

INSPECTION REPORT

Harrogate Training Services

02 June 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

Harrogate Training Services

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Harrogate Training Services (HTS) was part of Harrogate Borough Council until 1992, when it became a private training provider. HTS contracts with the North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council to provide work-based learning, as well as delivering education for 14 to 16 year olds. HTS also delivers training for learners aged 25 or over on a project funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Twelve members of staff work at HTS, six full time and six part time. HTS has one training centre which is located in the Harrogate town centre.

2. HTS currently trains approximately 100 learners, most of whom have employed status. The unemployment rate in Harrogate in April 2006 was 1.2 per cent compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent. The area of Harrogate and Ripon is characterised by rural market towns and employment is mainly in the service sector. In 2005, 62.8 per cent of pupils in North Yorkshire achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above, compared with a national average of 57.1 per cent. According to the 2001 census, 1.6 per cent of the population of Harrogate is from minority ethnic groups, compared with a national average of 9.1 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** HTS's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in health, public services and care.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report was detailed, but is not sufficiently accurate. Some strengths are overstated and some weakness identified by the inspection team are not identified in the report.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** HTS has formally documented quality assurance procedures, but progress on improvements from the provision inspection has been slow.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HARROGATE TRAINING SERVICES:

- continue to implement effective quality improvement strategies
- improve timely success rates
- further develop staff in early years programmes
- further improve strategies to promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity
- recruit more men into early years programmes

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		3

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Early years</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	51	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. One area of learning offered by HTS was reported and graded. Early years provision was agreed as this is the largest area of learning. In addition, a quality monitoring inspection carried out in June 2004 reported on business administration learners and information technology (IT) learners.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	16
Number of staff interviewed	13
Number of employers interviewed	5
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	7

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Success rates for early years learners are good.** The overall framework completion rate in 2004-05 was 71 per cent. All of the three learners leaving apprenticeships in 2004-05 completed their framework, as did 64 per cent of those on advanced apprenticeships. All programmes are performing above the national average.

8. In early years programmes, many learners make slow progress. At the time of the inspection, 33 per cent of learners were out of time and allocated funding.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

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

9. HTS provides good, flexible training which meets learners' and employers' needs.

Employers speak highly of the flexible training offered to them and their employees.

10. **Good progression routes are available to learners.** These are well used and learners take up the opportunities offered to them by HTS. Some learners have progressed from level 2 to level 3 NVQs and onto management training. Many learners have remained with HTS as their provider of choice.

11. Delivery of training for early years programmes is satisfactory. Training is well planned, but insufficient ongoing checks are made on learning and range of learning activities is too narrow. Learners' work is reviewed regularly to a satisfactory standard.

12. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners receive an initial assessment. Additional learning needs are identified and supported.

Leadership and management

13. **HTS has formed good external partnerships.** Its relations with employers are good. HTS works closely with a range of other partners including local schools and the Connexions service for the benefit of learners.

14. Internal communications are good. Staff meet regularly and carefully consider learners' achievements and progress. Meetings are recorded in detail with clear action points.

15. **Employers are monitored well for equality of opportunity.** A comprehensive pack for employers provides a useful self-assessment tool for equality and diversity issues.

16. **HTS uses feedback particularly effectively to make improvements for learners.** The training manager systematically analyses all of the feedback and uses it to make useful changes.

17. **HTS has been slow to implement strategies to improve provision.** Many of the key weaknesses identified during the previous inspection in 2002 have not been resolved. The proportion of learners who do not achieve their qualifications within the planned period remains too high at 33 per cent.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good external partnerships
- good use of feedback

HARROGATE TRAINING SERVICES

- good plans to monitor employers' equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of strategies to improve the provision
- insufficient strategies to improve learners' understanding of equality of opportunity

Health, public services and care

Early years

Strengths

- good overall success rates
- flexible training to meet learners' and employers' needs
- good progression for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress for many learners
- insufficiently experienced staff

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HARROGATE TRAINING SERVICES:

- the relaxed atmosphere at the training centre
- the organised days out
- that help is always available
- the flexibility of the programme
- the location of the training centre in town

WHAT LEARNERS THINK HARROGATE TRAINING SERVICES COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of staff in early years programmes
- 'the stairs'
- the structure on the days they come into the centre
- the feedback on progress
- the turnover of assessors - they change too often

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good external partnerships
- good use of feedback
- good plans to monitor employers' equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of strategies to improve the provision
- insufficient strategies to improve learners' understanding of equality of opportunity

18. HTS has formed good external partnerships. The company is committed to working with external organisations to share and benefit from examples of good practice. Relations with employers are good. Employers comment favourably on the flexibility and professionalism of HTS's staff. HTS works closely with Connexions to provide support and guidance for learners who are at risk of leaving their training programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. HTS also works closely with the pupil referral unit and provides training and work placements for school pupils in year 10 who have been identified as needing a different educational experience to the one which schools can provide. Through its work with this challenging group of learners, HTS has developed its approach to working with all learners, for example by introducing a team approach towards learning and support and by providing taster courses.

19. Internal communications are good. Staff meet formally every two months to discuss all aspects of the company's performance. Learners' achievements and progress are carefully considered. Meetings are recorded in detail and circulated to all staff. Action plans, timescales and responsibilities are clearly identified. Management is open and friendly. Staff feel well supported. Learners have good access to staff and managers. The company's policies and procedures on health and safety, equality of opportunity and bullying and harassment are prominently displayed in the public areas of the training centre.

20. Managers have taken effective steps to improve qualification success rates. Framework completion rates were judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection. They are now good. Several new staff have been appointed to carry out progress reviews and monitor learners' unit and key skills qualification achievements. An office manager has been appointed to carry out regular audits of learners' progress against their action plan. Group tuition sessions have been replaced by individual coaching sessions focusing more closely on each learner's individual needs.

21. Management of additional support is satisfactory. All learners complete an application form and attend an interview. Those offered a place receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. Approximately 50 per cent of learners have some learning difficulties. Of these about 5 per cent have severe learning difficulties. Learners receive

additional individual support at the training centre. Support is recorded on the learner's individual learning plan, but the effectiveness of additional support in promoting achievement is not formally recorded or evaluated. HTS has successfully introduced an online key skills assessment for the examined component of the qualification.

22. The company has effective management systems to collect accurate data on learners' numbers, success rates and timely achievement. Managers understand the data well and make good use of this information to set targets for staff. Data was used well to support judgements during the self-assessment process.

23. Training and development are satisfactory. The company provides financial support for staff to attend professional updating events. Staff performance is reviewed formally once a year and supported by three-monthly reviews. Induction and mentoring arrangements for new staff are good. Some staff lack suitable qualifications and experience to carry out their role. One assessor has only recently completed a level 3 childcare qualification, but is responsible for carrying out assessments at level 2 and 3. Another does not have an assessors' qualification and has little occupational experience in childcare. The childcare co-ordinator is currently on long-term sickness leave. Effective alternative arrangements are in place to support learners during her absence.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

24. HTS has a good plan to monitor employers for equality of opportunity. All learners' placements are regularly monitored for equality of opportunity. Placement providers are asked to provide a copy of their policy before a placement is accepted. An employers' pack is sent to employers at the start of each placement. The pack includes a comprehensive questionnaire which provides a self-assessment for the organisation on six indicators. These indicators are the employers' equal opportunities policies, equal opportunities training, principles of good recruitment and selection practice, harassment and codes of conduct, disability discrimination checklist, and writing an action plan. However, very few questionnaires have been returned by employers. Those that have, have not been analysed systematically.

25. HTS's equal opportunities policies and procedures are satisfactory. Procedures are comprehensive and cover all appropriate legislation. The policy is reviewed annually by staff and managers, and effectively covers staff and learners. The policy is displayed on the noticeboard along with other promotional materials, including displays developed by learners.

26. HTS provides satisfactory staff development activities on equality of opportunity. All staff have completed mandatory staff training in equality of opportunity in February 2005. Updating training was booked with learndirect for February 2006, but unfortunately could not proceed. HTS is currently investigating supporting staff on accredited training through online provision.

27. HTS makes satisfactory arrangements for alternative access. HTS is in the process of relocating to a new building within the town centre with ground-floor access which will better suit learners with restricted mobility and other support needs. The current training centre is located on the upper floors of an old building in the centre of Harrogate. While this is a very good location for local learners in the town centre, it has no lift facilities for those learners with restricted mobility. HTS makes arrangements for alternative provision,

using the Connexions building where interviews and induction can be delivered.

28. HTS is making satisfactory progress in increasing the number of men in early years programmes. HTS has recognised that the number of men working in childcare is low, as is the number of learners from a minority ethnic background. HTS promotes childcare to young men through its school visits. A recent ESF bid has been submitted which aims to support learners aged over 25 from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, these strategies have not yet had a significant effect on recruitment to early years programmes.

29. Strategies to improve learners' understanding of equality of opportunity are insufficient. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Harassment and complaints procedures are clearly displayed on noticeboards and explained to learners at induction. However, HTS does not emphasise in its apprenticeship leaflets that it is an equal opportunities provider that welcomes diversity. Learners' recorded responses to questions on equality of opportunity are poorly developed. Although responses are provided in learners' own languages they do not show a good understanding of diversity. For example, most learners suggest that equality of opportunity means treating everybody the same. However, these responses are not being identified by staff. Learners' posters, displayed on noticeboards, also indicate that they do not have a wider understanding of diversity. Responses to questionnaires have not yet been analysed or used consistently to support new teaching strategies to help develop learners' understanding. For early years learners, equal opportunities issues do not go beyond the NVQ requirements and reviews and assessments are not adequately used to reinforce and develop learners' understanding of the issues.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

30. HTS uses feedback particularly effectively to make improvements for learners. It asks learners to fill in questionnaires, both during their training and when they leave. These include questionnaires about their off-the-job training. HTS also encourages learners to fill in feedback slips and pin them to the main noticeboard. Staff write responses on the slips and return them to the noticeboard for everyone to see. The training manager analyses all the feedback and has used it to make improvements. For example, learners' feedback led HTS to set up social events for learners and to provide training for learners to use the internet for research. HTS also collects and responds effectively to feedback from staff and employers. However, the feedback is not being used to improve progress.

31. HTS has satisfactory quality assurance policies and procedures, which cover most aspects of the learners' experience. Actions taken to improve the provision are clearly identified and recorded in the company's development plan. HTS carries out regular internal audits to monitor compliance with the company's administrative procedures. Learning sessions are regularly observed and evaluated, and learners are interviewed. Staff receive constructive feedback. However, observations are not planned in advance and there is little supporting paperwork to identify good practice or to tackle weaknesses. HTS does not formally analyse or summarise the information gained from lesson observations.

32. Learners receive a satisfactory induction which covers health and safety information and details how to make a complaint or to appeal against an assessment decision. The company carries out health and safety checks at each work placement and at the training centre. Criminal records bureau checks have been carried out on all learners and staff.

33. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. External verifiers' reports comment favourably on assessment and verification practice. An internal verification sampling plan covers all assessors and units. Verification activity takes place at regular intervals in the learners' programme. Verifiers provide helpful and constructive comments and advice to assessors. Internal verifiers meet regularly to standardise assessment decisions and share good practice.

34. The company has been slow to implement strategies to improve the provision. Despite some effective measures taken to improve success rates, many of the key weaknesses identified during the previous inspection in 2002 have not been resolved. HTS has set a target to ensure all learners achieve their full qualification within the planned period of study. However, the proportion of learners who do not achieve their qualification within the planned period of study is still too high at 33 per cent. For example, learners who leave early are not offered unit accreditation. Learners who leave the training programme without achieving their targets are removed from the database. This does not enable effective trend analysis. There continues to be too much reliance on the use of written questions in portfolios. Access to the training centre for learners with restricted mobility remains poor, though the company is shortly due to move to new, accessible premises.

35. The self-assessment process is generally inclusive. Staff contributed to the judgements in the report. Feedback from learners is used to make judgements. Employers have insufficient involvement, however. Managers have a satisfactory understanding of the company's main strengths and weaknesses. HTS has a detailed action plan to tackle weaknesses identified during the previous inspection, but progress against these weaknesses has been slow against the timely progress of learners. The self-assessment report identifies some of the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, but some strengths are overstated in the report and many weaknesses are not identified. Inspectors gave lower grades for all aspects of the provision than those in the provider's self-assessment report. The self-assessment report was not sufficiently thorough and did not have accurate judgements about the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		3
Apprenticeships for young people	51	3

36. HTS has 51 learners in early years care and education programmes. Of the 51, 22 are on apprenticeships, 16 are on advanced apprenticeships, one learner is working towards a level 2 NVQ and 12 are working towards a level 3 NVQ. Learners can start their training at any time of the year. Some learners apply directly to HTS, while others are referred by employers or by Connexions. All learners are interviewed and undergo assessment on entry in literacy, numeracy, key skills and occupational skills. Twenty-three per cent of learners have additional learning needs. They receive extra support from their trainer and assessor. HTS works with day nurseries to provide work placements for learners. All but one of the learners have employed status. All learners receive an induction at HTS and a separate induction from their employer. Off-the-job training is delivered in the workplace and at the training centre to meet learners' individual needs. Learners receive progress reviews every six weeks. Assessment is carried out by HTS or by work-based assessors. Currently there are two men on early years programmes and no learners from minority ethnic groups.

Early years

Strengths

- good overall success rates
- flexible training to meet learners' and employers' needs
- good progression for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress for many learners
- insufficiently experienced staff

Achievement and standards

37. Overall success rates on early years programmes are good. On advanced apprenticeship programmes, the overall framework success rate was 78 per cent in 2003-04. In 2004-05 the overall success rate of advanced apprentices was 64 per cent. On apprenticeship programmes, the overall framework success rate was 60 per cent in 2003-04 and 100 per cent in 2004-05 for the three learners on the programme. On NVQ programmes the overall success rate was 60 per cent in 2003-04 and 69 per cent in 2004-05. All programmes are performing significantly above national averages.

38. The standard of learners' work is generally satisfactory. Background knowledge evidence is usually supplied by question and answer but there are examples of oral

questioning and the use of professional discussion. Learners receive detailed feedback on the standard of their work, although insufficient attention is paid to some spelling and grammatical errors, particularly at level 3. Learners are developing appropriate workplace skills and are adequately linking background knowledge to practice in the workplace.

39. Many learners make slow progress. Timely success rates on the apprenticeship programme and the NVQ programmes in 2003-04 and 2004-05 are poor and are below national averages. Timely success rates for the advanced apprenticeship programme are low, although they are improving and are above national averages. At the time of the inspection, 17 of the 51 learners on programme were out of their allocated time and funding. A number of learners have experienced difficulties with timely continuous assessment, and have fallen behind. HTS recognises this in its self-assessment report and is putting strategies in place to deal with these issues. There is insufficient guidance for two new learners on the interpretation and understanding of the qualification. Many learners are unclear of what evidence is required on key skills qualifications, and are making insufficient progress in the collection of suitable evidence.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	9	78	55	78	27
		timely	11	36	31	36	15
	2004-05	overall	11	73	49	64	22
		timely	10	40	26	64	22
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	5	80	49	60	21
		timely	6	17	20	17	7
	2004-05	overall	3	100	53	100	36
		timely	9	0	0	0	0
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	15	60	48	0	0
		timely	17	24	25	0	0
	2004-05	overall	16	69	53	0	0
		timely	19	16	33	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

40. Good flexible training for learners and employers successfully meets their needs. Employers speak highly of the flexible training offered to them and their employees. Learners are positive about the arrangements they have for on- and off-the-job training. HTS arranges training within the centre with fortnightly workshops for learners to develop their portfolios and gain essential knowledge. Learners who cannot attend these sessions are offered individual support from staff in the workplace. Some nurseries make their venues available for learners within the locality to attend sessions with staff. Learners are able to contact HTS easily and there is good access to staff by telephone or e-mail. Staff are supportive of learners' individual needs and will collect work from them at any time for marking and feedback. Learners can also drop into the centre at any time to discuss their

work with staff and get additional help with building their portfolio. Learners have the opportunity to attend the centre to work independently and access resources such as learning materials, the internet and computers. HTS has good links with work-based assessors and communicates well with employers to quickly support them in their practice and respond to any queries or problems, as well as to keep them informed of learners' progress. Learners who may require extra help receive good support through additional visits to the workplace and arrangements to meet at the centre when the learner is not at work.

41. Good progression routes are available for learners at HTS. School-age young people attend taster sessions, and some have progressed onto full-time programmes at HTS. Nine current learners have progressed from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships with HTS, and two learners have progressed from level 2 programmes to level 3 and onto management qualifications. Three learners have progressed from NVQs to apprenticeships and two learners have progressed from NVQs to advanced apprenticeships. Progression routes are meeting employers' needs, enabling learners to develop their careers and fulfil roles within the workplace.

42. Delivery of training is satisfactory. Training is planned with clear aims and objectives with checks on previous learning. Learners demonstrate interest in the topic being covered. However, there are insufficient ongoing checks on learning and an insufficient range of learning activities. Tutors do not always provide learning materials and visual images to illustrate and support the topic.

43. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners receive an adequate initial assessment at the start of their programme. The results of initial assessment are clearly documented and are used in the production of action plans and individual learning plans. Learners are aware of the results and understand the key skills qualification requirements that they must meet to complete the apprenticeship framework. Additional learning needs are identified and supported.

44. Continuous assessment is planned satisfactorily, being clearly negotiated with each learner and the workplace. Assessment opportunities are appropriate and identified for learners, but learners can experience some delays in assessment.

45. All relevant issues are covered satisfactorily in induction. However, a small number of learners do not feel fully confident that they have received all the relevant information to help them fully understand their NVQ.

46. Learners' reviews are conducted within a realistic timescale and to a satisfactory standard. Learners have a good understanding of the review process. Employers are fully involved in the process and are required to make comments on the learners' progress. Everyone involved in the review process receives written copies. Progress is detailed and action-planning for future learning is recorded. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is not sufficiently promoted or checked within the review process.

Leadership and management

47. Communication is good within the small team of staff who are working well together to raise learners' timely success rates. The internal verification policy and procedures are satisfactory, with sampling plans in place for all aspects of the qualifications. Staff

performance and the activities of work-based assessors are observed. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and identifies the strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. Audits are currently taking place to ensure that management information is accurate and learners' progress is monitored. Learning resources, materials and the learning environments are at a satisfactory standard. Few workplaces provide separate space for meetings with learners. While HTS has an experienced and well-qualified childcare staff member, some new staff have insufficient qualifications and experience. These new staff are expecting to achieve appropriate qualifications in the near future. However, there are instances of assessors assessing at levels above the qualification they hold.

