

INSPECTION REPORT

Greenwich Housing Services

16 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

Greenwich Housing Services is a part of Greenwich Council. Its training development unit provides work-based learning programmes in health, social care and public services for a small number of its caretakers and housing officers. The unit also provides finance, administration and job-related training programmes for council staff, which were outside the scope of the inspection.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, work-based learning is good in health, social care and public services. Leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity. Quality assurance is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Health, social care & public services	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- very good integration of NVQs with individual professional development
- positive learning opportunities
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- particularly good support for learners in the workplace

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently detailed arrangements for continuous improvement of training
- inappropriate levels of NVQ for some learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer explanation of vocational training schemes to learners and managers

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of three inspectors spent 10 days at Greenwich Housing Services during December 2002. They met 12 learners and carried out eight interviews with Greenwich Housing Services's training staff, and one with a subcontractor. The inspectors visited eight workplaces, where they interviewed 10 workplace supervisors and work-based assessors. Inspectors observed four progress review and assessment sessions, graded two learning sessions, and reviewed 12 portfolios of evidence, learners' files and personal records. They examined a range of documents including the training and development plan, policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, management information, and reports from awarding bodies and other external agencies. Inspectors studied the self-assessment report and the development plan which were produced in November 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Greenwich Housing Services has over 900 staff who provide a variety of services for the council's 30,000 properties. The training and development unit (the unit) is part of Greenwich Housing Services's human resources division and organises training for all staff in relation to their core tasks and their personal development. The unit has a training manager, five training staff, and approximately 20 work-based assessors. In addition to a dedicated training area for caretakers, the unit has access to other training rooms in council properties.

3. The unit provides work-based learning programmes and modern apprenticeships for a small number of staff leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in cleaning and support services and housing. The London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds these schemes. There are 11 learners on NVQ training programmes and one learner on an advanced modern apprenticeship. The council employs all the learners as caretakers or housing officers. All caretakers are required on appointment to have job-related training based on nationally recognised qualifications. Three of the 230 caretakers in post are taking additional NVQs at level 1 or 2. Nine housing officers, out of approximately 60 in post, are studying for qualifications as required by the employer.

4. The unit is an approved centre for the award of housing and key skills qualifications and is able to carry out all necessary training and assessment activities. It can also train assessors and internal verifiers. The unit provides the training and assessment for cleaning and support services, and a local college acts as the approved centre for the administration of the scheme.

5. Learners who are employed as housing officers have at least four passes in general certificates of secondary education (GCSE) at grade C or above, while caretakers require no formal qualifications. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above in Greenwich was 34 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In May 2002, the unemployment rate in Greenwich was 7.6 per cent, which is the highest rate for all outer-London boroughs, and compares with an overall unemployment rate for London of 3.6 per cent and a national rate of 3 per cent. In the most recent government index of multiple deprivation, Greenwich was ranked as the forty-fourth most deprived district out of 354. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Greenwich is 12.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

6. Achievement rates for NVQs and key skills are good. However, some learners are working towards inappropriate levels of NVQ. There is particularly good support for learners in the workplace and all learners are given time each week to complete their portfolios of evidence and other relevant work. Most training is carried out on an individual basis in the workplace and is very good. Induction is well planned for most learners. For some learners, key skills training and assessment are not introduced until late in the training programme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

7. Greenwich Housing Services's annual training plan is reviewed and agreed by the directorate management team. The plan includes a requirement to provide modern apprenticeships and NVQ training programmes for selected staff. The manager of the training and development unit reports to the assistant director of human resources for the implementation of this plan. The training unit has two full-time training officers who, as well as managing the programme, act as trainers, assessors and internal verifiers. There is an additional caretaker trainer, who manages the cleaning and support services training and acts as an assessor and internal verifier. The unit has recruited and trained around 20 work-based assessors, some of whom are also internal verifiers. The unit abides by the council's policies on equality of opportunity, recruitment, staff development and quality assurance. Two self-assessment reports have been produced to date, the latest of which was produced in November 2002.

STRENGTHS

- very good integration of NVQs with individual professional development
- particularly good support provided by managers
- effective long-term strategic planning
- good initiatives for equal opportunities
- very good quality assurance policies and procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective analysis of achievement data
- insufficient routine promotion of equality of opportunity to learners
- insufficiently detailed arrangements for continuous improvement of training
- no clear system for implementing quality assurance

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer explanation of vocational training schemes to learners and managers
- more effective procedures for monitoring learners' off-the-job training

8. The integration of NVQs with individual professional development is very good. Learners are recruited and employed on the understanding that they will study for vocational qualifications. Learners are allocated time each week to work towards their NVQ. This is an agreed part of an employee's conditions of employment. The NVQs are directly related learners' job responsibilities and are assessed by work-based assessors. Assessment is mainly linked to the learners' everyday work. The learners are encouraged to attend a range of short courses, which either complement the NVQ or

extend the learners' capabilities in related areas. An additional motivating factor for learners on the housing programme is that pay progression is linked to satisfactory progress in training. The adoption of vocational training standards has stimulated improvements in working practices. Managers use internal awards and nominations for national and regional awards to acknowledge exceptional achievement in vocational training.

9. Managers provide good learner support. The annual training and development plan, which includes the vocational training scheme, is examined and endorsed by senior management. Managers have voluntarily attended a series of briefings on the vocational training schemes. Individual line managers have agreed to convert established posts into training posts, and to accept learners with the associated commitment to provide assistance and training. Managers generally provide good individual support to learners and work-based assessors.

10. Long-term strategic planning is effective. The vocational training scheme is now an essential part of the routine council operations. The scheme is structured to encourage learners to progress to more advanced training. Some learners who have taken a higher qualification have volunteered subsequently to be assessors and help run the scheme. A clear long-term strategy to recruit and train assessors has provided significant levels of learner support. Several Greenwich Housing Services's staff have been involved at national level in developing standards and frameworks for the specialist area of housing. They have been able to advise from experience on the kinds of problems learners encounter when they are placed on inappropriate levels of training. Greenwich Housing Services's trainers are planning ways in which they can incorporate the requirement to include technical certificates in training frameworks.

11. Data on achievement rates are not analysed effectively. Approximately 90 per cent of learners remain in employment and engaged in associated training, and management do not consider retention to be an issue. There are targets for the recruitment of learners, and their individual progress is monitored, with targets set. The achievement rates of groups of recruited learners are not analysed formally, however, and there is no overall analysis of the length of time that learners take to achieve qualifications. No targets are set for achievement by groups of learners. Managers do not use achievement data to review and plan training. Data are not used to review the training schemes. The training staff usually know whether individual learners are being allowed their time off work for training, but the arrangements for monitoring this are inadequate.

12. The vocational training scheme was originally designed for modern apprentices. Current learners begin by taking NVQs, with the option of progressing to a modern apprenticeship. However, policies, standard documents and many managers still refer to all the learners as modern apprentices. Recruitment advertisements state that learners are being offered modern apprenticeships and most learners refer to themselves as modern apprentices.

13. Communication within the training department is satisfactory. Arrangements for

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staff development and training are also satisfactory. Annual staff reviews are being revised, with increased emphasis placed on appraisal and target-setting.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

14. Greenwich Council has a comprehensive and up-to-date equal opportunities policy which has an emphasis on meeting the needs of staff and the local community. There is a wide range of associated policies and procedures, such as the council's social inclusion and justice policy. Equal opportunities issues are emphasised in almost all council publications. There are regular initiatives to deal with specific problems such as racial harassment. Training events are organised for all staff in addition to the initial training at staff induction. In 2002, learners on the training programmes had diversity training on a pilot scheme before it was made available for all council staff. Some learners have used equal opportunities topics in projects within their NVQ programmes. The personnel section of the housing department monitors the effectiveness of the council's policies and procedures in the department, and collects data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability, among a number of other indicators. Most current learners are men. Attempts are being made to recruit more women. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds make up 17 per cent of the learners. Council publications display appropriate images of people from under-represented groups, and some general material is available in languages other than English. A housing services initiative ensures that registered disabled learners can receive details of all available job opportunities matched to their individual circumstances. Access to training and administration facilities at the council's premises is good, and the council employs an officer whose specific responsibility is to ensure that disabled people have convenient access to all council property. The housing services training programmes provide opportunities for learners with little previous success in education. Learners in caretaking, with few formal qualifications, for example, can enter level 1 of the NVQ, and are then encouraged and assisted to progress to NVQ training programmes at levels 2 and 3.

15. Although council policies emphasise the importance of equal opportunities, there is not enough specific and routine promotion of equal opportunities to learners. Learners are provided with equal opportunities information at induction and in any subsequent council training, and they also receive copies of the council's complaints, grievance and appeals procedures. Staff explain these procedures, and learners are clear about who to approach if they experience harassment or bullying at work or at a training centre. Equality of opportunity is considered in the assessment of elements of the housing NVQ. The reinforcement of equal opportunities in off-the-job training or at learners' progress reviews is ineffective, however. Learners are not asked specific questions during progress reviews, to ensure that they fully understand their rights and responsibilities. There is not enough training material on equal opportunities for learners.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

16. Greenwich Council has a very good set of quality assurance and personnel policies and procedures available to all staff in manuals and through the intranet. The policies and procedures deal clearly and effectively with issues such as the methods and standards of recruitment and selection, induction, training entitlements and person specification criteria. Staff are familiar with council and departmental policies and use them frequently and automatically in their normal duties. The training unit has prepared a quality assurance document which covers the assessment, as well as some internal verification arrangements of the training programmes. The training department has recently developed its own effective internal verification procedures for caretaking qualifications. It continues to act as its own centre for proposing housing qualifications and has effective procedures for assessment and most internal verification. External verifier reports on the housing qualifications are satisfactory and the training department responds quickly to action points raised by external verifiers.

17. Arrangements for ensuring the continuous improvement of training are insufficiently detailed, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Staff revise their training processes regularly, but do not conduct a formal audit of their activities and do not record the results of informal progress reviews. The training unit holds standardisation exercises and regular meetings of assessors which are minuted, but these activities do not form part of an overall system for reviewing provision. There are inadequate arrangements for monitoring and evaluating some off-the-job training. Training managers do not formally observe instructional sessions on a regular basis. The strategy committee does not meet on a regular basis. Those meetings which do take place are not minuted and no action plans have been produced. The department has produced self-assessment reports and development plans. These plans have accurately identified strengths and weaknesses and relevant actions. However, these plans do not form an integral part of the quality assurance activities within the department.

18. There is no clear system for implementing quality assurance. Staff are fully involved in reviewing management and quality assurance procedures. However, documents relating to training materials are not well managed, and there is no guidance about how changes to the materials should be introduced. It is not clear which documents are out of date or current. Minutes of meetings are not set out in a systematic way. Responsibilities for the actions are not clear and no times are set for the completion of the actions. Learner details are held on a central database. However, additional information which is not monitored for accuracy is also retained in paper form.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	12	2

19. There are 12 learners on work-based learning programmes in health, social care and public services. Three learners are employed as caretakers and are working towards NVQs in cleaning and support. Eight learners are employed as customer service officers and are working towards NVQs at level 2 or 3 in housing. One learner is an advanced modern apprentice working towards an NVQ in housing. All the learners are employed in housing offices or in housing complexes managed by the council. Workplace supervisors and other qualified staff carry out the training. All learners complete an initial assessment which includes a basic skills test. Learners on housing training programmes complete a three-day induction into Greenwich Housing Services, and learners on cleaning and support training programmes have a two-day induction. An individual learning plan is prepared for each learner. Most assessments are carried out in the workplace by a work-based assessor, or at the training centres. There are about 20 work-based assessors and four internal verifiers, all of whom have relevant assessor qualifications or are working towards them. Progress reviews are carried out every three months. For learners on housing training programmes, these reviews are linked to salary progression and are carried out by the line manager. Key skills training and assessment are introduced towards the end of the NVQ at level 2.

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)	2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	4		3		5											
Retained*	1		0		3	60											
Successfully completed	0		0		3	60											
Still in learning	1		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																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2				1											
Retained*	0				0	0										
Successfully completed	0				0	0										
Still in learning	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													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		7													
Retained*	0		3													
Successfully completed	0		1													
Still in learning	6		5													

*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

- particularly good support for learners in the workplace
- positive learning opportunities
- good achievement rates for NVQs and key skills
- well planned induction for most learners

WEAKNESSES

- inappropriate levels of NVQ for some learners
- late introduction of key skills training and assessment for some learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better implementation of revised training documents

20. The support for learners in the workplace is particularly good. All learners are

employed, receive the same benefits and are given the same access to core training as other council employees. In addition, they have half a day each week for study to complete their portfolios of evidence and other NVQ work. This time can be reduced at busy periods. Most learners have a work-based assessor, and experienced training staff provide regular assistance for assessors and learners. Trainers, assessors and workplace supervisors have good working relationships with learners. Learners are able to carry out a wide range of work tasks, relevant to the NVQ. Where a problem occurs in meeting a particular learning need, trainers make arrangements for learners to carry out appropriate activities at other sites. Line managers regularly review individual learners' progress, and send a copy of the review to the training section. Line managers, previous learners and assessors provide good personal support for the learners. Other staff also provide cover, for example, in the absence of an assessor. The training staff also encourage and help the learners to support each other.

21. There are positive learning opportunities for NVQ candidates. Nearly all learners and assessors are notably enthusiastic about the learning programmes. Training is very good. Most training is carried out on an individual basis in the workplace. Staff fully understand the requirements of the NVQ. Assessment practices are good, with assessments cross-referenced clearly. Portfolios contain a good range of evidence. Observations are well planned and are recorded accurately. Observations are also carried out in the workplace at the request of the learners. Learners are able to join assessors' meetings, which take place every eight weeks. These meetings are used to share good practice. Joint training events, such as a workshop on diversity, have been arranged for learners and assessors. Training centres are well equipped. Learners are able to use the training centre every two weeks for demonstrations, assessments, workshops and meetings. Learners are able to gain additional skills and qualifications and have attended professional development courses, for example, in presentation techniques.

22. Achievement rates for NVQs and key skills are good. Of those learners who have started training programmes since 1998, 53 per cent achieved an NVQ, although not necessarily at the level required for the modern apprenticeship framework, and most achieved the key skills qualifications.

23. Induction is well planned for most learners. All new employees take part in a three-day induction programme which includes equal opportunities awareness, health and safety and council policies and procedures. The programme also includes a tour of the housing services area, with visits to specific services provided by Greenwich Housing Services. Some learners are employed as customer service officers for two to three months before the start of their training programme. The training section arranges another three-day induction which covers the NVQ and key skills. Learners who join training programmes at times other than the group recruitment stage, have a one-day induction which covers the basic elements of the training programme. Further induction is usually provided when there are sufficient numbers to justify the resources required.

24. Some learners were started on an inappropriate level of programme. Apart from

those learners who started training programmes in 1998, no learners have achieved their qualification or continued with their modern apprenticeship framework. The housing qualification NVQ at level 3 is not matched effectively to the learners' jobs. Most modern apprentices have transferred to individual NVQs and key skills.

25. Key skills training and assessment are introduced late in the training programme for some learners. Key skills training and assessment are not carried out as an integral part of the training programme. Initial assessment includes a review of learners' key skills levels and a basic skills test. Key skills learning needs are generally recorded in learners' individual learning plans. The target date for completion is usually the same date as the end of the training programme. Some learners have not been provided with sufficient key skills training or assessment until they have completed their NVQ units.

26. Training documents are regularly reviewed and revised. Training documents, particularly records in learner files, are under regular review and revision. When forms are changed, some of the learners' files still include the old-style forms. This can cause confusion for assessors or learners when they are working with others in the scheme.

Good Practice

A support group has been organised by current learners and those who have completed their training programmes.