

INSPECTION REPORT

Humberside nextstep

7 April 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 over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

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 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 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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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTRACTOR

1. Since August 2004, the **nextstep** contract for the Humberside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) area has been held by igen Ltd (igen) which also holds the **nextstep** contract in Tees Valley and is a joint holder of the contract in West Yorkshire with three other partners. igen is a company limited by guarantee. The guarantor is Leeds City Council. The **nextstep** contract in Humberside is delivered by an operating division of igen called Future Pathways. Future Pathways also delivers training and support programmes for young people aged between 16 and 19 alongside the **nextstep** contract. This inspection is concerned only with the **nextstep** contract.
2. Nationally, the **nextstep** service within igen is the responsibility of the Future Pathways divisional director. In Humberside, **nextstep** is managed by a senior operations manager. He is supported by a contract manager and two administrative staff. General management services, such as human resource management, financial control and information and communications technology (ICT) support are carried out by igen's head office in Leeds.
3. All service delivery is subcontracted. There are 13 subcontractors, delivering from 28 locations. Forty-five staff are involved in direct service delivery. Each subcontractor also has its own internal management and support staff. All subcontractors deliver the **nextstep** service alongside other services.
4. The Humberside **nextstep** contract covers the three main urban centres of Kingston-upon-Hull (Hull), Grimsby and Scunthorpe, plus the rural areas around these main centres and smaller towns such as Beverley and Bridlington. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic communities is 6.5 per cent in Yorkshire and Humber and 2.3 per cent in Hull, compared with 9.1 per cent in England as a whole. In January 2006, unemployment rates were 4.2 per cent in Hull, 4 per cent in Grimsby and 2.9 per cent in Scunthorpe, compared with 2.5 per cent in England as a whole.

SCOPE OF THE NEXTSTEP CONTRACT

5. Humberside **nextstep** provides advice sessions on an individual basis, in person and through a telephone helpline. Subject to eligibility criteria, it also provides enhanced service sessions for some clients. Some enhanced service sessions are delivered on a group basis. The main target group is clients who do not hold a level 2 educational qualification. Contractual targets for this group in the period August 2005 to July 2006 are for 6,330 advice sessions and 406 enhanced service sessions. By agreement with local LSCs, face-to-face advice sessions may also be provided for up to 500 clients who already hold a level 2 qualification, subject to certain eligibility criteria. Eligible clients include those who need support with English language, clients with learning disabilities and clients facing redundancy from work. Information and the telephone helpline service are available to all clients, irrespective of their level of prior educational achievement. Information is also available through an interactive website. Humberside **nextstep** provides information to approximately 150,000 clients each year. The value of the **nextstep** contract in 2005-06 is £586,889.

The following table shows the **nextstep** subcontractors. The * indicates those visited on inspection.

nextstep subcontractors	Visited on inspection
Best Training (Lincs) Ltd	*
Carlton Education and Enterprise Ltd	
Changes – The Learning Shop	*
Children and Family Action	*
Connexions Humber Ltd	*
Fern Training and Development	*
The Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education	*
Ib2K Ltd	*
Mencap	*
Preston Road NDC	*
Rainer	*
Seaside Radio Ltd	*
Shaw Trust	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspector days	19
Number of sites visited	22
Number of staff interviews (includes subcontractors)	46
Number of client interviews	26
Number of advice sessions observed	19
Number of external agency interviews	4
Number of client action plans reviewed	29

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management and arrangements for equality of opportunity are both satisfactory. Arrangements for quality improvement are inadequate. Achievement and standards and the quality of the **nextstep** provision are satisfactory.

7. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Humberside **nextstep** involves all its subcontractors in gathering information for self-assessment. They provide their own judgements about their performance against all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework using a well-designed checklist. The main grades in self-assessment report are correct, although equality of opportunity is graded as good rather than satisfactory and quality improvement as satisfactory rather than inadequate. Some of the weaknesses identified during inspection, particularly in leadership and management, are not identified in the self-assessment report. Some of the practices claimed as strengths are standard procedures or have only a marginal impact on the quality of service provided to the clients. The content of the self-assessment report has not been communicated effectively to all subcontractors.

8. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** It collects and analyses feedback from clients on a regular basis. It has recently introduced procedures to observe advice session being delivered. A new management information system is on order. The network of subcontractors is growing steadily and the newer subcontractors are quickly integrated into the delivery network. However, to date there has been little trend analysis of the overall performance of **nextstep**, and an over-concentration on the number of clients being seen rather the quality of service being delivered.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HUMBERSIDE NEXTSTEP:

- plan advice sessions more thoroughly
- make much better use of data to monitor performance
- increase the emphasis given to achieving positive outcomes
- more fully involve all stakeholders in improving **nextstep**
- raise the quality of all advice session to the level of the best currently provided
- continue to provide a well-targeted service
- continue to develop partnership working

GRADES

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4
The quality of the nextstep provision		Grade 3
Overall nextstep contract		Contributory grade 3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. Humberside **nextstep** clients gain an increased awareness of the breadth of employment and learning opportunities available to them. They become more able to make long-term plans and to take the first steps towards identifying and achieving improvement in their levels of education or employment status. They become more adept at overcoming barriers to progress and finding new ways to move forward in life.

10. Just under 60 per cent of Humberside **nextstep** clients who receive an advice session enter learning or work within six months. Approximately 12 per cent of clients who are unemployed when they first contact Humberside **nextstep** find work and enter learning.

The quality of the nextstep provision

Grades given to observed sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
	1	5	10	3	19

11. Humberside nextstep provides particularly timely and practical interventions for its clients. Advisers are particularly adept at identifying clients' immediate barriers to learning and work and taking quick actions to resolve these barriers. They then concentrate on long-term progress. They make good use of subsequent advice sessions to ensure that initial momentum is not lost.

12. Most advice sessions provide a satisfactory service to clients. Advice is impartial and confidential. Advisers use a wide range of information about learning and work to help clients consider their various options. Clients who require longer periods to discuss relevant issues always receive it.

13. Some advice sessions are insufficiently planned and there is poor action-planning. These sessions do not have sufficient structure. Important issues for particular clients are not raised and explored sufficiently early in these sessions for their significance to be considered. Action plans are not sufficiently well summarised for clients and their targets or objectives are not clear. In some cases, clients do not receive written summaries of the actions that have been considered.

Leadership and management

14. Humberside nextstep plans its provision very coherently. There is a clear business plan which sets objectives that are closely related to the needs of clients and managing the provision to meet these needs. Clear direction and priorities are set for managing the network of subcontractors. These priorities are well communicated and monitored by well-designed and relevant success criteria and measures.

15. Humberside nextstep takes good actions to encourage clients from disadvantaged groups into learning and work. It has a good working knowledge about the range of community-based organisations across its region. It uses this information effectively to provide a range of services which are attractive to potential clients who are not participating in learning or work and are facing barriers to participation in society. All subcontractors provide other relevant services alongside information and advice which are attractive to particular segments of the community with whom the work.

16. Humberside nextstep makes insufficient use of data to monitor performance. The methods used to compile information about clients' progress after they use the service are very unreliable and contain major errors. The information collected provides a poor basis on which to plan improvements. The need for accurate data is not given adequate attention by management.

17. There are inadequate arrangements to ensure quality improvement. Current procedures focus on maintaining satisfactory levels of service. Not enough work is done to share good practice and ensure that all clients receive the best possible services that nextstep can provide.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very coherent planning of provision
- good actions to encourage clients from disadvantaged groups into learning and work

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to monitor performance
- inadequate arrangements to secure quality improvement

The quality of the nextstep provision

Strengths

- particularly timely and practical interventions for clients

Weaknesses

- some insufficiently well-planned advice sessions and poor action-planning

WHAT CLIENTS LIKE ABOUT HUMBERSIDE NEXTSTEP:

- the accessibility of useful information
- the time that is given to them
- the help they get to produce good curriculum vitae and find work
- feeling more positive about the future
- the helpful and friendly staff

WHAT CLIENTS THINK HUMBERSIDE NEXTSTEP COULD IMPROVE:

- the access to online literacy and numeracy tests
- the amount of direct help available when searching for jobs
- the range of opportunities for work experience
- the availability of information about how enrolling on training courses may affect eligibility for benefits

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- very coherent planning of provision
- good actions to encourage clients from disadvantaged groups into learning and work

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to monitor performance
- inadequate arrangements to secure quality improvement

18. Humberside **nextstep** plans its provision very coherently. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. There is a very clear business plan that identifies relevant and meaningful objectives for delivering **nextstep** to clients. Priority is given to actions that have a direct effect on the clients that Humberside **nextstep** seeks to attract and serve. For example, since the contract was awarded, Humberside **nextstep** has focused on expanding the availability of its services to clients across the region and to providing relevant training and development to staff in the new organisation. Progress against these priorities is thoroughly monitored. The number of subcontractors has been increased from three to 13. There are now 28 delivery sites, compared with three 18 months ago, and all delivery staff either hold or are working towards relevant qualifications in advice and guidance. There are clear and well-managed procedures for identifying organisations with the potential to provide information and advice services and then establishing them as operational subcontractors. Priorities for **nextstep** are well communicated and there are clear reporting channels for monitoring progress with business objectives from subcontractors through to Future Pathway's and igen's senior management. There are clear, well-defined responsibilities for delivering particular aspects of the business plan.

19. Financial expenditure is particularly well managed and controlled. Resources are focused on services for clients. Funding is well managed to provide significantly greater access to advice sessions than is needed to meet contractual requirements. In particular, clients who require ongoing support can receive more than one advice session within the same financial year. Subsequent advice sessions are very well allocated on a simple and fair basis according to clients' needs. They are available through all subcontractors. Individual clients may receive these subsequent services from the same subcontractor they initially contacted or from an alternative organisation if this is more relevant to their needs.

20. Humberside **nextstep** has developed good partnerships with external agencies. It works particularly closely with local Jobcentre Plus offices to provide integrated services for unemployed clients. There is very good co-operation over referrals. For example, Jobcentre Plus advisers make extensive use of the Humberside **nextstep** service to provide advice to people who are not eligible for similar services under its own new deal or related training schemes. In return, many Jobcentre Plus advisers attend training and communication events arranged by Humberside **nextstep**. Humberside **nextstep** produces a good range of marketing and promotional materials about its own service and other learning opportunities. These are distributed widely by external organisations with whom Humberside **nextstep** has working links. There is a particularly well-designed pocket directory of local learning opportunities which was produced jointly with training providers in the Humberside LSC region.

21. Humberside **nextstep** provides a good range of training and professional development for its advisers. It runs an ongoing series of well-attended full- and half-day workshops on relevant topics such as advanced interviewing techniques. These workshops are also used well to keep advisers fully up to date about developments within **nextstep** and the range of specialist expertise provided by other subcontractors.

22. Humberside **nextstep** has a satisfactory strategic approach to identifying clients who need support with their literacy and numeracy skills and signposting them to appropriate skills for life training. The strategy concentrates on providing essential training for all advisers so that they can identify needs sensitively and provide relevant information about local training opportunities.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

23. Humberside **nextstep** takes good action to encourage clients from disadvantaged groups into learning and work. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. It sets and monitors meaningful targets for participation by gender, ethnicity, age and level of disability. It has also identified people facing redundancy or long-term unemployment among its priority groups. Providing a network of services which are readily available and attractive to people facing barriers to participating in learning and work is a primary and well-planned business objective. Humberside **nextstep** has good information about the range of community-based organisations across its region. It uses this effectively to provide a range of services which are attractive and accessible to its target groups. Expansion and development of the network is based on identified needs for particular groups of clients. For example, during 2004-05, Humberside **nextstep** identified that it was working with fewer than expected clients with learning difficulties. It identified Mencap as having appropriate expertise and geographical coverage to attract and assist these clients. It arranged appropriate training and development in information and advice for relevant staff so that Mencap could join the delivery network. Mencap now provides specialist services to **nextstep** clients with learning difficulties in Scunthorpe and Grimsby. Other subcontractors recognise this specialist expertise and refer clients appropriately. Similarly, Humberside **nextstep** recently identified that the proportion of its clients aged over 50 was declining. **nextstep** also ran well-received training workshops for advisers about the barriers faced by clients over 50 using its services and their ability to progress further in learning or work.

24. All subcontractors provide other relevant services alongside information and advice, which are attractive to particular segments of the community with whom the work. They make good use of these services to promote the **nextstep** service. For example, the Learning Shop in Hull runs a training scheme for the local council to increase their number of employees from minority ethnic communities. It makes good use of this programme to promote the value of the service that **nextstep** can provide to these communities. Connexions in Scunthorpe works closely with a small voluntary organisation that provides language training to people from minority ethnic communities. It runs effective outreach services on their premises which provide good information and advice about further learning and employment opportunities. There are good arrangements to provide training and development to all advisers so that they can provide suitable support for a wide range of clients. For example, effective workshops for advisers have been delivered on understanding dyslexia, and supporting clients who misuse drugs.

25. Training locations are spread satisfactorily across communities. All subcontractors operate from friendly and welcoming premises in locations which are readily accessible to local residents. There is a balanced geographical coverage between the main population centres and rural areas.

26. Most of the delivery sites are accessible for clients with mobility difficulties. Where this is difficult, alternative arrangements have been established at more accessible premises. There is an adequate supply of promotional material and information leaflets in alternative languages and some information is also available in Braille from some subcontractors. The website of Humberside **nextstep** has a useful direct link to information about the multilanguage advice service from **learnirect** for clients who speak English as an additional language.

27. All subcontractors have satisfactory equality of opportunity policies which set out their aims and values. There are satisfactory arrangements to monitor equality of opportunity at quarterly and contract reviews. Subcontractors' success in attracting the target groups is monitored and their policies are checked for continuing relevance and compliance with any changes in legislation.

28. There are insufficient arrangements to monitor the positive outcome rates for different groups. Humberside **nextstep** does not collect sufficiently detailed data to analyse any variances in the success rates of different groups or to identify how different groups may benefit from its services.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

29. Humberside **nextstep** has suitable procedures in place to monitor contractual compliance at all subcontractors. All subcontractors hold external quality standards in accordance with LSC requirements. All delivery staff hold appropriate qualifications to demonstrate their competence and ability to deliver the **nextstep** service to a satisfactory standard. There are appropriate checks on financial claims and the eligibility of clients to use **nextstep**.

30. There are satisfactory arrangements to collect feedback from clients. Humberside **nextstep** uses standard questionnaires for all subcontractors and distributes these at predetermined times of the year. The content and volume of responses is sufficient to confirm that clients are satisfied with the service they receive and that the overall satisfactory standards are being maintained. There are appropriate procedures to communicate the results back to all subcontractors and to identify any significant discrepancies in clients' perception of **nextstep** in particular locations. The results are discussed with subcontractors at the contract review meetings and there are adequate arrangements to agree and implement remedial action if standards fall below satisfactory.

31. There are inadequate arrangements to secure quality improvement. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. Humberside **nextstep** relies too much on external audits and assessment to manage quality. Once staff are trained and contractual requirements satisfied, there are too few actions to improve the quality of provision beyond a satisfactory standard. Good practices are not well shared between subcontractors or between individual advisers. There are insufficient arrangements to improve the standard of all advice sessions to that currently achieved in the best sessions. Humberside **nextstep** has only recently started to monitor the quality of advice sessions by observation. These observations have not identified the weaknesses that inspectors observed in some sessions. The feedback given to individual advisers contains too little guidance about how to improve. Similarly, too little information is collected to identify opportunities for introducing network-wide improvements. Quality improvement objectives from the self-assessment report have not been thoroughly communicated. Subcontractors are not sufficiently involved in identifying the improvements they can make or how their own expertise may be most fully used to help other subcontractors.

32. Humberside **nextstep** makes insufficient use of data to monitor clients' achievements, identify trends and improve its performance. This weakness is partially identified in the self-assessment report. The methods used to compile data for the six-month follow-up survey of clients are very unreliable. The data contains major statistical errors and there are inadequate quality assurance checks on its validity. The information it provides was numerically wrong until corrected during the inspection. It provides a poor basis on which to design and implement improvements. The importance of this data is given inadequate attention at any level of management as a tool for managing performance. Subcontractors do not have meaningful targets for monitoring and improving the proportion of clients who achieve positive outcomes. There is no shared understanding of how well Humberside **nextstep** clients succeed after they use the service, what proportion find work or enter learning and how performance can be improved. There is insufficient analysis of the types of destination to which successful clients proceed. For example, there is no shared information about the proportion of clients who proceed to skills for life training or assessment after referral or signposting to such services. Similarly, there is insufficient quantitative information about the value of the follow-up advice sessions which Humberside **nextstep** provides for some clients.

The quality of the nextstep provision		Grade 3
Overall nextstep contract		Contributory grade 3

The quality of the nextstep provision

Strengths

- particularly timely and practical interventions for clients

Weaknesses

- some insufficiently well-planned advice sessions and poor action-planning

Achievement and standards

33. Humberside **nextstep**'s clients gain new awareness and knowledge about the range of learning and employment opportunities available to them. They gain the confidence to consider alternative routes and options towards their medium- and long-term goals. They plan more realistic and practical ways to improve their employment opportunities or to engage in lifelong learning. For example, some adjust their career aims to those with better employment prospects, and some learn how they may use their lifestyle or leisure interests as routes into learning or work. They become more able to gain access to specialist agencies and sources of support which can help them to overcome barriers to full participation in society. Many clients produce good CVs to help them find work and some make good use of the opportunities for repeated advice session to keep these up-to-date and to modify them when applying for particular jobs.

34. Since August 2004, Humberside **nextstep** has been collecting data about the proportion of clients who achieve a positive outcome within six months of their first advice session. It uses telephone calls and letters to collect information from a sample of its clients. The procedures used for data collection and analysis are prone to major errors. For clients who did not hold a level 2 qualification when they first contacted the **nextstep** service, reliable data is only available for the six-month period from February 2005 until July 2005. The proportion of clients who obtained a positive outcome in this period was satisfactory at just under 60 per cent. There was an equal spread between employment and learning outcomes. Approximately 12 per cent of clients who were unemployed when they first contacted Humberside **nextstep** found work and entered learning.

35. There is insufficient data about positive outcomes for clients who already held a level 2 qualification when they first contacted Humberside **nextstep**, to make any reliable judgements.

Table 1 For clients without a level 2 qualification when they first contacted **nextstep**

Advice and enhanced service outcomes		Date of first advice of enhanced services session							
		Aug 05-Jan 06		Feb 05-Jul 05		Aug 04-Jan 05		Feb 04-Jul 04	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A	Number of clients who received their first advice or enhanced services session during the period	2,662		3,474		3,604		2,847	
B	Of those in A the number of clients successfully contacted for the six month follow-up survey	56	2%	1127	32%	128	4%	0	n/a
C	Of those in B, the number of clients who have successfully completed a learning programme since their advice session	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	n/a
D	Of those in B, the number of clients who have started, but not yet completed, a learning programme since their advice session	15	27%	245	22	23	18%	0	n/a
E	Of those in B, the number of clients who have continued with, but not yet completed, a learning programme they were already on	4	7%	246	22%	2	2%	0	n/a
F	Of those in B, the number of clients who were unemployed at the time of their advice session	35	63%	699	62%	14	11%	0	n/a
G	Of those in F, the number of clients who are now in employment	10	29%	244	35%	9	64%	0	n/a
H	Of those in B, the total number of clients who have achieved a positive outcome	31	55%	654	58%	38	29%	0	n/a

The quality of the **nextstep** provision

36. Humberside **nextstep** provides particularly timely and practical interventions for its clients. Advisers take prompt, well-informed and specific action to help clients succeed to find work or enter education or training relevant to their needs and aims. They make very good use of local and national services and resources to provide immediate solutions to clients' short-term barriers to participation in learning and work. The support advisers provide is wide ranging, immediate and practical. They concentrate very effectively on resolving short-term issues at the earliest possible opportunity. For example, advisers provide quick and effective support for clients struggling to complete application forms for benefits or funding for training courses. They persuade organisations that can provide key documents about clients' employment or training record to do so promptly, and also provide rapid access to external support for clients with caring responsibilities. Once these barriers are removed, advisers maintain the momentum for progress very effectively by fully exploring clients' longer-term aims and how to achieve them at the same or subsequent advice sessions. Advisers make very successful use of ICT and software packages to identify and explore a wide range of funding sources to help clients who wish to pursue particular training courses.

37. Humberside **nextstep** has an effective working relationship with the **learndirect** helpline. Its own telephone helpline service is provided by the Humberside Connexions service and handles approximately 10 calls each day. The helpline provides more detailed local information than is available through **learndirect**, particularly in relation to the complicated local travel arrangements affecting training and employment opportunities on opposite sides of the Humber estuary. It also provides detailed information to other agencies, particularly local trade union learning representatives, who have an interest in information and advice about learning and work, even though they are not part of the subcontractor network. In the period August 2005 to February 2006, Humberside **nextstep** referred 96 clients to the **learndirect** helpline and received 12 incoming referrals for face-to-face advice sessions.

38. There are satisfactory resources across the network of subcontractors. The **nextstep** service is available from a wide range of locations that hold ample stocks of relevant information about learning and work. Clients and advisers have good access to ICT equipment and the internet. The Humberside **nextstep** website is easy to use and is kept up to date with local information. Staff are suitably qualified and have appropriate experience for their roles. All subcontractors have access to additional resources, such as learning materials or specialist computer software through their other contracts and activities. These resources are made readily available to **nextstep** clients as and when necessary.

39. Most advice sessions deliver a satisfactory service to clients. Of those sessions observed during the inspection, 5 per cent were outstanding, 26 per cent were good, 53 per cent were satisfactory and 16 per cent were inadequate. In the better sessions, advisers provide their clients with a comprehensive service that fully explores their needs and ambitions, including any requirements for additional help with literacy and numeracy. Clients leave these sessions with significantly increased motivation and a commitment to a positive future. In most sessions, clients' main needs are met. They receive the information they require and the advice they need to take positive steps towards learning or work. However, some sessions are insufficiently planned. They do not provide clients with such a complete and thorough service. Their shortcomings range from relatively small diversions, such as wasting too much time explaining irrelevant details about LSC funding rules, to more serious omissions and errors which detract from the clients' experience. In some cases, advisers do not follow a clear strategy to fully identify all of a client's needs. Sometimes information is poorly presented and action-planning at the end of the session is poor. The worst sessions are poorly structured and do not provide sufficient support for clients to help them take meaningful steps towards work, education or training.