

INSPECTION REPORT

LDR Squared

10 August 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*

INSPECTION REPORT

LDR Squared

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. LDR Squared was formed in August 2001 to provide accredited training and individualised consultancy projects to organisations throughout the Northeast, focusing particularly on their business development needs. Six employers are currently involved with training employed learners in European Social Fund (ESF) co-financed programmes. There are 46 learners on the engineering and manufacturing technologies provision and 158 learners on business administration and law programmes. LDR Squared is managed by a managing director. He has a core team of six employees, one of whom is the learning and development manager, and another is responsible for quality improvement. The other employees cover administration, marketing and assessment activities. In addition to this core team, LDR Squared has 16 associate trainers and assessors with whom they contract when specific training provision is required. Off-the-job training takes place either at LDR Squared's conference centre, or at the employers' premises, if suitable training rooms are available. Training in the workplace is provided by employers, and LDR Squared provides the on-site assessments.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** LDR Squared's leadership and management, and arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The arrangements for quality improvement are inadequate. The training provision for the contributory areas of manufacturing technologies and business management is satisfactory.

3. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report is the first one produced by the provider. LDR Squared used external support to help it with this new process. Some staff were asked for their views about strengths and weaknesses in their area, but none of them have seen a draft or a completed version of the report. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report are similar to those identified by inspectors.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Although LDR Squared's quality improvement arrangements are inadequate, the relative accuracy of the self-assessment report, especially the identified weaknesses, give some positive indication of LDR Squared's ability to understand its provision and make plans to resolve weaknesses. There is no inspection history for LDR Squared, but the good achievements in the two areas of learning within a short contractual time frame indicate that LDR Squared has sufficient capacity to improve.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR LDR SQUARED:

- develop a strong system for quality improvement
- improve use of data
- continue to develop good partnerships

LDR SQUARED

- continue work with employers
- develop an effective equality and diversity strategy
- develop stronger operational management
- improve the formal planning of learning

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Manufacturing technologies		3	
Other government-funded provision	46	3	

Business administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Business management		3	
Other government-funded provision	158	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. This was the first inspection of LDR Squared's provision. The ESF co-financed programmes in manufacturing technologies and business management were inspected and graded, together with leadership and management. Inspectors visited the provider for three days during August 2006. This was their only visit to the provider.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	15
Number of staff interviewed	13
Number of employers interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- active partnerships to support the regional development agenda
- good work with employers
- good management of contracts to support participation
- good response to the needs of individual learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient data to manage the provision
- inadequate application of systems to manage staff performance
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity
- inadequate systems for quality improvement

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- good success rates
- good training on performing engineering operations
- very effective involvement of employers to improve the learning experience

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment of learners' support needs
- insufficient target-setting for learners in performing manufacturing operations
- insufficiently rigorous operational management

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good skills development
- good off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- inadequate formal planning for the management of learning
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LDR SQUARED:

- 'chance to get a qualification'
- 'opportunity to progress at work'
- 'good training'
- 'good help with portfolios'
- 'helpful and supportive staff'
- 'built up my confidence'
- 'brilliant workshop'
- 'good tools to use at work'
- 'always in touch with assessor in person and via e-mail'
- 'more aware of aspects to do with performance production'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK LDR SQUARED COULD IMPROVE:

- the length of time between induction and the start of the course
- the programmes - they need to be more challenging
- the workload - 'its hard doing training and a full shift'
- the amount of information provided in advance about workshops
- workshop sessions - tutors should be encouraged to stay on topic
- the time taken to return marked work

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- active partnerships to support the regional development agenda
- good work with employers
- good management of contracts to support participation
- good response to the needs of individual learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient data to manage the provision
- inadequate application of systems to manage staff performance
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity
- inadequate systems for quality improvement

6. LDR Squared has some active partnerships which support the regional skills development agenda. The provider works closely with groups of employers to develop those sector skills identified as potential areas of expansion within the region. LDR Squared hosts networking meetings and leads on specific issues. The managing director assumes a wide variety of support roles with local employers, such as acting as a mentor to new training managers within the region.

7. LDR Squared has an overall business plan which relates clearly to the plans of the regional industry development group. The provider actively targets sector-specific companies which have been identified as having skills shortages, or who need to update skills. A more recent partnership, which is led by the managing director of LDR Squared, is in the process of applying for funding to target people who have low skills in the region. Initiatives are being planned to remedy the shortage of women in engineering, and to target some minority ethnic groups.

8. The provider has carried out some effective work with employers, offering free taster sessions which fulfil specific skills needs. This also acts as a method of marketing the provision. LDR Squared has a good understanding of local business needs and actively shares its experience with partners to improve their working practice. LDR Squared has a strong learning and entrepreneurial culture.

9. LDR Squared has close and productive relationships with the employers with which it works. Communications between employers and LDR Squared are good, and LDR Squared responds to their needs. Training is designed for the individual company's needs. LDR Squared's staff work flexibly to fit in with often challenging work patterns. Companies and individuals appreciate this dedication. LDR Squared is working productively with two companies to design training programmes to meet company human resource strategies. Progression routes are included in the training programmes. This structured approach allows learners to achieve the qualifications and gain the financial rewards given by the employers for achievement.

10. LDR Squared also works effectively with other providers to support the employers. In one instance, LDR Squared worked with a less-experienced provider to develop its provision, even though there was no financial incentive to do so. This was at the specific request of an employer. The other provider shared LDR Squared's good practice, and the employer gained an overall professional service. LDR Squared works well with an advice and guidance provider to improve the induction experience for learners on some programmes. Learners and employers gain a wider experience of advice and guidance from these specialists.

11. LDR Squared manages a number of ESF co-funded contracts well to support a range of in-company learners. It is responsive to requests to provide training for learners with different eligibility criteria, to meet local employment and skills needs. LDR Squared uses information from its partnership activities well to identify skills shortage areas and potential barriers to funding relevant training. LDR Squared ensures that learners are not affected by the demands of the different funding sources. The provider makes good use of different funding models to establish progression routes for learners. LDR Squared enables learners who are not eligible for funding to begin or complete programmes by bearing the costs itself. In one case, learners began a programme, but external eligibility checks had not been carried out correctly. The learners were ineligible for funding. LDR Squared allowed the learners to complete their programmes despite receiving no funding. LDR Squared is meeting or slightly exceeding its contractual targets. The development of funding packages is effective in helping equal participation. The provider's application of the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, skills for life, has not been developed sufficiently to ensure appropriate support for all learners.

12. Communications are satisfactory. LDR Squared is a small organisation and informal communications among staff are good. However, managers plan to meet daily and to have the results of these meetings recorded. Recently, meetings have been less frequent and minutes are not always taken. Members of staff receive a satisfactory induction and feel well supported.

13. Overall, information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Some good initiatives have been taken with a local specialist advice and guidance provider to give learners better-quality advice at induction. Some learners receive more specialist input and there are more paper-based resources, but these initiatives have not been developed throughout the provision. The level of information given at induction and during the rest of the programme is satisfactory, but some learners would like more information before beginning a programme.

14. LDR Squared does not make sufficient use of data to manage the provision. The only up-to-date data is collated and managed by the managing director. Some of this data is made available to managers, but they do not have a data system which they can use to access reports. Staff do not have immediate access to data or reports from the system. Assessors can have access to appropriate data if they request it, but it is not routinely provided or used. Data about achievements was provided for the inspection team, but it is not available in a reliable enough form to be used in inspection data tables. The provider does not benchmark itself sufficiently against training provision of a similar nature. LDR Squared does not use data systematically to manage the provision. Learners do not always understand their progress, and there is insufficient data to ensure that staff

are able to provide this information accurately. This weakness has been recognised by LDR Squared and it is currently devising a spreadsheet to collect the data needed to manage the programme.

15. LDR Squared does not apply its systems adequately enough to manage the performance of its staff. The company does not have a formal appraisal system. In place of this, staff develop a 'route map' which identifies their training needs. This is a learning log which is developed from their own views of their performance and needs. Most of the updating of the route maps has been done recently and actioned in the month before inspection. The route maps are not used as a management tool. Some staff have their needs identified adequately, but files are not maintained systematically, and the progress of individual staff members is difficult to measure. Staff development needs are not aligned with company business plan objectives. Staff do not have clear targets. LDR Squared has a training needs analysis form to identify specific training needs for associate assessors, but it is not used. Few staff have been observed on teaching and learning activities. There is little evidence of quality improvements from teaching and learning observations. All staff have job descriptions which include a general appreciation of their roles, but not detailed objectives against which to measure their performances.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

16. LDR Squared is responsive to the needs of individuals and their employers. Assessors' visits are very regular and supportive. Good use is made of individual coaching sessions. Assessor staff are friendly and approachable. They take note of learners' problems and respond quickly to them. Learners are supported sensitively. Staff take care to design courses or training to meet the individual needs of the employers. Assessors work irregular hours to accommodate learners' various shift patterns. Training workshops and individual tutorial support are also arranged to accommodate shift patterns and learners' personal circumstances. Six learners who were unable to attend scheduled workshops were given individual training sessions outside normal working hours.

17. Learners access learning materials from LDR Squared's website to ensure that they can study at a time that is convenient to them. Employers and learners value this flexibility. LDR Squared works throughout a wide geographical area. The needs of learners are met, even where there is only one learner in a rurally isolated part of the region. Although LDR Squared is responsive to learners' individual pastoral needs, formal assessments of specific literacy or numeracy support needs are not thorough enough.

18. LDR Squared's policies and procedures are satisfactory. They cover equality and diversity, bullying and harassment, and appeals and complaints. There is also a document for learners' rights and responsibilities. The equality and diversity policy covers the main areas affecting learners, although it is not updated for all relevant legislation, such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, or the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. A clear, simplified version is distributed to learners. Accommodation at the main site is satisfactory, and has appropriate toilet facilities for learners with disabilities, and a colour scheme to help people with visual impairments. Induction is satisfactory, with the use of good-quality training materials. Learners understand how to make complaints. Managers attend network meetings associated with equality and diversity and are active in the regional development of ways to fill the skills needs of the sector. Funding is well used to ensure parity of experience for learners.

19. Equality and diversity are not reinforced sufficiently. LDR Squared has a development plan and a draft business plan which mention equality and diversity. However, not enough specific actions are detailed to show how LDR Squared intends to improve its current practices for learners or staff. Although equality and diversity are covered adequately in induction, they are not reinforced sufficiently throughout the learning programme. Staff training is not planned on a systematic basis, although most staff have received some basic equal opportunities training. Staff are given few targets for the development of equality and diversity throughout the provision, and data is not analysed fully to indicate appropriate targets. LDR Squared recognises this issue and is planning to develop an equality and diversity strategy to ensure effective reinforcement of equality and diversity to staff and learners.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

20. LDR Squared has a satisfactory system of internal verification which meets the requirements of the awarding body. LDR Squared holds standardisation meetings, which are used as opportunities to share good practice, but the meetings are not always recorded satisfactorily. LDR Squared has a sampling plan which ensures sufficient internal verification.

21. The self-assessment process and report is adequate and is the first one produced by LDR Squared. The provider used consultants to help them with this new process. Some staff were asked for their views about strengths and weaknesses in their area, but none of them have seen a draft or a completed version of the report. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report are similar to those identified by inspectors.

22. The quality improvement systems are inadequate. LDR Squared has a quality management system which includes a wide range of policies and procedures which have been designed to quality assure the learning process. The systems are not updated sufficiently. Some of the procedures have been established since 2004, or the beginning of 2005. A few procedures, including those relating to the observation of teaching and learning, have been added very recently. LDR Squared does not have a timetable for the review of these documents, and many were reviewed for the first time in July 2006. LDR Squared does not have a quality assurance calendar to identify when key quality assurance activities should take place, how they should relate to one another, or how they should be used to ensure quality improvement. LDR Squared has a system of corrective action reports which respond to some of the feedback from external audits and verification, and what action will be taken. Some reports are not completed and signed off, and issues identified in some external reports are not included. Inspectors identified some weaknesses, which have still not been resolved, that were included in an external audit report in 2003.

23. LDR Squared does not have an internal audit procedure. The provider does not review individual quality assurance activities to check their use, or to evaluate or improve their effectiveness. The procedure for the observation of teaching and learning and other key learning processes has only recently been established. It is ambitious and complex and is designed to review key questions over time, and sets a target of monthly observations of individuals. LDR Squared records when observations have taken place, but does not plan them. Observations began in March, but only four members of staff have been observed, one of them on four occasions. The quality improvement manager carries out most of the observations using an appropriately designed form. However, this

manager has not been trained in observation skills and is not occupationally qualified in all areas.

24. LDR Squared gathers feedback from learners at the end of workshops and at the end of training programmes. The feedback form is designed to collect both quantitative data and learners' individual comments. LDR Squared identifies how many learners are satisfied with their programmes, but does not analyse learners' comments or identify areas for improvement. LDR Squared does not record any actions taken. The provider uses a comprehensive form to collect feedback from employers. This feedback is generally satisfactory, but LDR Squared does not record actions taken to resolve any weaknesses, and does not have a strategy to improve those elements of training that are identified as satisfactory.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Manufacturing technologies		3
Other government-funded provision	46	3

25. LDR Squared provides training for adult national vocational qualification (NVQ) learners in manufacturing technologies. This is the second year that LDR Squared has had a contract for this provision. Currently there are 46 learners, four of whom are women. There are no learners from minority ethnic groups. All learners are employed, with nearly all working for medium to large employers. The programmes offered are a level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations for engineering learners, and a level 2 NVQ in performing manufacturing operations for manufacturing learners. The performing manufacturing operations programme consists solely of on-site assessments by LDR Squared's staff. Employers deliver most of the training for the performing engineering operations programme, and the assessment is provided by LDR Squared, through a team of four assessors. An associate assessor acts as the internal verifier. Learners are recruited through the employers who invite their employees to enrol on the programmes. The training programmes are delivered on site over a three-month period.

Strengths

- good success rates
- good training on performing engineering operations
- very effective involvement of employers to improve the learning experience

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment of learners' support needs
- insufficient target-setting for learners in performing manufacturing operations
- insufficiently rigorous operational management

Achievement and standards

26. The success rate for both programmes is good. Learners' rate of progress is also very good. Eighty-five of the 88 leavers over the past two years have all succeeded and done so within their scheduled training periods. The length of the programmes is agreed with employers to meet their needs and those of their learners, and is significantly shorter than the time allowed within the contract. The performing engineering operations programme is particularly well designed to support very timely achievements. Many of the learners, particularly on the performing manufacturing operations programme, have either no qualifications or have not achieved any qualifications for a long time. The programmes have improved learners' confidence and self-esteem in the workplace significantly. Although achievement data was given to inspectors to help in making judgements, such data is not available in a reliable enough format to be used in an inspection data table.

27. The standard of learners' work is good. They are all working in fast-paced environments, or where the standards for quality and hygiene are very demanding. Tasks are completed to very good standards and meet demanding quality and service requirements.

The quality of provision

28. The training for performing engineering operations learners is good. The programme is well designed. It comprises a series of well-defined modules, with assessment clearly linked to the modules. It is given in a well-presented, purpose-designed training room. The quality of the rigs and tools is very good. The training material is good and up to date. Some of the material consists of custom-made, interactive computerised training modules, which have been developed by LDR Squared. Some of the modules are taught by the employer's trainers. They are well qualified and very experienced with the machinery on which the learners will be working.

29. LDR Squared has very good and close partnerships with the employers with which it works. Employers have a high regard for the service that they receive from the provider. At the two largest companies, LDR Squared works very closely with managers to support their human resources strategies. There are clear, structured training and development plans. Learners understand this progression structure and value it. The support from the employers is very good. Learners are given time off from very busy production lines to work towards their qualifications. The duration of each programme is agreed with the employer, and employers are involved in selecting the appropriate optional modules. One employer was heavily involved in developing the curriculum for the performing engineering operations programme. Two of the four employers have their own qualified assessors. Progression is good. With the largest company, learners progress from performing manufacturing operations to performing engineering operations, and then to a level 3 NVQ programme in business improvement techniques.

30. The information, advice and guidance provided for learners is satisfactory. All learners are employed before beginning their programmes. They are allowed to decide for themselves whether they wish to take the course. The employers and the provider give satisfactory presentations to the employees about the benefits and challenges of taking the course. Employees are made aware of the opportunities to gain additional qualifications. They are also made aware of the improved chances of career progression.

31. Induction is satisfactory. Although it is short, the presentation is clear. The content of the programme and the assessment process are covered well. There is adequate coverage of health and safety, and equality of opportunity. Learners' understanding of the content is checked satisfactorily at the end of the session. They have reasonable recall of the contents of the induction.

32. Support for learners is thorough. Training workshops and individual tutorial support are arranged to accommodate shift patterns and personal circumstances. For example, six learners who were unable to attend scheduled workshops were given individual training sessions outside normal working hours. Drop-in surgeries are held to support learners. LDR Squared has one of its trainer/assessors permanently on site with one of the larger employers.

33. The initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy support needs is inadequate. Learners are given the opportunity to inform the provider if they feel that they may need support with literacy and numeracy. Vocational assessors are asked to watch for any indication that learners may need support. However, the formal testing of learners at the beginning of their programmes, to identify literacy and numeracy support needs, is inadequate. The provider is aware of this issue and is reviewing their strategy.

34. There is not enough target-setting for performing manufacturing operations learners. There are no individual learning plans. Support needs are not well documented. LDR Squared has no dedicated progress reviews to set targets and check learners' progress. Assessment of learners' competence are well recorded, but no interim milestones are set. Learners do not understand how much progress they have made, or how much progress they should have made. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report and plans are being made to resolve it.

Leadership and management

35. The promotion of equality of opportunity to learners at induction is satisfactory. The employers are checked appropriately for equality of opportunity before learners begin training. However, there is not enough reinforcement of equality of opportunity throughout the programme.

36. Internal verification is satisfactory. There are sampling plans, which are used appropriately. Assessors are observed by the internal verifier and constructive feedback is given. The standardisation meetings are satisfactory, but they are not recorded. Staff have been involved in contributing to the self-assessment report, but they were not involved in reviewing the draft report and have not seen the final self-assessment report. The report reflects the main strengths and weakness identified at inspection and is sufficiently critical.

37. Operational management is not thorough enough. Staff meetings are scheduled for the beginning of each day, and information from the meetings is reported in LDR Squared's internal daily newsletter. However, the meetings do not always take place. There is a staff appraisal system, but appraisals do not happen with the required frequency. One staff member has been employed by the provider for 16 months and has not had an appraisal. Staff are not set targets and quality improvement systems do not identify and stimulate effective changes in practice adequately enough.

Business administration and law**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business management</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	158	3

38. There are 158 learners on business management programmes. Four learners are on the level 2 NVQ business administration programme, 20 are working for management qualifications at level 3 and 4 NVQ, and 134 learners are following the business improvement techniques NVQ at level 3. LDR Squared recruits its learners through employers. There are five assessors and two internal verifiers. Inductions to the programmes take place at the training centre and in the workplace, with individuals or with small groups. LDR Squared carries out off-the-job training at its training centre. Assessors visit the apprentices frequently in the workplace, at least once each month, to provide opportunities for assessment, and to discuss the collection of evidence. All learners are employed in a small number of large, private sector companies.

Strengths

- good skills development
- good off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- inadequate formal planning for the management of learning
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity

Achievement and standards

39. Learners develop good skills in their workplaces. The support provided by employers is good. Experienced learners make very good progress in the workplace. The standard of learners' work is good and they are making satisfactory progress towards achievement of their qualifications. They are having a significant impact in improving the operating methods of their work units, to improve workplace processes and minimise waste. LDR Squared's assessors have good relationships with the employers. Progression opportunities for learners are good. Learners progress within the workplace and from qualification to qualification, moving from the performing management operations programme to business improvement techniques. These programmes meet the aspirations of most learners and are responding effectively to employers' needs in this area.

40. Achievements are satisfactory. Some learners have already achieved their qualifications on the management development programmes and, with some business administration learners, are close to completion. Most of the learners on the new business improvement techniques programme have not achieved their qualification yet, as this is an early stage in the establishment.

The quality of provision

41. A good, creative and practical off-the-job training programme is delivered at LDR Squared's premises. Tutors introduce learners to sound methods and tools that can be applied to monitoring improvements in their job roles. The knowledge and skills development of learners on management and business improvement techniques programmes are well supported. Learners speak highly of the training workshops. Employers support and encourage the learners by giving them time to attend off-the-job training. LDR Squared has a wide range of good resources to support off-the-job training. These resources include practical tasks to support understanding of business improvement techniques, and paper-based resources designed to improve self-knowledge and working relationships with others. Tutors are appropriately qualified and occupationally competent. However, some learners who are operating at high levels in their workplaces have not received an initial assessment, and comment that the programme does not challenge them enough.

42. Assessments are satisfactory. The process is fair, accurate and reliable. Although assessments are not planned, assessors are in the workplace regularly and take opportunities for observations as they occur. Assessment judgements are properly recorded. Assessors visit learners regularly and provide support through work-based observations and individual coaching where learners' knowledge is weak. This support is not always recorded and there is not enough additional support for any specific additional learning needs, if they are identified.

43. There is not enough formal planning of the management of learning. Many learners receive no initial assessment, and there is evidence of learners being registered on the wrong level of programme. The process for identifying learning needs and guiding learners appropriately is unclear. There is no assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs, or any plan for how these might be provided for if they were identified. A small number of the learners interviewed had received a thorough electronic assessment of their current skills and knowledge in relation to their job roles, but did not have a record of this.

44. There is no overall learning plan against which learners might document their own targets and against which progress might be monitored. A number of documents are used to plan for assessments and to record evidence required. A learning log records specific units, and this log is signed and dated when the unit has been achieved. There is evidence that learners are informed of their current level of progress and any outstanding assignment work. However, there is no simple visual record available for learners for detailing their overall progress, or setting targets for personal development and workplace goals. Not all of the learners had portfolios of evidence, as these are held by assessors.

Leadership and management

45. The provider has a range of policies and procedures and learner information packs. However, these do not make a significant contribution to the formal planning of learning, or ownership of the programme by the learner. Communications are effective on an informal, day-to-day basis, but there are few records of actions taken. Internal verification is satisfactory, and includes sampling plans and feedback to assessors. However, where corrective actions are required, and dates are set for these improvements, there is no

evidence that the actions have been taken. Health and safety measures are satisfactory, and learners demonstrate good knowledge of the procedures to minimise contamination of products in their workplace.

46. The provider does not reinforce equality of opportunity and diversity sufficiently. These subjects are introduced briefly at induction for some learners, but are not followed up adequately with the learners during their programmes. Learners mention the information that is available in their workplaces, but their knowledge of equality of opportunity is restricted. Some learners attend a workshop about diversity as part of their course, but where this is not a requirement there is little further reference to equality of opportunity. This weakness was partially identified in the self-assessment report.

