly plan a small minority of group sessions. Some of the activities do not engage or challenge all learners. Of the nine lessons observed, seven were good, one was satisfactory and one was inadequate.

61. EBP offers a wide range of programmes to meet learners' interests and vocational needs. Six subcontractors provide the training across a wide geographical area of Luton and Bedfordshire. Learners can very easily attend these centres. EBP covers a broad range of curriculum areas such as the loft insulation programme, music technology, IT, sports and driving theory courses and childcare. These activities attract young mums to be, homeless young people and learners who have a history of failure at school. Unusually for the programme, the number of young men and women is roughly evenly split. One of the subcontractors has opened a women-only centre and the provider has worked hard to increase participation levels from young women. EBP encourages learners to progress

from the N2N programme to E2E. The provider has recently introduced an apprenticeship programme in childcare to provide a progression route for the learners who wish to work in the sector. EBP makes good use of outside speakers for specific topics such as alcohol and drug awareness and areas such as drama. The programme hours are flexible and increase when the learners are ready to do so. Each learner has an individual timetable that meets their interests and needs. The range of work placements and vocational tasters is good. EBP uses its network of employers to arrange work experience for the learners who are ready to work.

62. The support for learners is excellent. All learners have a thorough induction and have a good recall of health and safety and equality of opportunity. They have prompt and effective pastoral support and advice to help them deal with their personal difficulties. For many learners the programme is their only source of support. The support for study is also outstanding. For example, at one centre most of the learning takes place on an individual basis at first and then the learners work in pairs before going on to small-group work. This gives the learners time to increase their confidence at their own pace. EBP provides adequate financial support for childcare so that learners can attend work placements. EBP also funds driving lessons and driving theory tests. Tutors refer learners to other agencies when appropriate. Some centres make good use of a computer programme to help learners make choices about future employment options to suit their particular needs. Advice and guidance sessions are very good and are readily available for all learners in addition to the support they get from their Connexions personal adviser.

63. Numeracy and literacy support is good. Most learners work on an individualised programme of learning after their needs are carefully identified. Tutors give them appropriate support. The needs of learners who speak English as an additional language are identified and the provider has satisfactory arrangements to meet their needs. Current learners do not have such needs. Pastoral support on dyslexia, counselling and welfare is excellent. The provider has good links with a good range of agencies to support the learners if they need it. Progress reviews are excellent. Inspectors noted many evaluative comments that the tutors and learners made in the reviews. They are thorough and detailed and keep learners focused by monitoring their progress effectively.

Leadership and management

64. Staff are well qualified and supported well by their managers and by EBP. Communications are very good. Staff training improves the tutors' professional competence.

65. Tutors work effectively to improve the experiences of learners. They use a range of effective mechanisms for seeking feedback from the learners, to improve the provision. They also meet with other local E2E providers to share methods. The tutors share good practice effectively in their teams and with subcontractors' staff. The self-assessment process is good. It involves all staff and includes learners' views as well as data. The provider, in agreement with the LSC, calculates the rates of positive outcomes on the basis of leavers in the year to give a more realistic picture of the performance of the programme. However, this does not match the way the inspectorate collects the data. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and most of the strengths matched those identified by inspectors. However, the weaknesses in teaching were not identified, although the managers are aware of them. Learning resources are satisfactory.

66. The strategies to promote equality and diversity are very effective. Learners and staff are fully aware of the need for dignity and respect. Staff discuss diversity very well in teaching sessions on a regular basis. The subcontractors work hard and flexibly to help learners succeed. For example, 10 per cent of the learners are not funded but they are allowed to continue beyond their programme end date to encourage lifelong learning and to maintain their motivation levels. The provider celebrates achievements well.

