

INSPECTION REPORT

Connexions Leicester Shire Reinspection

08 May 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

| SEVEN-POINT SCALE | FIVE-POINT SCALE |
|-------------------|------------------|
| grade 1 | grade 1 |
| grade 2 | |
| grade 3 | grade 2 |
| grade 4 | grade 3 |
| grade 5 | grade 4 |
| grade 6 | grade 5 |
| grade 7 | |

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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

SUMMARY

The provider

Connexions Leicester Shire holds a contract with Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council to deliver Life Skills training. Since the original inspection, the contract has been extended to cover the Life Skills element of the Learning Gateway programme for all of the county of Leicestershire and the city of Leicester. On the Learning Gateway, young people work with a personal adviser to identify education, training or employment opportunities and agree a career action plan. Life Skills organisers work with the young person and the personal adviser to arrange a learning programme which matches their aims and abilities. Connexions are currently using 19 training organisations to provide Life Skills training. The training organisations cover a range of occupational areas. In addition, they offer activities which are designed to build personal and social skills. There are 83 learners on the learning programme, most of whom have a range of social and personal problems and poor academic qualifications. Some learners have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Learners can work towards appropriate certificates. There has been a significant change in staffing since the original inspection. A full-time manager, four Life Skills organisers and one part-time basic skills tutor are now responsible for the learning programme. The manager reports to the Connexions operations manager for city and community and other Connexions staff support the programme, in particular, the quality assurance manager.

Overall judgement

The original inspection in June 2001 found that work-based learning programmes for young people in Life Skills was satisfactory but that the leadership and management and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. The approach to equal opportunities was satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process all aspects are satisfactory.

Grades awarded

| | Original | Reinspection |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Leadership and management | 4 | 3 |
| Contributory grades: | | |
| Equality of opportunity | 3 | 3 |
| Quality assurance | 4 | 3 |

| | Original | Reinspection |
|------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Foundation programmes | 3 | 3 |
| Contributory grades: | | |
| Life Skills | 3 | 3 |

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

KEY STRENGTHS

- good management of change
- significant improvements in quality assurance
- good learner support
- good retention and achievement rates

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient integration of literacy and numeracy support
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient target-setting in individual learning plans
- insufficient sharing of information between partners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider exploration of possible progression routes

THE REINSPECTION

1. Two inspectors spent a total of 11 days inspecting the Life Skills programme at Connexions Leicester Shire (Connexions) in November 2002, March 2003 and May 2003. They observed and graded six learning sessions. They interviewed 37 learners and held 22 interviews with the Life Skills and other Connexions staff. They visited and interviewed nine subcontractors and three work placements. Inspectors examined 30 individual learning plans, a range of documentary evidence, quality assurance documents and progress files which were updated at each visit.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Total |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Foundation programmes | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Total |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Foundation programmes | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Total | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- very effective involvement of young people at a strategic level
- good management of change of the Life Skills programme
- significant progress in improving quality assurance

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient sharing of targets with providers
- insufficient sharing of information between partners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of equal opportunities data analysis and target-setting

2. Young people are very effectively involved in the organisation at a strategic level through management groups and in the recruitment of Connexion's staff. Learners are trained effectively to interview candidates being recruited to Connexions posts. Young people are involved in various activities, from direct interviews to role-playing scenarios with the candidates. Learners gain both confidence and skills to help them with jobsearch through these activities. The organisation makes effective decisions about the candidates' ability to communicate with the young people. There is good feedback to learners on the outcomes of the interviews.

3. There has been good management of the changes to the Life Skills programme since the original inspection. The organisation has made significant changes in the management of the Life Skills programme. A new staff team is in place with a dedicated Life Skills contract manager and four Life Skills organisers. The programme is now managed more effectively. Closer links now exist between the Life Skills team and the parent body, for example, the expertise of the quality assurance manager and the health and safety officer have been used to rectify the identified weaknesses at the original inspection. Effective lines of management and operating procedures now exist. The organisation has changed from the careers and guidance service to Connexions service. This has been managed very effectively and has not disrupted the learning programmes. There has been satisfactory succession planning for staff and learners for the end of the Life Skills programme and the transfer to the entry to employment (E2E) programme, even though the future arrangements were not known at the time of the final reinspection visit.

4. Communications are generally satisfactory or better. The Life Skills team meet

regularly on a formal and informal basis. Information and updates on Life Skills are posted on the Connexions internal website. Regular meetings take place between the Life Skills contract manager and the head of service. Partnership working is effective. Provider meetings have been introduced and these meetings include briefings and training sessions. A providers' network event has enabled the sharing of information on learning programmes and for local workers to become aware of the range of activities available.

5. Provision for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is inconsistent. There are satisfactory specialist group sessions for learners to attend at various locations throughout the county and city. In addition, a part-time basic skills worker has recently joined the Life Skills team to provide specialist individual and group support for a small number of learners where appropriate. However, in some subcontracted provisions the literacy and numeracy support is unsatisfactory. Connexions has plans to rectify these issues.

6. There is no systematic sharing of information between partners about learners and their needs and progress. Protocols for information sharing are currently being developed, but have yet to be implemented. Learners and some providers are unsure about who carries out which actions, such as progress reviews. Information about a learner who had a school statement of special needs for dyslexia was not provided. The learner subsequently took a further assessment. Information about learning goals, programmes and achievements in literacy and numeracy is not always shared between the specialist literacy and numeracy providers and the other providers that learners attend. Work is not matched to the context of the rest of the learner's programme. This issue has recently been identified by the provider and a new system is being implemented.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

7. The organisation's approach to equal opportunities is satisfactory. The Connexions equal opportunities policy applies to the Life Skills provision. There is effective monitoring of staff's understanding through the appraisal system and the use of open learning packs. Staff also attend training sessions to keep up-to-date with current developments.

8. There is effective monitoring of learners' understanding and awareness of equal opportunities at induction and throughout the learning programme. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The organisation deals very effectively with individual learner's needs and career aims in relation to their diverse backgrounds. Young people become effective role models for other learners from disadvantaged groups. For example, one learner acted as a mentor on the anger management course. Effective use is made of extensions to the Life Skills programme to ensure that young people are given alternative work placements and remain engaged in learning. Good use is made of external funding to provide extra support for the learners.

9. Since the original inspection, the organisation has started to analyse the achievement data of groups of learners by gender, ethnicity and disability. Further analysis is due to take place to analyse the trends that this information has provided and set performance targets.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

10. There has been significant progress in improving and developing the quality assurance of the provision since the original inspection. The organisation has provided a clear commitment to resolve the issues identified at the original inspection. An analysis of activities for Life Skills has taken place. Twenty-two new procedures have been introduced covering the key processes such as induction, links with providers, equal opportunities, attendance and progress reviews. Initial audits of the effectiveness of some of the quality assurance procedures have taken place. Subcontractors have been involved in a training event to improve the effectiveness of progress reviews. A new monitoring process for subcontracted provision has recently been established. The organisation is still refining this process in order to make it fully effective. Plans are in place to ensure all the new processes are fully established and are used consistently across all provision. The organisation has recently taken steps to monitor the quality and performance of the subcontractor's accredited provision for Life Skills learners. Subcontractors are now required to submit external verifiers reports as part of this monitoring process. The organisation is still developing methods of recording the achievements of Life Skills learners who do not fully complete their individual learning programmes. Training on new systems is currently taking place and this will link with, and be consistent with, the work of the personal advisers. Focus-group discussions have been held with young people to support the overall evaluation of the programme. Mid-programme evaluations have been introduced as well as evaluation of learners near the end of the programme.

11. A new system of lesson observations for subcontracted provision has been introduced. Initial observations did not have enough analytical detail to improve teaching and learning. The initial observations were not carried out with all providers. A more effective process is currently being introduced. Plans are in place to link this to the monitoring and feedback given to subcontractors.

12. During reinspection, targets on achievement and retention for Life Skills organisers and subcontractors have been developed. Currently, these targets are not sufficiently shared with the subcontractors. They do not know the increase in achievement rates required for groups of Life Skills learners at their provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

| Programmes inspected | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Life Skills | 83 | 3 |

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- very effective learner support
- good range of training activities
- good retention and achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient target-setting in individual learning plans
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient integration of literacy and numeracy support

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider exploration of possible progression routes
- more participative induction

13. Learners receive very effective personal and practical support. This helps to minimise any obstacles to young people joining and staying on the Life Skills training programme. A European-funded project enables additional work with young people either before they join the Life Skills programme or to provide additional support while they are on the programme. It has provided funding for individual learner support, childcare, transport costs, clothes for interviews, and anger management training. The Life Skills team use effective, imaginative solutions, and their good links with training providers and other agencies, to tackle learners' barriers to training and employment. For example, one learner has been provided with a bicycle to overcome transport problems. Good use is made of links with the youth offending team's early intervention programme to raise young people's awareness of the criminal justice system.

14. A good range of training activities are provided, a strength identified at the original inspection. Connexions staff work with 19 training providers, some of whom specialise in, for example, sport or arts activities. Learning programmes are well designed to suit individual learners' needs and interests. Some young people train with more than one provider. Some subcontractors offer units of a Connexions-accredited qualification. Others offer a nationally recognised foundation qualification. The qualifications provide a good framework for the development of social and personal skills. A multimedia project is particularly effective in engaging young people and in developing new interests. Work placements are carefully chosen and well matched to individual learners' needs.

15. Retention and achievements are good. In 2001-02, 62 per cent of learners stayed on the programme for the planned duration and 57 per cent achieved the targets on their learning plan. Progression to further learning or employment is not fully developed. Most learners understand that their levels of confidence and motivation have increased while on the programme. Some learners have a better understanding of their career aims. Attendance is good and monitored well. Overall, unauthorised absences account for less than 3 per cent of non-attendance.

16. As identified at the original inspection, initial assessment is inconsistent between providers. Levels of literacy and numeracy are tested but, in a number of subcontractors, there is no further diagnosis of specific needs. There is not enough assessment of preferred learning styles or social and personal skills. Personal advisers provide information on learners' training needs identified during the Learning Gateway. These needs are not always transferred to individual learning plans. Targets on individual learning plans are not sufficiently specific or measurable and do not have satisfactory target dates. Planning for young people's work-placement activities is not satisfactory. Life Skills organisers recently introduced a system to ensure more accurate transfer of all needs and barriers onto individual learning plans. This procedure has not been operating for long enough to assess its success.

17. Progress reviews are now satisfactory and more accurately identify and record targets and actions required. However, because many of the targets on the learning plan are not sufficiently specific, it is difficult to objectively measure learners' progress. This is particularly so for personal and social skills development and where there is no quality framework with which to monitor and record achievement. Connexions are planning to introduce a comprehensive system to remedy this once all personal advisers are trained to use it.

18. Some subcontracted providers provide only informal literacy and numeracy support. For these learners there are no detailed plans to guide their short or long-term literacy and numeracy development. Some learners with literacy or numeracy needs do not always receive relevant support. During the second reinspection visit, eight out of 11 learners with one subcontractor were identified as having literacy or numeracy skills below level 1. None had learning plans to meet these needs. Where literacy or numeracy training does occur, there are insufficient links with other elements of the Life

Skills programmes. Learning materials do not adequately meet individual's specific needs. There is not enough work to help learners develop skills during work placements. Most reviews of progress do not assess learners' literacy or numeracy progress or set targets for further development. Connexions recently appointed a part-time literacy tutor to directly support individual learners and learners' attendance at sessions is good. The tutor is beginning to integrate literacy skills and learning with the wider curriculum.

19. Connexion's staff have introduced a number of initiatives to increase the number of young people moving on to further training or employment with training. A Life Skills organiser now has responsibility for increasing the number and range of work-based learning opportunities. Connexions are also encouraging subcontracted providers to offer more work experience as part of their programme. Liaison with Connexions' employment vacancy unit aims to widen the range of possible progression routes for young people leaving Life Skills. There is still an over-emphasis on progression to a college-based course for some learners. The emphasis on work preparation varies between providers. One subcontractor provides good preparation for work training which helps learners focus on possible progression routes. There is not enough emphasis on work preparation or work experience in other subcontractors.

20. Induction of learners onto the Life Skills is adequate and covers the basic requirements. Life Skills organisers closely monitor understanding of these requirements. Providers are flexible in the way they deliver induction. For instance, group or individual induction sessions are arranged depending on the number of learners joining the programme. However, induction sessions do not have enough learner involvement and generally comprise the completion of documents.