

INSPECTION REPORT

Hudson and Hughes Training Limited

03 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
- **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*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Hudson and Hughes Training Limited (Hudson and Hughes) was established in May 2001. It has a contract for Train to Gain with Wiltshire and Swindon Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for approximately 25 learners following national vocational qualifications (NVQ) level 2 in health and social care. Outside the scope of this inspection, Hudson and Hughes provides full-cost-recovery training courses for a wide range of organizations including national companies. It acts as a subcontractor in providing NVQ provision at level 3 that is partly funded by the European Social Funds.
2. The administrative offices are in Taunton. Hudson and Hughes has six full-time staff including three directors and two part-time staff. One of the three directors is the operational manager, the second is the training manager and the third is the business development manager who is particularly involved in the company's commercial activities.
3. A further six or seven qualified self-employed consultants support the core team with assessment and internal verification. Before this inspection, Hudson and Hughes was involved in the Employer Training Pilot Scheme with 517 learners following NVQ courses at level 2 in health, public services and social care. The learners on the Train to Gain programme are in employment across three counties, but most are based in Wiltshire.
4. Five per cent of learners have minority ethnic backgrounds and 93 per cent are women. One per cent of learners have disabilities.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management and arrangements for quality improvement are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Provision in health, public services and care is good.
6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Staff were consulted in the development of the self-assessment report and feedback was sought from employers and learners. This was the first self-assessment report prepared by the company, and most of its findings matched those of the inspection team.
7. Hudson and Hughes has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. It has recognised its strengths and weaknesses and has taken prompt action to improve any weak aspect of provision identified by staff, learners or employers. Success rates have improved significantly, and most qualifications are now being gained in a timely manner. Partnership working is strong and relationships with employers are very good. The recent restructure and management changes have greatly enhanced Hudson and Hughes' capacity to make further improvements. Staff development is good and staff are well motivated to increase their skills and improve social care provision for their learners.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HUDSON AND HUGHES TRAINING LIMITED:

- develop a coherent strategy to respond to the literacy, numeracy and language support needs of learners
- increase the promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity
- continue to improve the use of management information and the analysis of quality questionnaires and feedback to more effectively contribute to self-assessment, strategy and development planning

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Health, public services and care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Social care</i>		2	
Train to Gain	55	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. This is the first ALI inspection of Hudson and Hughes. Two inspectors spent a total of eight days visiting learners in a range of care settings in Wiltshire and Somerset, though training is provided in a wider geographical area. Consideration was given to the company's self-assessment report, development plans and a range of documents.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	15
Number of staff interviewed	7
Number of employers interviewed	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	7
Number of visits	1

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- effective management of change
- good management of provision
- effective teamwork
- very effective management of employer and partner relationships to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy for dealing with learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity

Health, public services and care

Social care

Strengths

- good overall success rates
- good skills development and progression
- very effective measures to meet employers' needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient support for literacy, numeracy, language and other additional needs

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HUDSON AND HUGHES TRAINING LIMITED:

- the clear structure of the qualification
- supportive and friendly assessors
- the frequent visits and regular contact
- the way the assessors make the NVQ understandable

WHAT LEARNERS THINK HUDSON AND HUGHES TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the language in the values, legislation and policy pack - it needs to be simpler

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- effective management of change
- good management of provision
- effective teamwork
- very effective management of employer and partner relationships to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy for dealing with learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity

9. Hudson and Hughes has managed change effectively. A good balance of commercially successful activities and government-funded provision adds value to the experience of its learners and employers. Management of finances and resources is good. The company's board of directors was restructured in the six months before inspection, with two senior managers joining the one remaining director. All staff have a clear understanding of the business and its direction. A specific business plan for Train to Gain clearly outlines the aims and objectives for the provision. Managers delegate well. Staff are loyal and well motivated to achieve the changes required. They are keen to take part in training that will enable them to manage their new responsibilities. Managers support their staff effectively in achieving their targets, and listen to their concerns and suggestions.

10. The provision is managed well. Staff have effective annual appraisals and take part in internal training opportunities that respond to their individual needs. Hudson and Hughes ensures that staff update their knowledge and increase their skills. Staff have effective individual supervision from their managers. Assessment practice is sound. Managers organise the allocation of caseloads to make efficient use of assessors' time and minimise travelling. The scheduling of assessment visits is well organised. Learners and employers appreciate the regularity of visits and praise highly the reliability of their assessors. Assessors offer good support to learners working in residential, nursing or domiciliary care. The flexibility of their response to learners' shift patterns and employers' needs ensures that learners make good and timely progress through the training. Assessors make extra or extended visits to support learners with additional needs. Learners and employers are given assessors' telephone numbers and use them well, receiving helpful advice. Staying-on and success rates have increased consistently over a three-year period and are now good. Timely achievement rates have increased significantly.

11. Teamwork at Hudson and Hughes is effective. In response to staff suggestions, communications have improved throughout the period of change. Informal communication within the core team is effective and daily e-mail and telephone contact is made with assessors. All assessors spend some time in the central office. There is a well-structured series of meetings with a clear purpose and formal agendas, and minutes

are distributed. Much discussion of quality improvement and sharing of good practice takes place in standardisation meetings. Most training and assessment materials originate in-house, and staff work in teams to update them. Managers are open and approachable and they are involved closely in the day-to-day operation of the business. They accompany assessors on visits, and have a good understanding of the development needs of staff. Support for staff personally is excellent and staff appreciate the praise, the trust and high levels of autonomy they are given in managing their responsibilities. Staff negotiate their caseloads and duties according to their strengths and preferences.

12. Relationships with employers and partners are managed very effectively to improve the quality of provision. Employers express great confidence in the quality of the service provided by Hudson and Hughes. They negotiate packages of training that meet their needs, and contract with them to provide a range of additional courses privately. The provider has long-standing partnerships with most of its employers and has built good relationships. Communications are frequent and effective. The annual award ceremony is well-attended by employers, learners and their families and encourages learners to progress to further learning. Many employers are trained to level 4 by Hudson and Hughes. Workplace assessors attend useful meetings twice annually to be updated and to share good practice. Hudson and Hughes has developed very productive partnerships with external organisations. It has effective links with awarding bodies, other providers, colleges and a range of sector organisations across its region.

13. The use of management information is satisfactory. The system provides effective learner monitoring and is capable of producing a comprehensive range of reports to support the management of the organisation. The learner monitoring system records all the details of learners' progress. Managers use data regularly to monitor performance against contractual targets. The organisation is working to identify how to improve and when to analyse the data it collects to support its self-assessment process.

14. The strategy to provide literacy, numeracy and language development is inadequate. Hudson and Hughes has yet to develop a formal strategy which identifies key priorities and guidelines for the development of literacy, numeracy and language. Arrangements for the initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs are inadequate. There is no screening, and there are few guidelines on which assessment methods to use and at what stage. Assessment is by discussion. It is focused on the units to be covered and does not pay enough attention to the individual learners' skills and qualifications. The discussions are not recorded in sufficient detail. However, learners are clear about where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Support is offered through training activities and materials, and learners with lower-level skills achieve their qualifications, mostly within the planned period. The provider recognises where improvements could be made, and has plans to work with partners to provide training.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

15. The arrangements for equality and diversity are satisfactory overall. Hudson and Hughes has a range of satisfactory policies and procedures that cover its arrangements for equality of opportunity. These documents are reviewed and kept up to date. The provider's response to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and child protection legislation is satisfactory. All employers' premises are checked for accessibility to people with restricted mobility. Before learners begin their training, their employers' policies are checked to ensure that they comply with the Hudson and Hughes'

standards.

16. Learners know how to complain and to who if discrimination, bullying or harassment occur, though few complaints are received. Learners and staff treat each other with respect. Following induction, all learners complete a well-planned equality unit on values, legislation and policy as part of their NVQ. Learners recall its content and can explain their understanding of equality legislation as a part of the statutory requirements of the care sector.

17. There is insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity. There are few statements of commitment to equality in the organisation's plans. The equality of opportunity policy and guidelines do not include diversity as an extension of equality practices. The provider has recognised the need to simplify its documents for some of its learners. Learners have good understanding of the legislation, but not of the wider issues. Learning is not sufficiently reinforced in progress reviews. The records of discussions in progress reviews are limited to learners' support needs. Hudson and Hughes does not require assessors to explore equality or diversity further with learners or employers, and this has not been the subject of development in staff training or meetings. The questions in the revised progress review document do not indicate clearly the requirement that assessors should record these discussions. Management and board meetings do not have equality and diversity arrangements as standing items on their formal agenda. There has been some staff development to encourage a greater understanding of equality and diversity, but this is not a regular, planned event.

18. The provision is organised in an inclusive and very supportive way. The learner is the focus of all activities and inclusion is central to Hudson and Hughes' ethos. Staff feel valued by their managers. Assessors are knowledgeable about the needs of individual learners and they share this information with each other and with employers. Employers' needs are very well supported. For example, one employer was helped to devise a new induction programme specifically for people with learning disabilities and difficulties. Hudson and Hughes helps learners and employers to find new ways to improve the services they offer and enhance the lives of those they care for.

19. Assessors provide individual support for learners to help them to remain on their programmes. Their visits to the workplace are well planned and well organised. They occur when it is most convenient and always include contact with the employer to check on progress. This flexibility is reflected in the continuing improvement in the proportion of learners who stay on their programme, and in the success and progression rates. Assessors visit learners more often when they need extra help with their portfolios. Learners and employers appreciate being able to get advice and information by telephone. Assessors are skilled in building the confidence of learners. Completed work is returned promptly with encouraging feedback. Assessors offer appropriate support for learners with literacy needs and for the small number with a specific learning disability. They have effective alternative methods of collecting evidence, including the wide use of audio tapes. Hudson and Hughes' staff work well with employers to support learners who are reluctant to enter training. An annual ceremony to distribute certificates encourages further learning. All learners have access at their workplace to regular, high-quality advice and guidance from assessors. Progression rates are good.

20. The collection of equal opportunities data is satisfactory and some analysis takes

place. Monitoring activities are increasing but are not sufficiently systematic. Equal opportunities data on age, gender, ethnicity and disability is now used to identify trends. The percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups is similar to that in the area. Currently the age profile of learners is younger than is usually the case in the care sector.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

21. Quality improvement processes are good overall. The Hudson and Hughes management team is committed to continuous improvement. It has developed comprehensive quality assurance arrangements with clearly written policies and procedures, and staff follow guidelines appropriately. Managers give clear direction for improvements. Managers and staff meet regularly to review the standard of training and assessment. Staff can explain the organisation's strategies for improvement and are enthusiastic about achieving these objectives. However, some of the measures are very new. The monitoring of key components of the provision is not sufficiently systematic. For example, learners' induction has not been reviewed regularly. The provider is now taking steps to rectify this with well-established plans for all staff to be involved in closer review of each key component of training and assessment.

22. Staff are highly committed and responsive to the improvements that learners request. They actively seek informal feedback from learners and employers. Written questionnaires are used regularly to gather the views of learners and employers. Samples of these are analysed. However, the questions are not sufficiently searching for the responses to be used effectively to bring about improvements. Appeals, complaints and grievance are covered thoroughly at induction. Learners know how to complain and who to complain to, but complaints are few. Issues that arise are dealt with promptly, but managers do not keep a central log of actions to identify where improvements can be made.

23. There are many examples of successful initiatives which have improved the quality of the provision. Health and safety monitoring is good, and includes trained staff carrying out thorough risk assessment with employers before training begins. As part of its strategy to improve retention, the organisation has reviewed and improved the induction process. The proportion of learners leaving early has reduced significantly. Hudson and Hughes has sought feedback from staff and taken steps to improve communications. Many of the learning resources are good and are devised and updated by staff working in groups during team meetings. The provider has improved and standardised the documents it uses, including progress review forms. Learners are set clear targets in reviews that cover small chunks of learning, but most are connected to NVQ units. Targets do not refer to the wider skills needs of the learners. The system of checking and monitoring reviews ensures they take place regularly and that employers are involved. Reviews are discussed informally in meetings, but their quality is not audited formally.

24. Assessment and internal verification practices and procedures are sound. Achievement is good and has improved over a three-year period. Learners and employers express high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of their training. There are frequent informal discussions on the quality of training, and these are a feature of all meetings. Good practice is shared.

25. The self-assessment process is new, and the self-assessment report produced before this inspection is Hudson and Hughes' first. It is written against the key questions of the

Common Inspection Framework but it is not sufficiently inclusive of the views of assessors, learners and employers. Managers and co-ordinators have attended meetings and discussed all aspects of the report and development plans. The report includes most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Social care		2
Train to Gain	55	2

26. Hudson and Hughes provides training, assessment and verification for NVQs in care at levels 2, 3 and 4, and for the registered managers award. Training and assessment is also provided for assessor and verifier awards and a range of short, vocational course to support employers in providing statutory training. Training and resources to support the NVQ programme are also provided by learners' employers. Learners are all employed and work in a range of care settings including domiciliary, residential and learning disability services. At the time of inspection, NVQs in care at level 2 were funded for 55 learners. Ninety-six learners are funded through other routes that are outside the scope of the inspection.

27. A centre co-ordinator oversees a total of 10 full- and part-time trainers, assessors and verifiers and a number of in-house assessors employed by the various care providers.

Social care

Strengths

- good overall success rates
- good skills development and progression
- very effective measures to meet employers' needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient support for literacy, numeracy, language and other additional needs

Achievement and standards

28. Overall success rates on NVQ programmes are good and improving. Rates have increased from a relatively low 52 per cent in 2004-05, to 72 per cent in 2005-06. Timely success rates also show a significant improvement from 30 per cent in 2004-05 to 70 per cent in 2005-06.

29. Learners develop good, and relevant skills in the workplace that build well on training provided both by Hudson and Hughes and their employers. For example the NVQ is effectively used to further develop learners' knowledge about relevant legislation in the care sector and to improve the way learners apply that knowledge. Employers value the progress made by their staff in the application of knowledge and skills, with many learners working as key workers for their clients.

30. Many learners show significant improvements in their personal skills and confidence

and report that they now better understand the reasons for their work and training. A significant number of learners have no previous qualifications. They report gains in confidence and many plan to go on to further education and training. Twelve per cent of learners have progressed from NVQs at levels 2 to 3, with some previous learners moving on to management and other supervisory posts. Hudson and Hughes is actively involved in supporting a scheme from the care sector skills council to promote care work as a career.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Adult training (long courses)	2003-04	overall	0	0		0	
		timely	0	0		0	
	2004-05	overall	290	54		0	
		timely	86	30		0	
	2005-06	overall	108	72		0	
		timely	76	70		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

31. Hudson and Hughes has very effective measures to meet employers' needs. Senior staff and managers have excellent relationships with care employers that focus on supporting employers' workforce development needs, using a range of funding. Employers contribute to the planning and teaching of the NVQ through their workforce training programme, and in many cases they provide in-house assessors to support observations. Relationships between managers and training advisers are very good, and focus on meeting learners' needs. Both employers and training advisers work well together to identify training needs and to support learners. Employers particularly value the professionalism and reliability of Hudson and Hughes' staff, and the very good communications.

32. Learners starting their NVQ with Hudson and Hughes receive a very satisfactory induction to their programme. Skilled assessors carefully match the NVQ to the learner's needs and job role. Induction is carried out at the learner's workplace, usually in a well-planned individual session that encourages learners to ask appropriate questions about their programme. Assessors use a well-structured induction pack that covers all the appropriate information on the NVQ and on the support they will receive from Hudson and Hughes. Clear action-planning for the next visit includes the distribution of a detailed work book on the value of care work and the legislation that relates to it. This develops learners' understanding and checks the training provided by their employer, linking well with the NVQ evidence requirements. However, some of the language in the workbook is ambiguous, and it is not always clear what exactly learners are required to do. Equality of opportunity for learners is covered, but this focuses quite narrowly on religious needs and does not extend to the rights of the learners. There are few differences between the packs used for the induction for learners at level 2 and 3.

33. Assessment is satisfactory overall with some good features. Learners use well-structured unit assessment packs that give clear and supportive guidance both for assessor and learner. Assessment planning and observation sheets are very effective in ensuring that all requirements of the unit are covered. Well-planned assessment uses the full range of evidence methods as appropriate to the needs of the candidate. Portfolios are well structured and show varied use of evidence including observations, work books, oral questioning, witness statements and case studies. However, advice on the layout of portfolios is very structured and gives little opportunity for individual initiative. All the work in learners' portfolios is of an appropriate standard and in many cases it is very good. In a very small number there was not enough specific detail to make it clear that all the evidence requirements had been met. Although there is some accreditation of prior learning, it is not always clear how knowledge gained from previous courses is being applied to the NVQ and to the learner's portfolio, although many are up to date and cover very relevant material.

34. In-house assessors are well used, providing good standards of observations, and there are very good working relationships with the Hudson and Hughes assessors who monitor the effectiveness of in-house observations. Regular standardisation meetings are attended by a good proportion of in-house assessors, and follow-up meetings occur if someone is unable to attend.

35. Learners are visited by their assessors at least monthly, and more often, or for a longer period, if required. Assessors leave learners and their employers with an action plan for work to be completed by the next visit. Most of these are very detailed and many are followed through at the next visit. However some are less specific and not always carefully monitored for action.

36. Resources are satisfactory, and there are appropriate ratios of assessors and learners. Assessors are well qualified and have a good range of up-to-date professional expertise that is used well to support their learners. Resource packs for each unit of the NVQ are good and learners are supported well by additional books and materials from their employers.

37. Support for learners is generally satisfactory. Assessors are flexible in their availability, with assessment available in the evenings or early morning if needed. Learners can easily make contact with their assessors in addition to the monthly visit. All learners feel valued and have good relationships with their assessors.

38. There is insufficient support for learners' literacy, numeracy, language and additional support needs. Although there is some identification of literacy and numeracy needs at induction, staff do not use a formal assessment tool. Assessors do seek to offer alternative forms of assessment, for example greater use of oral questioning, but there is no method of support available regularly and consistently. Review documents have a section to identify needs arising from different learning styles, but insufficient attention is paid to this and there are some learners whose learning styles have not been fully identified or responded to.

Leadership and management

39. The provision of NVQs for the care sector is well managed. Members of staff are well

qualified and regularly attend relevant update training sessions. Assessors meet centre staff frequently and there are excellent communications between them. Internal verification processes are satisfactory. Appropriate sampling plans ensure that all aspects of the NVQ are covered, and assessors generally receive detailed feedback. Challenges to evidence and/or assessment are dealt with, although the records of this and of some other aspects of the verification are not always complete.

