

INSPECTION REPORT

Meadowhall Training Ltd

01 February 2007



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

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

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

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

INSPECTION REPORT

Meadowhall Training Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Meadowhall Training Ltd (The Source) is a limited company based in South Yorkshire and is part of Meadowhall Centre Ltd which itself is part of British Land Ltd. The Meadowhall Centre is a large Shopping Complex on the outskirts of Sheffield. The Source delivers learning in conjunction with a range of employers in the Meadowhall Centre and at other locations in South Yorkshire.

2. The Source contracts with South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for youth and adult programmes, and with Jobcentre Plus for an employability programme jointly funded by that body and the European Social Fund (ESF). It has 216 learners, and its head office is in a purpose-built training, conference and community support facility close to the Meadowhall Centre. Staff are based at the facility and visit employers at the Meadowhall Centre and at various other locations. The Source is managed by a centre director and a centre manager who are part of the senior management team of the shopping centre. Operational management at The Source is split between a work-based learning manager and a community development manager.

3. The Source offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in customer service and in retail skills and has recently begun offering apprenticeships in administration. It provides parallel training to qualifying adults under its Train to Gain contract, and has a further 31 adult participants in its employability programme. As part of its commitment to the local community, The Source also offers teaching support to local secondary schools and has begun contact with local primary schools to support specific projects. Further commitment to local needs is demonstrated by the Source's involvement in a foundation degree in retailing offered by a local university, and in a retail Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) led by a regional college.

4. South Yorkshire is an area of high deprivation and is designated as such by the European Community. Rates of unemployment are significantly higher than the average for the country as a whole. Prioritised funding is available to counteract deprivation and ameliorate unemployment rates.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement are all good. Provision in retail and commercial enterprise, preparation for life and work, and business administration and law is all good.

6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The Source has been effective in including staff in the self-assessment process. Staff views were collected regularly during normal meetings, and the initial findings of the self-assessment process were suitably challenged by staff to test how accurate and appropriate the judgements were. Inspectors found the self-assessment report to be well written, evaluative and accurate. The quality improvement plan attached to the

self-assessment report was comprehensive and related well to the self-assessment report, but it contained targets that were insufficiently measurable in terms of performance and timing.

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

The Source has adopted the principle of continuous improvement as the basis to all its activities. In a relatively short period it has inaugurated a range of training programmes to support employment in the local community. The work-based learning manager is responsible for quality improvement and is well supported by the staff in her department in introducing a wide range of improvements. Staff are encouraged to raise improvement issues at all meetings and feedback from employers and learners is actively encouraged. As part of the wider management of the Meadowhall Centre, managers at The Source are active in sharing ideas and resources with other operating departments and specialist committees.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MEADOWHALL TRAINING LTD:

- improve focus on success rates across all programmes
- develop and select appropriate resources to support level 3 programmes
- adopt a more analytical approach to data to aid decision-making
- ensure that the good motivational support available is extended to all new learners
- ensure that the individual approach to planning and reviewing learning is effectively maintained for all new learners

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		2
Quality improvement		2

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Retailing and wholesaling			
Apprenticeships for young people	16	2	
Train to Gain	3	2	
Warehousing and distribution			
Apprenticeships for young people	4	2	
Train to Gain	21	2	

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	31	2

Business administration and law		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Administration</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	23	2
Train to Gain	10	2
<i>Customer service</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	55	2
Train to Gain	43	2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Inspectors reported on and graded provision in retail and commercial enterprise, preparation for life and work, and business administration and law. Preparation for life and work is delivered through an employability programme called Source of Your Own Destiny. Learners in retail and commercial enterprise and in business administration and law are either apprentices or on Train to Gain programmes. They are trained and assessed by staff from The Source in conjunction with staff and managers in their workplaces.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	32
Number of staff interviewed	19
Number of employers interviewed	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	18
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	2

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good community and partnership links
- very good resources and accommodation

- good staff development
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- well-managed quality improvement processes

Weaknesses

- insufficiently analytical use of data in management decision-making
- insufficient emphasis on success rates in some programmes

Retail and commercial enterprise

Strengths

- significant acquisition of personal and workplace skills
- very effective planning and review of learning
- particularly good individualised support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient targeted resources to support advanced apprentices
- insufficient readily available enrichment activities for some learners

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- particularly good development of participants' confidence and employability skills
- highly effective focus on individual needs when planning learning
- significant enrichment activities available for participants

Weaknesses

- poor but improving job outcomes

Business administration and law

Strengths

- highly motivated learners
- good planning and co-ordination of learning
- particularly effective assessment and progress reviews
- good support for additional learning needs

Weaknesses

- poor success rates for advanced apprentices in customer service in 2005-2006
- some incomplete learner records

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MEADOWHALL TRAINING LTD:

- the good training rooms and facilities at The Source
- the fantastic library and drop-in facility
- 'learning and getting a qualification boosts my confidence, I now feel much better about myself'
- the helpful staff - every member of staff is pleasant
- 'assessors are fantastic, very reliable, and always contactable'
- 'assessors are patient and put you at ease, nothing is too much trouble for them'
- 'they are good at explaining things and helped me understand health and safety and equal opportunity'
- 'better than I expected, it's not like school'
- 'this training has helped me find out about my company'
- 'I can now pass on what I have learnt to other people'
- 'The Source is in a good location for public transport'
- 'advisers are always at the end of a phone'
- 'I can't believe assessors will visit me on my night shifts'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MEADOWHALL TRAINING LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- lunchtime facilities - a more affordable café or somewhere to eat a packed lunch
- storage - lockers, or somewhere to put gym bags while using other facilities such as the ICT suite
- 'I would like one workbook instead of lots of bits of paper'
- access to, and availability of, crèche places at times linked to course attendance

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good community and partnership links
- very good resources and accommodation
- good staff development
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- well-managed quality improvement processes

Weaknesses

- insufficiently analytical use of data in management decision-making
- insufficient emphasis on success rates in some programmes

9. The Source has good community and partnership links. The company has established community support as a clear purpose and incorporates that support well in its aims, objectives and strategic planning. The parent company, Meadowhall Centre Ltd, uses The Source in a very positive way to reinforce its commitment to local communities. The Source has established good working relationships with local community groups to provide training and facilities to disadvantaged members of their community. Staff from these groups see The Source as a professional, approachable and adaptable resource. Additionally, The Source has established good links with secondary schools. Staff from The Source are actively involved with schools, providing teaching both in the schools and at The Source itself. There is good support in arranging work experience for school pupils with employers at the Meadowhall Centre and elsewhere. The Source has also taken an active part in developing links with a local university to establish a foundation degree in retailing. There are good links with employers in the Meadowhall Centre and with a wide range of other employers in Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster.

10. The Source has very good resources and accommodation. The centre is purpose built to provide good-quality training and conference facilities. There are well-equipped and furnished training and conference rooms available, not only to local employers and organisations, but also to a wide range of local community groups. The centre has established a well-equipped information and communications technology (ICT) centre, run in partnership with Sheffield College, that provides both structured training and drop-in facilities. Staff from Sheffield College also provide literacy, numeracy and language support when necessary. Additional facilities include a well-equipped gymnasium, an on-site crèche and a good-quality café restaurant run by a franchisee from the Meadowhall Centre. Learners from all programmes have access to these facilities and participants on the Source of your own destiny programme have free access to the gym as part of the benefits of the programme. There is an expanding library facility that actively reinforces the Source's membership of a local retail CoVE led by a regional college.

11. The Source's staff development is good. A performance management system ensures staff have clear roles and responsibilities that are linked to key performance indicators for

them and their teams. There is a six-monthly appraisal of performance which is used well to support individual staff development. A well-established and comprehensive continuous professional development programme has clear annual targets for each member of staff. Each new member of staff has a well-planned 24-week initial training and coaching programme. This is particularly well supported, and is linked to milestones such as attaining assessor qualification units and the preparatory certificate in teaching learning and skills. The Source has established good links with a local consultancy that provides the specialist training needed to support this development programme and that is part funded by the local LSC. Training in such areas as equality of opportunity is subject to regular review and updating. Individual progress is monitored regularly, and feedback provided from observations by peer staff, formal six-monthly reviews with the work-based learning manager, and sampling of assessment by internal verifiers. Staff turnover is low and learners benefit significantly from the continuity of attention provided.

12. The Source's arrangements for literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory. Those staff with appropriate qualifications and experience work across all programmes providing specific help to learners as required. The Source has only a small number of learners or participants in need of additional learning support, and specialist help is also available on site from staff of Sheffield College when this is necessary.

13. There is insufficient emphasis on establishing and maintaining high levels of success on some programmes. Staff from The Source have been active in providing learning programmes to give good support to local community development. Staff are increasingly involved in initiatives to develop employment skills and awareness for a range of audiences from primary schools to university undergraduates, and from apprentices to senior citizens. In some cases, such as Train to Gain programmes, success rates have been good, but in some of the core areas of provision, they have been no more than average. Success rates for advanced apprentices have been poor although numbers are small. These rates do not adequately reflect the good staffing, accommodation and employers' resources that are available to apprenticeship learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

14. The Source promotes equality of opportunity well. Learners, staff and employers all have an equally good understanding of equality issues. Learners are well briefed during induction and remember the information clearly in subsequent checks at reviews. The Source has produced well-informed and useful materials to promote good understanding of equality and diversity among learners.

15. Most learners can speak confidently and knowledgeably about equality of opportunity. Assessors use well-researched and presented scenario cards to challenge learners' understanding and interpretation. Most learners' responses show a clear understanding of the issues involved in the various topics. There are helpful prompts on the cards to support responses by assessor/trainers and to encourage discussion. The scenarios are particularly relevant both to learners and their workplaces. Staff are also encouraged to develop their personal understanding of equality and diversity, and the team has an equal opportunities champion who has prepared useful and informative materials to support the awareness of staff and learners. Staff have had regular professional training to update their understanding and awareness of equality and diversity issues.

16. Equality of opportunity is a fixed item on all staff meeting agendas. There is good partnership working with stakeholders through an equal opportunities and diversity steering group. Source staff gain a useful wider perspective through their membership of equality groups for retailers based in the Meadowhall Centre.

17. Source staff have developed good links with employers, and take pains to ensure that they meet their statutory obligations towards apprentices and other learners. The steering group has taken useful initiatives to enhance awareness of equality of opportunity through a series of meetings and conferences. Promotional material developed by The Source's staff has also provided information on both equality and, separately, diversity issues. Work produced by apprentices in their assignments has been used by employers to develop awareness among their other staff. One employer plans to pass on the equality and diversity information produced by a learner to all staff in future training sessions.

18. There is careful attention to the support given to learners with additional needs. All learners complete full and appropriate initial assessments which help to identify additional needs, and further diagnostic testing is used to provide more detailed information. There are many examples of support given to learners with needs in such areas as dyslexia and dyspraxia. The resources at the main centre include hearing loops for learners who need them.

19. The Source maintains a satisfactory equal opportunities policy and code of practice, copies of which are in a quality manual that is available to all staff. The policy and code of practice are carefully reviewed when there are changes in legislation, and updated to reflect changes in company policies and procedures. The code of practice gives clear advice on a range of topics such as harassment and bullying. In addition, The Source has an informative diversity awareness workbook that is also made available to all staff. It contains a wide range of exercises in equality and diversity that are useful in providing advice to learners and employers.

20. There are informative induction materials both for learners and employers that contain guidance on equal opportunity. All learners receive a substantial information pack at their induction that contains well-prepared information on equal opportunity. This information is constantly reinforced with learners and their employers throughout their programme. Assessors check employers' equal opportunities policies when learners start their training as part of a well organised risk-assessment process.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

21. The Source has well-managed quality improvement processes. Managers and staff are clearly focused on delivering a good-quality experience to learners. Quality improvement includes improving the performance and work of individual members of staff. Staff are regularly observed carrying out key tasks including assessment, progress reviews and teaching sessions. The work-based learning manager has a planned programme of observations of learning sessions. Feedback to assessors is supportive and constructive and brings about improvement. Observations take place regularly and the judgements made are accurate but there is currently no equivalent quality assurance of the on-the-job training given by employers.

22. To support team targets and quality improvement indicators, The Source prepares a well-written development plan and a quality improvement plan which are reviewed every six months. A new performance management process and new appraisal system have been successful in monitoring and improving assessors' performance. Good practice is identified both formally and informally through the quality improvement processes and also informally by members of staff. It is shared effectively among the work-based learning team, and discussed to ensure a continuous approach to establishing programme strengths and weaknesses. Programme performance is actively monitored and minuted at each weekly team meeting. Staff are aware of their roles in the quality improvement process and of the continuing team emphasis on improvement. This team working process has recently led to improvements in the learner induction programme, and changed the format of some programmes to improve target-setting and timely success rates.

23. Internal verification is planned and managed well and the process is thorough and rigorous. Internal verifiers have improved quality over and above their role of supporting the assessment process. The work-based learning manager ensures that systems are followed and the internal verifiers assist in sampling observations of the key points in the learners' experience, such as induction, initial assessment and learning sessions. Observers are well trained, have defined minimum levels of experience, and grade their observations against a clear set of criteria.

24. Working practices at the Source are consistent. The company has several quality assurance accreditations, and an audit system linked to that of its parent company. Audits of files and procedures are carried out to a quality calendar and the results fed back to staff at monthly meetings. The Source has also used external consultants to provide an independent audit of procedures and to recommend necessary alterations and improvements. Quality improvement policies and procedures are well publicised to staff, and they find this helpful. There is a quality improvement policy and a procedures manual but most staff access the contents through the company intranet.

25. Feedback is sought from learners and employers both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Learners feed back at the beginning, middle and end of their programmes, and the results are recorded. Employers' feedback, although less regular, is collected in a form which allows easy quantification of responses. Significant amounts of textual feedback have been collected to illustrate learners' and employers' satisfaction, although this approach is limited in the effect it has on identifying issues for improvement.

26. There is insufficient analysis of data to inform management decisions. The Source collects a great deal of information which it uses to bring about improvement. Information gathered from learners' and employers' feedback is collected and discussed at management team meetings but the information is not used in a sufficiently systematic way to support plans for improvements. Staff collect and record the reasons for learners leaving programmes, but there is no overall analysis of this information, and no subsequent evaluation of actions taken to reduce leaving rates. A large number of observations of learning are carried out annually but there is no systematic analysis of the grades awarded in order to evaluate the quality of the learners' experience. The Source holds information on participation rates by gender, disability and ethnic group, but there is no analysis of the performance of these groups to ensure that learning programmes are inclusive and non-discriminatory. Data on the company's performance is not used

MEADOWHALL TRAINING LTD

sufficiently to set performance targets for staff and to establish key performance indicators for teams and individuals.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Retailing and wholesaling</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	16	2
Train to Gain	3	2
<i>Warehousing and distribution</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	4	2
Train to Gain	21	2

27. The Source delivers training in retailing and in distribution and warehousing skills to apprentices, advanced apprentices and learners on Train to Gain programmes. The Source has been delivering Train to Gain national vocational qualification (NVQ)-only programmes since 2004-05, but initially as a subcontractor for another training provider and then under a pilot programme. Since August 2006, the programme has been under direct contract. All the learners are employed and they work in a wide range of retail organisations and manufacturers in South Yorkshire. Learners are recruited through their employers or Connexions and can join the programmes at any time. The Source's staff contact employers to introduce and promote the programmes. Learners are visited in their workplace every two to four weeks by their personal assessor for individual coaching, training and assessment. Learners' progress is formally reviewed every 12 weeks. In addition, most learners have access to a wide range of support services and enrichment activities at The Source's training centre at Meadowhall.

Strengths

- significant acquisition of personal and workplace skills
- very effective planning and review of learning
- particularly good individualised support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient targeted resources to support advanced apprentices
- insufficient readily available enrichment activities for some learners

Achievement and standards

28. Learners acquire significant personal and workplace skills. They show a real motivation to achieve their learning goals, and are more confident in their job as a result of completing their learning programmes. Employers report that learners demonstrate their improved confidence at work, especially in approaching and dealing with customers. For example, one learner is now taking responsibility for analysis and action-planning as part of his employer's mystery shopping programme. Some learners have been promoted at work and others are enthusiastically working towards becoming team leaders and senior sales staff. Some are working towards advanced apprenticeships following successful completion of their apprenticeships. One learner completing an NVQ as part

of the Train to Gain contract had been out of learning since leaving secondary school more than 30 years ago, and was now greatly enjoying the programme and keen to progress further. Learners' portfolio work is of a high standard and all activities and evidence, including those used for the key skills awards and technical certificate, are relevant to the learners' specific workplaces. For example, one key skills project was based around sales, and included numeracy calculations relating to average transaction values.

29. Overall success rates for apprentices are satisfactory, at 27 per cent, in 2004-05, improving significantly to 63 per cent in 2005-06. Current apprentices and advanced apprentices are making good progress towards every component of their framework. Learners working towards an NVQ as part of a Train to Gain programme are also making good progress. Learners comment that their achievements are recognised and encouraged.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Apprenticeships	2004-05	overall	16	44	45	25	35
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
	2005-06	overall	8	88	54	63	50
		timely	*	*	*	*	*

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).
* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

30. Individual learning is planned and reviewed very effectively. All learners receive a comprehensive and effective induction at the start of their programme, during which a detailed initial assessment is conducted. This includes a relevant diagnostic test to identify any literacy and numeracy support needs. If needs are identified, the assessor works with the learner to plan an appropriate level of support. This could include additional visits, individual coaching, practical action or a referral for specialist support. The initial assessment also includes a learning style indicator and a skills scan, as well as a discussion about future career aspirations. Learners receive satisfactory initial advice and guidance and are all on appropriate programmes.

31. Information from the initial assessment is used to design an individual learning plan around the learner. The plan is well used throughout the learning programme, and learners demonstrate a good understanding of it, and how it relates to their programme. Specific medium- and long-term targets are agreed between the assessor, learner and employer and carefully recorded on each individual learning plan. Where appropriate these targets clearly relate to key skills and technical certificate achievement as well as the NVQ. The targets are challenging. For example, one new apprentice with previous experience and some accreditation of prior learning was targeted to achieve a full framework within nine months.

32. Targets are accurately reviewed and updated during learners' progress reviews, which

are conducted every 12 weeks throughout the programme. Reviews are well planned and noted on the individual learning plan, and all are being completed on time. Most reviews are effective and involve the learner, assessor and the employer. Assessors from The Source work hard to ensure employers' input is included, and demonstrate flexibility in delivery to take account of workplace needs, activities and training. Employers value this and there is good synergy between the training provided by The Source and that given in the workplace. Assessors demonstrate good knowledge of accessible workplace-specific training, and encourage learners to use it as evidence towards their qualification. For example, one learner was set the target of using information from his employer's intranet system in his project work. Review documents are comprehensive, and learners' progress from initial assessment is constantly reviewed. Reviews also include good reinforcement of induction topics such as health and safety and equal opportunities.

33. Assessment for all aspects of the qualifications is well planned and holistic. Learners are assessed frequently using a wide range of methods and employers are often asked to produce witness testimonies. Assessment action plans are set during every visit, with targets agreed and understood by learner and employer. In many cases, assessors negotiated with employers to come into busy workplaces over the Christmas trading period to complete observation assessments.

34. Individual support for learners is very good. The frequency and timing of visits is well planned to adapt to learners' and employers' needs. Some assessors are working with learners during night shifts in local manufacturing and distribution warehouses in order to make the best use of assessment opportunities. Other assessors are working early mornings and up to a closing time of 2100 to support learners based in the Meadowhall Shopping Centre. Assessors also frequently work on Saturdays and Sundays in order to support learners. The Source provides specific and supportive help if an individual learning need is identified, regardless of whether it is required for a qualification achievement. For example, one learner who was exempt from key skills requested and received personal numeracy support to enable her to do her job better. Assessors also work with employers to help learners achieve promotion at work. For example, one assessor worked with an employer to devise a personal work-based development plan for a learner who wanted a senior sales position.

35. There are insufficient targeted resources to support advanced apprentices. Resources for apprenticeship and NVQ programmes are generic and do not specifically relate to the standards for retail operations and distribution and warehousing. Although numbers are still relatively small, more learners are now progressing from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships, but there are insufficient training and study materials for the increasing numbers.

36. For some learners there are too few readily available enrichment activities. The Source's training centre has very good resources including up-to-date computer equipment and free drop-in internet access. Learners can also use a very good on-site gym, a well-equipped library and a creche. Various optional additional training courses are held at the training centre. However, some learners work and live some distance from Sheffield or work unsocial shift patterns, and they express disappointment at being unable to access these resources and activities. Staff at The Source have begun a number of new initiatives to overcome this disparity but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

Leadership and management

37. Staff are kept well informed through weekly team meetings. All are aware of their roles and responsibilities and work well together. The assessor team are well qualified and occupationally experienced. New staff are well supported and mentored and immediately start work towards appropriate qualifications. All staff are encouraged to take up professional development opportunities and they speak highly of the training and learning they have experienced. Assessor's caseloads are appropriate and all have suitable key performance indicators to measure personal performance. There is an effective appraisal system with reviews being conducted every six months. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and identify and feed back strengths and weaknesses on an ongoing basis. The self-assessment report clearly identified many of the same strengths and weaknesses as the inspection team. Internal verification is satisfactory and there is appropriate sampling. The atmosphere at The Source is welcoming, supportive and very learner centred.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	31	2

38. There are 31 participants in a programme jointly funded by Jobcentre Plus and the ESF entitled 'Source of your Own Destiny'. This is a 28-week core programme for long-term unemployed adults returning to work. Many participants come from hard-to-place groups and are referred by Jobcentre Plus or other agencies that support adults to overcome barriers to work and learning. This programme is now in its fourth year and to date 307 participants have taken part in it. All participants have an induction and initial assessment. This is followed by an eight-week ICT module with all participants working towards relevant ICT qualifications in areas such as word processing and spreadsheets. The next eight-week module on health and well-being leads to the achievement of nationally recognised credits and is followed by a 12-week work placement in a preferred occupational area. Jobsearch support is provided throughout assisting with letter writing, interview skills and the compilation of a curriculum vitae. The final stage of the programme, delivered at The Source's own expense, is a seven-week neuro-linguistic programming course which focuses on working with participants to unlock their true potential. The programme team comprises two advisers, one administrator and a number of subcontracted specialist delivery staff. Key partners include Sport Active for the delivery of the well-being module and Sheffield College for ICT, and literacy and numeracy. Employability training is provided by Meadowhall Centre Ltd.

Employability training*Strengths*

- particularly good development of participants' confidence and employability skills
- highly effective focus on individual needs when planning learning
- significant enrichment activities available for participants

Weaknesses

- poor but improving job outcomes

Achievement and standards

39. The development of participants' confidence and employability skills is particularly good. Many participants speak proudly of the increase in their self-esteem and motivation, and demonstrate a high standard of work in producing job application letters and curriculum vitae. They feel much better about attending interviews and clearly demonstrate effective communication skills. Participants have a greater understanding of their personal well-being and some readily discuss how they have changed their eating habits and given up smoking as a result of being on the programme.

40. Most current participants are making good progress towards achievement of

accredited qualifications. Since the programme started, 378 ICT qualifications have been achieved ranging from modular accreditation in first level computing skills, to basic skills support and courses taken from the learndirect portfolio. Many participants have also achieved healthy living qualifications.

41. The rate of job outcomes has been poor but is now improving. The number of participants returning to work at the end of the programme has been below the locally agreed target of 31 per cent. Twenty-two per cent gained a job in 2004-05 and 25 per cent in 2005-06. A number of participants have moved into further education at the end of the programme and some into voluntary work. Some participants currently finishing the programme are moving into employment, and results for 2006-07 are already close to the target, and likely to exceed it. Since the inauguration of the programme, The Source has chosen to work with adults who have significant barriers to finding employment, and the management team has been taking effective action to improve the outcomes. This has included working with drug rehabilitation agencies to ensure that participants are stable enough to cope with the demands of the programme, and targeting single parents whose children are nearing school age.

The quality of provision

42. The Source focuses very effectively on participants' individual needs when planning learning. Participants come from many different backgrounds and have many different and significant barriers to learning and getting a job. Staff from The Source work effectively with each participant to design and implement a programme suited to their individual needs.

43. Every participant receives a satisfactory induction at the start of the programme, offered in a group setting or individually if preferred. Participants demonstrate a very good understanding of their programmes. All take part in a personalised initial assessment using a variety of methods including a basic literacy and numeracy diagnostic test. If participants need additional learning support then advisers work carefully with them to plan and organise it. The results of the initial assessment are used effectively to design a good-quality and detailed individual progress and achievement ladder. This includes well-designed short-, medium- and long-term personal goals, together with learning targets and aims for each stage of the programme. Participants are actively encouraged to design their own timetable for learning, and to take clear responsibility for their own programme.

44. Personal advisers provide good individual support throughout the programme. Participants speak highly of the close relationship they have with their adviser and how they can talk to them about personal and other matters. A well-publicised open-door policy operates between participants and advisers. Access is made easy by telephone or face-to-face, and communication is good. Monthly reviews are well planned in advance and are led by the personal adviser. Participants value the opportunity to review their progress and set agreed action points. Work-placement providers are also actively involved in the review process.

45. There is good linking together of all elements of the programme and this is reflected in the individual progress and achievement ladders and participants' targets. Lesson plans are effective and have clear aims and learning outcomes. All activities are carefully selected to be relevant to the programme and many are personalised to reflect individual participants' needs. Delivery of the programme is very flexible and designed to meet the

specific circumstances of each participant. For some participants the programme has been extended, in agreement with Jobcentre Plus advisers.

46. Significant enrichment activities are available to all participants. They have free membership to the on-site gym and are given a personally designed exercise programme aimed at immediately promoting a positive personal image. There are good crèche facilities at The Source and these are valued by the participants who use them. Physical and equipment resources are very good and participants have immediate access to all that is available, including up-to-date computer equipment and internet use, and a well-stocked library. The Source's staff are careful to treat participants on all programmes with dignity and respect, and 'Source of Your Own Destiny' participants comment that this adds value to their experience and has increased their self-esteem.

Leadership and management

47. The Source of Your Own Destiny programme is managed effectively. It is a well-resourced programme with staff from the Source developing and maintaining good partnerships to ensure meaningful delivery of learning. Support for employability is readily available from The Source's relationships with other departments at Meadowhall Centre Ltd. There is a more recent focus on improving job outcomes with effective action being taken to improve future results. There are regular team meetings to discuss programme development and participants' status. These meetings also provide an opportunity to share good practice. All participants have the opportunity to provide feedback on any aspect of their programme.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		
Apprenticeships for young people	23	2
Train to Gain	10	2
Customer service		
Apprenticeships for young people	55	2
Train to Gain	43	2

48. The Source offers training in customer service and business administration to apprentices, advanced apprentices and NVQ learners on Train to Gain. The Source initially delivered Train to Gain as a subcontractor during a pilot programme. In August 2006 this became a direct contract from the LSC. There are 131 learners on programme, all employed in administration or customer service roles retail outlets, human resource departments, partner organisations, office environments or community organisations. Learners are inducted either at The Source or in the workplace. All learning and assessment is done in the workplace with additional off-the-job sessions provided at The Source according to individual needs. Progress reviews takes place every 12 weeks. The programmes are delivered by a team of five assessors, two administrators and a work-based learning manager.

Strengths

- highly motivated learners
- good planning and co-ordination of learning
- particularly effective assessment and progress reviews
- good support for additional learning needs

Weaknesses

- poor success rates for advanced apprentices in customer service in 2005-2006
- some incomplete learner records

Achievement and standards

49. Learners are highly motivated to achieve. They are fully involved in their programmes, enjoy learning and promote learning to others. The Source's tutors and assessors are highly effective in encouraging learners with praise, reassurance and patience. The work in learners' portfolios is of a high standard. They are proud of their achievements and demonstrate the same high standards in practice in the workplace. They are very keen to progress within their qualifications and in their careers. For example, several learners have progressed from a schools preparation programme to apprenticeships and then on to advanced apprenticeships. In many cases, progress through the qualification levels is mirrored by promotions to supervisory or team leader positions and management training in the workplace. Learners are confident, assured and self-aware. They also communicate well, are articulate and can identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Employers see a positive effect on their businesses, particularly

when learners' awareness of business needs improves, and they give better service to customers.

50. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. In business administration, the success rate was 50 per cent in 2005-06. In customer service it was 54 per cent in 2004-05 and 52 per cent in 2005-06. In Train to Gain and advanced apprenticeship programmes, current learners are making good and some very good progress. However, success rates for advanced apprentices in customer service in 2005-06 are poor.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2005-06	overall	4	0	59	0	51
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
Apprenticeships	2004-05	overall	13	54	56	54	46
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
	2005-06	overall	66	58	63	52	58
		timely	*	*	*	*	*

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).

* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

51. The planning and co-ordination of learning is good. Learners have a comprehensive and thorough induction to their learning programmes. Staff use an initial assessment of learning needs and learning styles, and an evaluation of vocational skills to design the individual learning plan. Employers and learners are fully involved in the planning and co-ordination of learning. Very good use is made of individual learning plans, and they are kept up to date throughout the programme. Learners are responsible for them and are encouraged to update the records themselves when they achieve units and when targets are amended.

52. Learning sessions for key skills and the technical certificate are carefully planned at the start of the programme and are integrated well with the NVQ. Employers' in-house learning programmes are also co-ordinated well with NVQs, technical certificates and key skills work. This helps to further motivate learners and employers. If employers do not have their own training programmes, assessors work closely and effectively with them to identify gaps in learners' knowledge. In these circumstances, learners are offered additional training at The Source's training centre, or individual coaching in the workplace. Learners have a very good understanding of their programmes and of their learning goals.

53. Assessors make good efforts to ensure that employers' and learners' needs are met by being flexible in their approach to assessment visits. They often make time for learners during unsociable hours such as evenings and weekends. Learners are offered the opportunity to drop in to the training centre for additional learning sessions in key skills, technical certificates and ICT. Each learner is enrolled in the library and encouraged to make use of the good range of additional resources available.

54. Assessment and progress reviews are particularly effective. Assessments are well planned. Learners are fully involved in the planning and can request assessments to drive progress at their own pace. Assessors use a good range of assessment methods, including professional discussion, work-based case studies, digital recordings and photographs, and witness testimonies from managers and colleagues. There are some innovative assessment methods and use of evidence in portfolios. For example, a learner collected evidence to demonstrate planning and inter-personal skills from the arrangements for a local Somali family wedding and a children's party. Learners record their own evidence in log books and use very effective cross-referencing to maximise their claims to competence. Progress reviews are very effective and each session has a clear purpose so that learners recognise their significance. Short-, medium- and long-term targets are negotiated with learners and employers, amended where appropriate, and updated on the learner's individual learning plan. Employers are fully informed of learners' progress and wherever possible take part in the review sessions.

55. Support for additional learning needs is good. Assessors carefully identify and supply learning support materials such as coloured paper to support learners coping with dyslexia. Learners who are unable to cope with conventional portfolios of written work are readily offered alternative assessment methods such as by professional discussion, or the preparation of digital recordings and photographs. The provider offers an intensive motivational learning programme to support learners who lack confidence. Readily available and well-prepared literacy, numeracy and key skills support is given by staff with specialist experience. There are good supportive relationships between assessors, learners and employers, with learners given extra time away from the workplace to receive individual support from tutors or assessors.

Leadership and management

56. The administration and customer service programmes are managed well. Staff are well qualified and experienced in administration and customer service and are highly motivated. There is good continuous staff development and assessors display a high level of professionalism. Employers respect the knowledge and industry skills of The Source's team, and the team has developed a wide range of good and productive working relationships. Learners and staff have a good understanding of equality and diversity, and it is discussed and reinforced at every review.

57. Internal verification practices and procedures are sound. However some learner records are incomplete. Some work in learners' portfolios is unsigned. There is insufficient recording of types of assessment decisions on assessment documents and internal verification records. Some action points on internal verifiers' feedback to assessors are not signed off appropriately.

58. The self-assessment report is well written and identifies most of the same strengths and weaknesses as the inspectors. The grades given in the self-assessment report are accurate.

