

INSPECTION REPORT

Huyton Churches Training Service

03 December 2002



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 and Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Huyton Churches Training Service is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity based in Huyton, Merseyside. It provides work-based learning for young people in Life Skills, business administration including information technology, engineering, construction and childcare.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is inadequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. In health and social care and foundation programmes, work-based learning for young people is satisfactory. But it is unsatisfactory in construction, engineering and business administration. Although equality of opportunity is satisfactory, quality assurance, and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	3
Other government-funded provision	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- productive external links and partnerships
- effective support for learners
- well-resourced training facilities
- good work placements

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor management information system
- no established quality assurance system
- poor retention and achievement rates
- incomplete individual learning plans
- ineffective progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more employer involvement with NVQs
- better recording of senior management team meetings
- more frequent staff training in equal opportunities
- better monitoring of equal opportunities

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days inspecting Huyton Churches Training Services (HCTS) in December 2002. The inspectors visited the head office in Knowsley and the one subcontractor, and carried out 35 interviews with staff, including all of the senior management team and the chairman of the board of directors. They also visited 21 workplaces, where they spoke to 20 workplace supervisors and 50 learners. They observed three assessments, learners' progress reviews and 11 learning sessions. They examined 27 learners' portfolios, learners' files, records of learners' progress reviews, reports of audits by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and awarding bodies, records of meetings, policies and procedures, and data on achievement. Inspectors also studied the most recent self-assessment report, produced in August 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	5
Total	0	2	2	3	2	2	0	11

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. HCTS is a charitable organisation with its headquarters in the Knowsley area of Merseyside. It was formed in 1980, under the sponsorship of a number of churches of all denominations within the borough of Knowsley, to provide training for the unemployed youth of the area and adults unemployed for six months or more. HCTS is financed through LSC contracts, the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), European Social Fund (ESF) projects and by employers. Income surpluses are used to further develop learning and training resources. HCTS is fully committed to its mission to provide access to training for all those seeking it and this is central to all training. HCTS provides work-based learning for young people in childcare, construction, business administration including information technology (IT), motor vehicle engineering, and foundation, which includes Life Skills and short programmes for those learners who are undecided about what training programme they want. There are 141 learners. Training provision is divided between the HCTS training centre for off-the-job training, and assessment is carried out in the work placements. In construction training programmes, off-the-job training is subcontracted to a local college of further education. HCTS employs 24 staff, under the direction of a board of directors, a chief executive and a training manager. There are 10 full-time assessors and most of the staff are full time.

3. Knowsley is a metropolitan borough and an area of severe economic deprivation. The unemployment rate in Knowsley is 8.9 per cent, which is almost three times the national average of 3 per cent. The largest employment sectors in the area are public administration, education and health, distribution, hotels and restaurants, and manufacturing. In Knowsley, 52 per cent of 16 year olds and 38 per cent of 17 year olds are participating in full-time education, compared with national figures of 71 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in Knowsley was 27.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of the local population of Knowsley from minority ethnic groups is approximately 1 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Support for all learners and their skill and attitude development is good, but retention and achievement rates in all areas are poor. The quality of training in childcare is satisfactory. Teaching and learning opportunities are good, and there is an effective induction for learners. There are thorough internal verification arrangements, although most learners make slow progress in achieving their full qualification. The quality of training in construction is unsatisfactory. There is good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training, but insufficient assessment in the workplace. In engineering, the quality of training is also unsatisfactory. Teaching resources are used effectively and there is a useful induction for learners, but there are insufficient checks on health and safety in the workplace and a lack of recorded detail in learners' progress reviews. Business administration training provision is unsatisfactory. Good use is made of the well-resourced teaching rooms, but there is insufficient assessment in the workplace and not enough action to deal with internal verification issues.

Life Skills

5. The quality of training in the Life Skills programmes and programmes for those learners unsure which programme to join, is satisfactory. Learners on the Life Skills programme receive good training in their work placements, which are supportive and help learners to build useful portfolios of skills. Learners' confidence, self-esteem and general attitude to work are developed effectively. However, off-the-job training is poor and individual learners' targets and progress are not recorded fully in the individual learning plans.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

6. HCTS is managed by a board of 12 directors who are all members of the clergy representing churches of many denominations. The chief executive manages training with a management team of five in support, including a training manager, finance manager, business development manager, a work-placement and health and safety manager, and the director of operations. HCTS has an equal opportunities policy and procedures, together with a quality assurance policy and related procedures. In May 2002, HCTS was accredited with the Investors in People award, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. HCTS has been carrying out annual self-assessments for four years and the current self-assessment report was produced in August 2002.

STRENGTHS

- good business analysis of local needs and national developments
- productive external links and partnerships
- good commitment to local community needs
- good quality assurance audits

WEAKNESSES

- no targets for monitoring retention and achievement rates
- ineffective staff appraisal system
- poor management information system
- no established quality assurance system
- no systematic gathering of learners' feedback

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of senior management team meetings
- further develop monitoring of equal opportunities
- more frequent staff training in equal opportunities
- better promotion of equal opportunities

7. HCTS carries out a good analysis of local needs and national developments. The analysis is contained in a well-written business plan. The analysis also helps the company to identify and successfully obtain external funding from a variety of sources, which it uses to support its work-based learning. This support makes a significant contribution towards the good resources and equipment enjoyed by learners. The business plan contains an analysis of current progress against corporate targets. HCTS considers its capabilities carefully and has produced a detailed analysis of local and national factors affecting the training environment and a well-considered local training

needs analysis. All these analyses are used to specify new corporate objectives and create a broad strategic development plan. However, the operational planning at departmental level is informal. It is unclear how the different areas of training are linked to the strategic and business plans and there are no arrangements in place to check this.

8. HCTS develops and maintains productive external links and partnerships. The company is committed to improving work-based learning within the local community and promotes the concept well. For example, the company seconded two members of staff to a local project to improve the retention and achievement rates of work-based learners in the area. One staff member is now using the experience gained during the secondment to work directly with learners to improve achievement. HCTS has a successful arrangement with 12 local schools for those learners with identified learning needs and difficulties. They attend HCTS's training centre one day each week throughout the academic year, to help them decide their future training needs.

9. Poor retention and achievement rates are identified in the self-assessment report. The board does not receive regular reports about retention and achievement rates and the senior management team has been slow in dealing with the problem. For example, in two years of weekly meetings of the senior management team there are no recorded actions relating to achievement rates and very few references to retention rates. There are no set targets in the analysis of retention and achievement rates. Most staff are not aware of the retention and achievement rates across training programmes and they do not receive reports relating to these issues.

10. Staff appraisal is ineffective. Appraisals were carried out regularly until January 2001, when they ceased altogether. Individual staff performance is not monitored effectively, staff are not set sufficient personal targets. A new system of staff appraisal was introduced in August 2002 and most staff have had one appraisal. These now include both staff development and performance targets, although these remain general and are not linked clearly to the business plan.

11. Staff development is satisfactory, and appropriate company priorities have been identified, which have a direct effect on the learners. For example, current priorities in staff training include teacher training, key skills practitioner training and basic skills training for staff. Staff development is well managed and there are clear and comprehensive records of staff development carried out by all members of staff. There is a good balance between company and individual priorities and a fair method of considering staff development requests.

12. The management information system is poor. There are two database management information systems, one of which is used for logging contract compliance data. This system does not provide the data analysis necessary for managing the training process. HCTS is now using another database management information system to analyse data relating to equal opportunities and training management, which produces detailed reports. For example, all data relating to individual learners' performance in initial

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assessment tests are stored in this database. Summary reports are produced centrally and passed to areas of learning to check that learners are on the correct level of course. However, the system is not providing a full analysis of retention and achievement data. There are significant discrepancies between achievement records held in some areas of learning and achievement records held centrally.

13. General communication structures within the company are satisfactory. Senior management team meetings are held weekly, followed by staff meetings for team briefings and general discussions. Both work to standard agendas. All meetings are well attended. Records of senior management team meetings consist of action points recorded on a standard document. However, there are no records of discussions and the actions recorded are seldom clear. Action points do not identify clear target dates and responsibilities are not always allocated to individuals. At meetings, action points are not checked or circulated to those attending the meeting.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

14. The chief executive is responsible for equality of opportunity. HCTS has recently updated its policy on equality of opportunity. The policy refers to all relevant legislation, and is for learners and company staff. It includes a new anti-harassment policy. The policies are written clearly and explain those measures designed to ensure equality of opportunity, and the procedures for raising complaints or concerns. Work-placement providers receive a copy of the policy when a learner joins them, and must agree to abide by its terms. However, there is no regular monitoring of employers' compliance.

15. Staff are very aware of the significance of equality of opportunity. There is a shared staff commitment to HCTS's declared aim to accept all learners who present themselves for training and development. A few staff have recently received further training in employment legislation and all staff have received a short training session on equal opportunities. Two staff have also recently attended a disability awareness workshop. Materials relating to equal opportunities are displayed on noticeboards and in all training areas. There is good access for people with disabilities to the company's training facilities. Equipment, such as special furniture or software, is available to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. There is good information and training available for those learners attending the Life Skills programme and those who are undecided about what areas of work they would like to follow. Learners have the flexibility to transfer between training programmes.

16. Learners are given a well-planned induction, which includes video presentations and useful and informative discussions about equality of opportunity. Learners recall their induction well, but their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the workplace is not formally reinforced through the training programmes. Learners' progress reviews do not sufficiently explore the situations in the learners' work placements. The accompanying paperwork does not contain sufficient detail to help learners develop their understanding of their responsibility to others and to themselves.

17. HCTS's equality of opportunity policy includes a commitment to promote participation in training by people from traditionally under-represented groups. The company accepts all applicants for training, although there are few learners from minority ethnic groups. HCTS is promoting its training services to a large geographical area where there is a recognised concentration of minority ethnic groups. More detailed data on learners' ethnic origins, gender and disabilities have been collected recently and are being used to promote HCTS's training in its fact sheets on vocational areas, but this is not reflected in other promotional materials, such as general information leaflets.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

18. HCTS has a quality assurance policy supported by a range of procedures covering many aspects of training. The policies and procedures are detailed, concise and clearly written. They are held on the company's intranet and all staff can view or print copies. A number of policies and procedures have had recent and substantial revisions made to them, but they have not been established long enough to be able to judge their effect.

19. There are some quality assurance audit systems. For example, an effective internal verification system, carried out every six months, and an attendance procedure is helping to improve learners' attitudes towards attendance. These audits are thorough, comprehensive and well recorded. Any recommendations made, or corrective actions required, are followed up by the training manager. The audits are also effective in identifying non-compliance and inconsistencies in policies and procedures. They cover all the occupational areas and have led to improvements being made. For example, an audit identified differing internal verification practices within the company. Following the audit, the internal verification policy and procedures were rewritten and new forms introduced. The new system was recently adopted and internal verifiers have identified some serious weaknesses in assessment practice in one of the occupational areas. Measures are now being introduced to remedy this issue.

20. There is no established system to assure the quality of learning. Quality assurance measures have failed to adequately evaluate and deal with significant issues concerning learners' retention and achievement rates. Observation of teaching and learning has only recently been introduced, with the first observations carried out in October and November 2002. A team of three senior managers is responsible for managing quality assurance, but the team does not meet regularly to discuss quality assurance or to identify and share good practice. There are no improvement targets and no performance indicators for quality assurance or any other aspect of HCTS's activity. There are no formal arrangements for monitoring the quality of training in the subcontracted provision. For example, HCTS does not routinely request or receive internal or external verifiers' reports from the subcontractor. The company does not request or receive reports on observation of teaching and learning, and does not attend any quality assurance meetings, staff meetings or reviews held by the subcontractor. There are no formal audits of any aspects of the subcontracted provision.

21. There is insufficient use of learners' feedback to help the company identify its strengths and weaknesses, or support continuous improvements. There is no systematic collection and analysis of learners' opinions. Some occupational areas carry out learners' surveys, but these are restricted to learners' comments on specific teaching sessions. Reports on the surveys are not submitted to the senior management teams, or included in the improvement plans.

22. Assessment is generally fair, reliable and accurate. Internal verification is effective in monitoring the quality of assessment. There is a timetable for internal verification and there are sufficient qualified internal verifiers to ensure proper verification of all assessors'

work. In a few occupational areas there is insufficient assessment in the workplace and some poor assessment practice. There are no formal meetings of assessors or internal verifiers. There is no proper forum in which good assessment practice can be shared.

23. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The reports are critically evaluative and identify many of the weaknesses found during inspection. However, the self-assessment report underestimated some of the weaknesses identified. Poor retention and achievement rates were identified as a weakness in 1999 and in every subsequent self-assessment report. Successive action plans have failed to produce a strategy to improve consistently poor retention and achievement rates.

Good Practice

The training manager carries out departmental reviews with groups of staff every 12 weeks. All operational aspects of the department are reviewed formally. The reviews are a valuable quality assurance improvement measure and make a significant contribution to the management of training.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	28	4

24. There are 28 learners on construction programmes, of whom 20 are general construction learners, one being a foundation modern apprentice. The other 19 are on programmes to national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2. Eight learners are on painting and decorating programmes working towards NVQs at level 1 and 2. All learners are on work placements for their training period. Most learners take up to 18 months to complete the foundation modern apprenticeship and one year to complete an NVQ. Initial assessment is carried out to identify learners' specific additional support needs. Following initial assessments, learners are allocated work placements. All HCTS's learners are able to follow a programme of learning and training that meets their individual needs. Foundation modern apprentices are referred to HCTS by the local Connexions service and others are recruited directly by HCTS. HCTS subcontracts the construction off-the-job training to a local further education college and both HCTS and the college carry out learners' induction. Learners attend the college for one day each week, gaining knowledge for their NVQ, and spend the rest of their time at their work placement, where they receive on-the-job training. HCTS's supervisors visit learners in their workplace every 12 weeks to review their progress and help them to gather additional evidence for assessment. All assessment and verification takes place at the college of further education and is carried out by qualified assessors.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		2		2		1									
Retained*	1		0	0	0	0	0	0									
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	0	0									
Still in learning	1		0	0	0	0	0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25		38		38		38									
Retained*	1		5	13	1	3	2	5								
Successfully completed	0		3	8	2	5	3	8								
Still in learning	20		5	13	1	3	1	3								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good skills development
- effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- good training support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient assessment in the workplace
- incomplete individual learning plans

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better employer awareness of NVQs

25. Learners develop a good range of skills during their training. Training is well organised and effective. The quality of training is good, with well-qualified instructors and workplace supervisors who provide good support to all learners and encourage them to raise their standard of skill development and gain further knowledge of the related background knowledge. All learners are on work placements in a wide range of painting and decorating and general construction companies. Work placements have good resources and learners carry out a variety of appropriate tasks. Off-the-job resources are also good and learners have good access to these and practise their skills regularly. Most learners gain good practical skills, and the tasks they carry out are often more advanced than those required for this level of NVQ.

26. There is effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The college provides

construction learners with on-site logbooks listing the on-the-job activity tasks. Employers also have copies of these documents. Learners and employers can identify what tasks can be carried out in the workplace and when tasks may be completed. This good planning reduces the duplication of tasks and assists the learners' progress. If a task cannot be carried out, alternative arrangements are made to allow the learners to gain experience in the required practical skill. Learners are aware of their achievements throughout the training programme and what needs to be done to achieve their intended goal. However, target-setting at learners' progress reviews does not always make the objectives clear.

27. Learners are well supported by HCTS's staff, college tutors and their workplace supervisors. HCTS's staff visit the workplace every 12 weeks to carry out learners' progress reviews. Informal weekly visits are made to the workplace and the college. Effective help is given to learners in collecting a wide range of appropriate evidence for their assessments. This frequent contact and help motivates the learners to progress and develop new skills. Employers support the learners well and give their attention to providing the best opportunities for learners to gain experience and to develop their skills to the appropriate level. Employers have frequent discussions with staff from the college and HCTS about the requirements of the training programme, which gives them a better understanding of their role. However, employers do not have a full understanding of the NVQ system.

28. Retention and achievement rates are poor. Of the eight starters on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes between 1999-2002, no learner has achieved a full qualification. For the three years 1999-2002, the NVQ achievement rates were very low at 8 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively. The average retention rate for the four-year period is 28 per cent. For the year 2002-03, the retention rate is 80 per cent, although a number of these learners have only been on their training programme for a few weeks. Of the 147 learners who started on construction work-based learning programmes between 1999-2003, 41 have transferred to Life Skills or other work-based learning programmes. This represents 28 per cent of starters. Many of these learners have also then transferred back into construction training for further taster weeks, which has affected the retention rate data.

29. The subcontracted college carries out all assessment and verification. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Learners collect evidence from the workplace, which is witnessed by the workplace supervisor and passed to the college for assessment. Qualified assessors do not visit the workplace to carry out assessments by observation. HCTS's construction tutor is a qualified assessor and visits learners in the workplace frequently, but does not carry out assessments. There is an over-reliance on witness testimony by unqualified or untrained workplace employers.

30. Individual learning plans are incomplete and are not used as working documents to set targets or to help learners identify what they need to do to improve their work. Changes of circumstance are not always recorded. One learner, after considerable effort, has been transferred from the NVQ at level 2 to the NVQ at level 1, and was

identified as requiring additional learning support. No record of this has been entered in the individual learning plan. In some cases, no effort has been made to record learners' progress reviews and unit achievements or target achievements. The plans are not individualised and often, similar statements are used for many learning plans.

Good Practice

One employer contacted a learner's parents, to inform them of their son's attitude to work and his progress in the workplace. The parents and the learner were very appreciative of this support.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	14	4

31. There are 10 learners working towards NVQs at level 1 and 2 in engineering. An additional four learners are on foundation modern apprenticeships in vehicle fitting. The training programme takes between one and two years, depending upon the qualification level and the level of support identified during learners' initial assessments. Initial assessments are carried out by HCTS's tutors. Most learners have additional learning support needs. They are recruited through referrals from the Connexions service, although some are recruited through direct contact from employers. All learners are employed with companies which range from specialist tyre and exhaust fitting centres to small, privately owned garages. All learners attend HCTS's training centre one day each week for off-the-job training. Work placements provide suitable opportunities for learners to gain practical experience. All assessments are carried out in the workplace by visiting assessors. There are three full-time motor vehicle trainers, two of whom hold recognised teaching qualifications. All are occupationally qualified and experienced. Two of the trainers are qualified assessors and internal verifiers, and one member of staff is currently completing the assessor award.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			5		1											
Retained*			3		1												
Successfully completed			0		0												
Still in learning			3		1												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		18		23		19									
Retained*	4		4		4		5									
Successfully completed	0		0		0		2									
Still in learning	4		3		2		1									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good induction for learners
- good use of learning resources

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress reviews
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotion of welfare and pastoral support available to learners

32. Learners' induction is both informative and memorable. There is a full discussion about equal opportunities and a video presentation which explains different aspects of equal opportunities in the workplace. The induction also provides learners with essential information on first aid, health and safety, and manual handling, in an interesting and understandable manner. During induction, particular emphasis is placed on encouraging learners to take personal responsibility for punctuality and attendance at their work placements and while attending HCTS's training centre. Although engineering tutors deal effectively with learners' personal difficulties and problems which may arise at their work placements, many learners are unaware of the additional pastoral and welfare support that is available to them.

33. The learning resources are good. HCTS's training rooms are well equipped and

maintained to a good standard. All rooms are equipped with a good range of teaching aids, which give learners the opportunity to experience a variety of teaching styles. For example, a ceiling-mounted data projector linked to a desktop computer enables tutors to make effective use of a specialist motor vehicle software package. The self-assessment report identified these resources as a strength.

34. Achievement rates for both NVQ and foundation apprenticeship training are poor. Over the two-year period 2000-02, no foundation modern apprentices have successfully achieved their full modern apprenticeship framework. However, HCTS has recognised that this qualification is inappropriate for the learners attracted to their training programmes. Of the 34 learners who started between 1999-2002, only two have fulfilled their learning plans. Since 1999-2000, no learners have achieved a level 2 NVQ. Although learners are making slow progress towards completing their qualification, an increase in the number of assessment visits to work placements has led to some improvements in the achievement of NVQ units.

35. Although employers value the visits by HCTS's staff to carry out progress reviews, employers are not involved in them. Progress reviews with learners are often carried out without employers present. Where employers are involved in reviews, comments are general and often only relate to the learners' attitude, punctuality and attendance. Targets for progress and achievement are not routinely discussed or agreed during these meetings. They are discussed during assessment reviews, but are not recorded in the progress review documents. Employers do not receive a copy of the assessment action plan and are often unaware of the specific short-term targets that have been agreed with learners. In addition, insufficient use is made of learners' individual learning plans, either for target-setting or for monitoring progress.

36. Health and safety is not adequately monitored within work placements. Although all work placements are monitored every six months, there are a number of health and safety concerns. General workshop housekeeping was poor, with many slipping and tripping hazards identified. At other work placements, fire extinguishers had test inspection certificates that had expired. In addition, two premises had bench-mounted abrasive wheels which were found to be defective, one dangerously so. Once notified, the training provider promptly carried out a full risk assessment of each work placement.

37. The co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is poor. There is insufficient formal planning of on-the-job training and it often simply reflects the work carried out by the employer. Most employers do not understand the NVQ structure, or their responsibilities to provide relevant training opportunities for learners. Employers do not know what type of off-the-job training is given to learners. They do not receive copies of the schedules for learners' work and are therefore unable to plan relevant workplace training opportunities. Off-the-job training is poorly planned and schemes of work are inadequate. Lesson plans are insufficiently detailed to help tutors to monitor the effectiveness of the lesson against training objectives. There is no documented plan to indicate how key skills training will be provided and assessed. Learners on foundation

modern apprenticeship programmes are unaware of the key skill requirements, or that they must achieve key skills to gain the full modern apprenticeship framework.

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	7	4

38. HCTS offers foundation modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in business administration. There are three foundation modern apprentices and four learners working towards NVQs at level 1. There are five female learners and two male learners. One learner is employed and six have work placements with local companies. Most learners are referred by the Connexions service. HCTS interviews all learners and the recruitment process includes a basic skills initial assessment. Foundation modern apprentices also have a key skills assessment before their training. Induction takes place at HCTS's head office and includes information on equal opportunities and health and safety. Off-the-job training is provided at HCTS's training centre one day each week. The HCTS tutor carries out assessments in the workplace every four to six weeks. An initial review is completed after two weeks and there are subsequent progress reviews every 10 to 12 weeks.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	4		11		4											
Retained*	1		2		1												
Successfully completed	0		0		0												
Still in learning	0		2		1												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			26		4											
Retained*			8		4											
Successfully completed			7		4											
Still in learning			1		0											

STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job training
- effective pastoral and training support by employers
- well-resourced training facilities

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress by most learners
- ineffective progress reviews
- poor assessment practice

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more employer involvement with NVQs

39. Learners receive good off-the-job training. Training sessions have detailed lesson plans and clear objectives. A wide range of teaching methods is used for the different ability levels within the groups and good use is made of different teaching resources, such as interactive touch screens, whiteboards and handouts. Most lessons are presented on computer slides. There is good participation by learners, and tutors offer effective individual support. For example, in one lesson the tutor explained the activity, demonstrated the method and then allowed the learners to complete the exercise. At the end of the session the learners could record and analyse data and offer suggestions for improvements to the business. Good questioning techniques are used by the tutor to confirm the learning and provide positive feedback to the learners. Learners' portfolios are well presented and include both off-the-job and workplace evidence. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report.

40. Learners receive effective pastoral and training support from employers. Employers understand the social and behavioural problems of the learners, and encourage and support them in their personal development. All employers ensure that learners experience a wide range of tasks in different departments, reflecting the requirements of the NVQ. Relevant additional training is offered by employers in basic computer literacy and IT, first aid and food hygiene. One employer arranged and paid for a learner to receive training on a recently installed accountancy software package. The learner is now responsible for the computerised accounts in that office. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report.

41. HCTS has well-resourced training facilities. There are 19 networked computers with flat-screen monitors. Laser printers, scanners, flipcharts and whiteboards are available. Multimedia projectors are used in all classrooms. The business administration area is spacious, well lit and has an interactive whiteboard that enables learners to use HCTS-designed software exercises. Large tables are used for group exercises and teaching, while workstations allow individual tuition. The self-assessment report identified that resources are well used and well maintained.

42. Retention and achievement rates are poor on the foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ training programmes. The self-assessment report identified that there has been poor achievement over the past three years in all training areas. On the NVQ programme for the year 2001-02, only one learner remains in training. For the year 2002-03, 50 per cent of learners are still in training. A number of learners have transferred within HCTS to Life Skills or training programmes for those learners still undecided about training options. This has a detrimental effect on the recording and analysis of data. HCTS recognises the issues concerning identifying appropriate training programmes for their young people and are in discussions with their local LSC to resolve this.

43. Most learners progress slowly towards achievement of their qualifications. There has been some improvement since the appointment of new staff, but of the seven learners on the training programmes, six have yet to complete an NVQ unit and, of those six, three started training in July 2002. Three learners who are near to completing units have not been given sufficiently challenging targets to produce the required evidence. Individual learning plans suggest learners' specific requirements based on results from the initial assessments. For example, four individual learning plans suggest individual guidance and special workbooks for learners on different programmes and with differing needs. But all the action plans have similar timescales for completion and there is no method of fast-tracking the more able learners. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

44. Learners' progress reviews are ineffective. There is insufficient recording of how learners develop in the workplace, such as their interaction with colleagues and supervisors, their use of initiative and ability to work unsupervised. Some reference to punctuality and appearance is made, but no action is recorded to show how identified

problems are resolved. Employers are not always involved in learners' progress reviews do not sign many of the report forms. Although progress reviews are carried out every 10-12 weeks, learners do not agree appropriate targets with their tutors to help learners improve their progress and performance. There is some checking of knowledge and understanding of equality of opportunity issues, but this has only recently been introduced.

45. The self-assessment report did not identify the poor assessment practice. The internal verifier's recent sampling report identifies insufficient cross-referencing of workplace observations against the NVQ performance criteria. There is no monitoring of the evidence record sheets. Learners are unable to identify the amount of evidence collected and how much is required to complete NVQ units.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	39	3

46. HCTS has 39 learners working towards qualifications in early years care and education programmes. Of these, nine are advanced modern apprentices following programmes leading to level 3 NVQs in early years care and education, and nine are working towards NVQs at level 2 in early years care and education. There are 21 learners working on an early years care and education NVQ at level 3. Most learners have work placements in nurseries, schools and daycare centres, and a few gain employed status during the training programme. Others obtain employment when they have completed their NVQ at level 3. The recruitment of learners is almost entirely through the Connexions service and most learners are recent school leavers. Few learners have any formal qualifications when they enter training. They are all interviewed by HCTS's staff and attend a company induction. Learners complete a basic skills assessment, followed by a key skills assessment for modern apprenticeship learners. All learners complete a learning styles questionnaire and a vocational assessment. They are given feedback on their results, which determine the level of their training programme. Support is provided for those with additional learning needs. Learners attend training in childcare and key skills one day each week in HCTS's training centre, given by two of the company's staff who are also assessors and internal verifiers. Learners receive a workplace induction and training in the workplace from qualified childcare practitioners. Learners receive observed assessments in the workplace and internal verification takes place throughout the training programme. Learners are given advice and guidance on jobsearch and interview skills to help them to find jobs in childcare when they achieve their qualifications.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		8		1		3									
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0	2	67									
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	1	33									
Still in learning	3		5	62	1	100	0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		3		5											
Retained*	0		2	67	3	60										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	0		0	0	0	0										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	26		4		54		9									
Retained*	8		4		19		0									
Successfully completed	7		4		11		0									
Still in learning	1		0		20		9									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good standards of teaching and learning
- effective partnerships with work-placement providers
- thorough internal verification
- good induction to the training programme and work placements

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor progress towards achievement of qualifications

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better target-setting at progress reviews
- better recognition of prior learning and experience

47. Weekly training sessions in HCTS's training centre are well organised for all learners on childcare courses. Training sessions are well planned in a well-organised classroom, with good lighting, attractive posters, and good childcare resources that create a welcoming atmosphere. If necessary, there are opportunities for learners to develop their basic skills within the NVQ programme. There are clear schemes of work, session plans and interactive computer slideshow presentations. Tutors use their expertise and skills well to motivate students. Small group exercises are thoroughly planned to challenge learners and ensure good levels of participation. Tutors check learning throughout the session. The training sessions are enjoyable and learners are keen to put into practice what they have learned in the workplace. Key skills assignments are linked to the main qualification topics. For example, one assignment is to prepare a presentation on a childcare topic and present it to the group, which involves several key skill units. Several learners have evidence in their key skills portfolios which demonstrates the effectiveness of this link.

48. The partnerships with work-placement providers are effective. HCTS has established a childcare consortium and this is well attended by nursery managers, who find it a useful forum for updates and making new contacts. Work-placement providers are kept informed of what is happening in the training programmes and receive updates on key skills, the new technical certificates and any other issues. Recently, learners had difficulty with one learning unit, but work-placement providers helped to reinforce the main learning points. Nursery staff are given regular information on what is taught during the off-the-job sessions, enabling them to plan tasks within the work placement. This ensures that learners receive the relevant practical experience and helps them to prepare for their assessments. Childcare tutors have excellent working relationships with the work placements and contact work-placement staff weekly to discuss learners' attendance and any other issues. Employers are effectively involved in the progress review process.

49. Internal verification is thorough on all childcare programmes, with frequent checks throughout. Internal verification is well planned and all stages are documented clearly. The childcare internal verifiers have established a simple colour-coded system which enables internal verification sampling to be monitored effectively. There are exceptional external reports for all aspects of internal verification. All units are reviewed at the end of the learners' programmes. All those learners interviewed understood and could fully explain the assessment and internal verification processes.

50. Learners are given a good induction to their workplace and training programme. Work-placement induction is thorough and learners are introduced to childcare practice through detailed policies and procedures, which can also be used as work instructions. One learner clearly outlined the support and coaching she had received from qualified practitioners, which had enabled her to gain confidence in her first work placement in childcare. HCTS has a two-stage induction to ensure that learners understand their work-based learning programme. The first stage is an introduction to the work-placement provider and includes equal opportunities, health and safety, and an initial assessment. The results of the assessment are fed back to the learners, and used to select an

appropriate level childcare programme. Childcare learners have a good knowledge of equality of opportunity and childcare issues, which is checked throughout the training programme.

51. The retention and achievement rates on the modern apprenticeship programmes are poor. On the foundation modern apprenticeship programme there has been no achievement of the full framework over the past three years. The retention rate appears to be poor on this programme, but most foundation modern apprentices transfer to the level 3 NVQ programme. Only one advanced modern apprentice has achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework in a four-year period and there are few achievements of key skill units. The achievement of level 2 NVQs has been poor apart from the year 2000-01, when four learners started and all were retained and achieved the qualification. Twenty-four learners started the level 3 NVQ programme in 2001, but only four achieved the qualification within the allocated time.

52. Many learners are making slow progress through their training programmes. One learner had been in training for eight months before being observed in the workplace. Where assessment needs had been identified in a progress review, these had not been discussed or actioned in the four successive reviews. Another modern apprentice had been in training for 16 months and had not completed one unit of the childcare NVQ. There is no close monitoring of target dates for unit achievement in the individual learning plans. Learners progressing from NVQs at level 2 to level 3 find the transition difficult and tutors are slow to arrange assessments in the workplace. The knowledge evidence completed by these learners is brief and does not meet the appropriate standards required by the awarding body. The evidence is accurately marked by tutors, but learners are slow to do the extra work and complete the assignments. Many learners do not have time for study or planning their assessments. The provider does recognise some previous qualifications gained by learners, but their work experience is not always taken into account. HCTS has been slow to introduce key skills training. Progress on key skills units has been slow for some time, but the new integrated assignments have motivated learners to make good progress over the past three months. No learners have yet had key skills units signed off.

Good Practice

Childcare tutors provide learners with electronic dolls which can be programmed to cry when they require attention. Learners are electronically tagged and take the doll home for the weekend to gain experience of caring for a baby. A computer chip lets the tutors know how long the doll has been left crying or has been inappropriately handled.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	44	3
Other government-funded provision	12	3

53. HCTS provides the Life Skills option of the Learning Gateway at its training centre. The programme is specifically aimed at local young people aged 16 to 18 who have not been involved in any training or learning because they do not have the appropriate skills, qualifications or attitudes, or because they have significant personal and social problems. As well as the Life Skills programme, HCTS operates a course for those learners who are unsure of which training programme to join. Learners are referred to the programme by the Connexions service and attend for a minimum of 16 hours each week. The expected length of stay on the programme is eight weeks for those learners who are undecided and 12 weeks for those on the Life Skills option, although there are opportunities for extensions according to need. Progress reviews take place monthly for the Life Skills learners and every other week for those on the additional programme. There are 44 learners on the Life Skills programme and 12 on the additional programme. Twenty-three learners are in work placements. There are three full-time tutors, one of whom acts as a programme co-ordinator. The course aims to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills, and there are weekly sessions on citizenship. The training is not designed to lead to qualifications, and achievement is measured by the personal targets agreed between learners and tutors. Learners take part in work experience, work placements and tasters from the second week onwards.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Life Skills	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	43		165												
Retained*	2		32													
Successfully completed	0		25													
Still in learning	37		7													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good development of learners' attitudes towards work
- supportive work placements
- good on-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient detail in individual learning plans
- poor off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better range of learning activities
- further develop project work to include more basic skills

54. Most of the Life Skills learners have considerable personal problems, such as a criminal record or a history of exclusion from school. This has prevented them from gaining academic qualifications and taking a full part in society. The Life Skills programme offers help in overcoming difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Training and support are given in a group or individually. Learners value this help, which builds their confidence and improves their general ability to cope with work. A gardening project has been set up which is encouraging teamwork and improving HCTS's communal garden areas. The tutors contact absentee learners, out of normal working hours if necessary, to discuss their reasons for failing to attend and to offer strategies to overcome any problems. This individual help and support leads to positive benefits in learners' attitudes towards learning and attendance. This strength was not noted in the self-assessment report.

55. Tutors place the more vulnerable learners with work-placement providers that have the skills and understanding necessary to settle them into a new environment. There is a database of 100 employers that have accepted learners from both programmes. Staff from HCTS are in regular contact with the learners on work placement and employers are supported by telephone and personal visits if there is a problem. The self-assessment report identified work experience as a strength.

56. Learners receive good on-the-job training, which helps them to develop positive attitudes towards work and their ability to complete set tasks. In one work placement, learners work alongside former Life Skills learners who are now employed by the company and act as positive role models. Learners are given increasing levels of responsibility within the workplace, after consultation with tutors from HCTS. The time

spent by learners in work placements is gradually increased as they become more aware of what is expected of them. The wide range of work placements means that learners can be transferred easily if it is considered that a different work placement will offer more appropriate training.

57. The successful completion of Life Skills training requires the learners to progress to education, work-based learning or employment, or to achieve the targets agreed with tutors at progress reviews. However, the individual learning plan, which is used to help develop and co-ordinate the different aspects of the learners' training, does not contain sufficiently detailed information. The information from the initial assessment is generalised and does not consistently identify the learners' individual needs. The progress targets recorded by the Life Skills tutors are not detailed enough. For example, one learner's target was to improve their listening skills, but the learner was given no details about how to achieve this goal. Learners are unaware of their own targets. Progress reviews do not detail reasons for learners leaving work placements, or set achievable targets to deal with problems in the workplace or in the learning sessions. This issue also reflected the analysis of the management information data. HCTS recognises this and is working with a new system that will help to gain a more accurate analysis of retention and achievement rates.

58. Some of the training sessions require learners to copy work from worksheets and forms which contain language that is not easily understood. The learning sessions lack pace and variety and consist of a lot of lecturing, with insufficient active involvement by the learners. There is not enough questioning of learners or checking of their understanding of the topics. The Life Skills classroom is noisy and inadequately resourced for those learners currently attending. Insufficient account is taken of the individual needs of learners in group sessions.

59. Within the Life Skills scheme of work there is a strong emphasis on basic skills sessions. But the project work that the learners carry out does not always sufficiently link the development of the learners' basic skills with their personal development needs. Although an interview techniques session and a visit to a drug rehabilitation officer are arranged for every new group of learners, there is not enough formally documented work on the general skills required for employment and personal development.

Good Practice

Life Skills tutors often accompany learners on public transport from their homes to the work-placement provider in order to settle them in and to give them confidence when starting a new work placement.