

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Sebert Road Training Centre**

**24 July 2004**



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

- work-based learning for all people 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

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.

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **Sebert Road Training Centre**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Sebert Road Training Centre (SRTC) was established in 1982 by the Newham Community Renewal Programme (NCRP) in response to the borough's high levels of deprivation. Its aim is to provide disadvantaged groups in Newham and East London with training and education to enable them to access further and higher education and employment. There is particular emphasis on learners gaining jobs.
2. The NCRP is a registered charity. It has a board of management which oversees five projects. These are: Step Up, supported housing for young single people; Turn Around which provides night shelters for homeless people; RAMP a project to help refugees and migrants; Newham Carers' network and SRTC. SRTC works with some of these other projects. There is a chief executive who reports to the board of management (the board). SRTC also has a project committee which reports to the board; it consists of three of the board's members; the head of a local school; representatives of a local university; the college of further education, and the voluntary sector. SRTC has a director who is managed by the chief executive and reports to the project committee. He is supported by an assistant director of learning and development who manages the five training officers. There is also an administrative officer, an administrative assistant and an information technology (IT) support officer. SRTC has a nursery for its learners' children.
3. Newham, the area covered by SRTC, has significant levels of deprivation, being the fifth most deprived area in England. In the 2001 census Newham had the highest percentage population from minority ethnic groups in London, 60 per cent compared with 29 per cent for London as a whole. Unemployment is also higher than for the rest of London at 4.5 per cent, compared with 3.4 per cent for all of London.
4. SRTC currently offers programmes in business administration, information and communication technology (ICT) and foundation programmes, most of which are accredited. At the time of the inspection there was a total of 85 learners, of whom 85 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. Many learners take courses in more than one programme.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Business administration, management & professional**

5. SRTC has 38 learners in this area. All are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in administration at level 2 with an additional computer literacy qualification. Some are also working towards key skills qualifications in communication, numeracy and IT. Learners can start in January/February or June/July. They attend the training centre for three days each week, five hours a day, over a 15-week period, to develop knowledge and skills towards their qualifications. There is a further nine weeks' work experience. All learners are unemployed and SRTC pays for travel and childcare. Two tutors deliver

## SEBERT ROAD TRAINING CENTRE

business administration training and carry out assessments and internal verification. Another tutor delivers key skills training. Work placements are arranged by a local borough-wide partner organisation. Most placements are within public sector organisations such as local hospitals and housing associations, as well as some small businesses. Most learners are recruited through local advertising, or personal recommendation.

### **Information & communications technology**

6. Forty-nine learners were enrolled on six courses at the time of the inspection. Courses offered include a nationally accredited qualification in using office applications at level 1, NVQs in Using IT at level 2 and 3, and an access to higher education course. Learners who enrol on NVQ courses in IT or business administration courses may also enrol on key skills courses and level 1, 2 or 3 courses leading to recognised qualifications in using computer applications, as part of their programme of learning. Learners on NVQ courses also receive jobsearch training.

7. Learners working towards NVQs spend 12 weeks in the training centre then attend work placements with local organisations. Many then return to the centre for further support in jobsearch and to build their portfolios of evidence for the qualification. NVQ courses are from six to 11 months' long. The level 1 office applications course operates on Saturdays, and on weekday evenings. All the sessions are held in the computer workshop at the centre. Level 2 and 3 courses are taught in classrooms. The level 1 course is based on self-directed work in computer workshops. One full-time tutor, two assessors and two part-time hourly-paid tutors work in this area.

### **Foundation programmes**

8. Literacy and numeracy programmes at entry level are offered at SRTC. The centre also offers communication and application of number at level 1 and 2 to learners on vocational programmes.

9. At inspection, nine learners were studying both literacy and numeracy and 44 were receiving communication and application of number on business administration and ICT programmes. The literacy and numeracy programmes are part time and learners study for two days each week throughout the year. All of the courses are accredited, with learners given the opportunity to acquire a unitary examination qualification at entry body level, level 1 and 2. The programmes are designed to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of learners who are seeking employment, or wish to progress to further education or training.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	21
Number of learner interviews	48
Number of staff interviews	23
Number of employer interviews	2
Number of partner/external agency interviews	3

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

10. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, as is quality assurance, although equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Business administration and ICT are both unsatisfactory. Foundation programmes are satisfactory.

## GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

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

Business administration, management & professional		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business administration</b> - Adult and community learning	38	4

Information & communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Using IT</b> - Adult and community learning	49	4

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Literacy and numeracy</b> - Adult and community learning	53	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

11. Retention of learners is satisfactory in all areas of learning. There was a drop in retention rates in the period 2002-03, but this has been recognised by SRTC and early indications are that the rate for 2003-04 is better.

12. Levels of achievement vary throughout the areas of learning. **In ICT the level of achievement of qualifications is poor**, although most learners do achieve part of the qualification. At 60 per cent the level of achievement on foundation courses is satisfactory. Achievement levels for administration learners are also satisfactory, although there was a significant decline during 2002-03. Achievement rates for 2003-04 in this area of learning indicate an improvement but it is too early to make a clear judgement.

13. **Learners develop good vocational skills, especially in administration courses. In all areas the focus of the provision helps learners to develop appropriate skills to help them gain sustained employment.**

## Quality of education and training

14. Most teaching is at least satisfactory; only one session was considered unsatisfactory. All teachers give good support to their learners and in the best lessons learners develop good skills. In the poorer lessons teaching is not well planned with a limited range of activities.

15. **NVQ learners in ICT are offered a well-planned programme** which encourages them to take additional qualifications. **Attendance rates are very good for classroom-based courses in Using IT.**

16. Resources for learners overall are satisfactory with appropriate and up-to-date computing and library facilities, although some of the computing rooms are cramped. Use of learning technology such as data projectors is limited.

17. Initial assessment is not effective in all areas of learning. All learners are assessed for their literacy and numeracy needs, but this is not always reflected in the individual learning plans. **In some classes individual learning plans are group-based and do not express individual objectives and requirements.** On some courses tutors do not use either initial assessment, or individual learning plans.

18. **Assessment practices on NVQ programmes in both ICT and administration are poor.** Learners are not assessed enough in the workplace. Assessors give learners prescriptive lists of assessment evidence which are often not based sufficiently on actual work experience. **Some assessment in the workplace takes place when learners have almost completed their programmes, not allowing them sufficient opportunities to provide further evidence should it be necessary.** Some work placements do not give learners opportunities to gather all the evidence required to meet the needs of the NVQ. **The assessment and setting of targets on foundation programmes is inadequate.**

19. **In ICT assessment is used effectively to promote attainment and raise learners' confidence on classroom-based courses at level 2 and 3.** Tutors set group target dates and make good use of mock examinations. They assess learners' work frequently and give them good feedback.

20. **Learners are well supported by SRTC.** They have regular meetings with staff which are appreciated by learners. SRTC provides some financial support for those who need it and learners speak very positively about the value of the nursery.

21. **Learners on foundation programmes have good access to accredited courses.** They particularly value this aspect of the provision.

22. The support provided for learners' needs in literacy and numeracy is appropriate but there is not enough provision for learners who have a need for language support.

## Leadership and management

23. **Communications within SRTC are good**, with an effective range of meetings which staff find very useful. Communications with the NCRP board of management are also effective.

24. **All staff have very effective monthly support and supervision meetings** with their line managers. These meetings discuss staff development needs, issues associated with individual learners, or wider issues concerning the provision.

25. **SRTC makes a very effective response to the needs of disadvantaged groups in the Newham area.** The training centre is clearly focused on widening participation and improving employment prospects for these groups through education and training. The percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups is over 80 per cent, significantly higher than the 60 per cent profile of the local Newham community.

26. **SRTC offers good support to learners with childcare needs** by having a nursery on the premises and by providing some financial support for employing child minders. This is well managed with surplus places being offered to students at the local college of further education.

27. **Some aspects of curriculum management are poor.** SRTC has no specialist co-ordinators to take the lead on curriculum development. Some staff vacancies have taken a long time to fill and staff absences are not always covered appropriately. **SRTC has been slow to implement strategies for literacy, numeracy and key skills training on the foundation programme.**

28. SRTC has satisfactory equal opportunities and complaints policies, **but does not take sufficient action to develop these policies.** Equality of opportunity is not discussed routinely at staff meetings and staff have not had sufficient equal opportunities training.

29. **Quality assurance is not applied effectively throughout SRTC.** Appropriate policies and processes focus on the learning process, but these are not applied consistently. Some procedures are not supported by written guidance.

30. **NVQ programmes are not internally verified sufficiently.** SRTC has no sampling plans and some portfolios have not been internally verified for a number of months.

31. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. All staff are encouraged to contribute to the process. The self-assessment report uses a range of evidence and matches inspectors' judgements in identifying most of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good communications
- good system of support and supervision of staff
- very effective response to the needs of learners from disadvantaged groups
- well-managed support for childcare

### **Weaknesses**

- some poor aspects of curriculum management
- insufficient action to develop equal opportunities policy
- insufficient application of quality assurance system

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### ***Business administration***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of personal and vocational skills
- good training support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor assessment practices
- insufficient internal verification

## **Information & communications technology**

### ***Using IT***

#### *Strengths*

- very good attendance rates for classroom-based courses
- good use of assessments on level 2 and 3 classroom-based courses
- good programme design promotes achievements of additional qualifications by NVQ learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor achievement rate for main qualifications
- poor individual learning plans
- very weak assessment practices on NVQ courses
- insufficient opportunities for learners to gather evidence in work placements
- insufficient internal verification

## **Foundation programmes**

### ***Literacy and numeracy***

#### *Strengths*

- good access to accredited courses
- good preparation for employment
- good pastoral support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- some unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate assessment and setting of individual targets
- poor implementation of literacy, numeracy and key skills strategies

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SEBERT ROAD TRAINING CENTRE:**

- 'classes are good because they are small'
- 'you get the attention that you need'
- well-structured courses
- learning step-by-step
- courses which are about the right pace
- 'the flexibility to work at your own pace'
- convenient location
- friendly, supportive and patient staff
- 'tutorials that give me a chance to talk about personal issues'
- the opportunity to develop new skills
- opportunities for work experience
- meeting other students
- the facilities and the library
- childcare facilities

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK SEBERT ROAD TRAINING CENTRE COULD IMPROVE:**

- the space round the computers - not enough
- the number of challenging hands-on tasks
- the amount of practical work - less theory
- the vending machine
- the speed of the computers
- the amount of speaking in literacy classes

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR SEBERT ROAD TRAINING CENTRE:**

- fully implement the quality assurance system
- improve the management and leadership of the curriculum areas
- implement a thorough, reliable internal verification system
- improve NVQ assessment practices
- further develop and implement key skills and literacy, numeracy and language strategies
- further develop the equal opportunities policy
- build on and maintain the good support for learners

## Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework*. The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
<b>Provider</b>	<b>Provider</b>	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
<b>Learner</b>	<b>Learner</b>	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
<b>Teacher / trainer</b>	<b>Tutor</b>	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	<b>Mentor</b>	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
<b>Learning goals</b>	<b>Main learning goals</b>	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge.
	<b>Secondary learning goals</b>	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	<b>Personal and learning skills</b>	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

## Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
<b>Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome</b>	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
<b>Subject-based programme</b>	A programme organised around a body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
<b>Issue-based programme</b>	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
<b>Outreach provision</b>	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
<b>Neighbourhood-based work</b>	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
<b>Community regeneration</b>	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

<b>Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning</b>	
<b>Community capacity building</b>	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
<b>Active citizenship</b>	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

#### Strengths

- good communications
- good system of support and supervision of staff
- very effective response to the needs of learners from disadvantaged groups
- well-managed support for childcare

#### Weaknesses

- some poor aspects of curriculum management
- insufficient action to develop equal opportunities policy
- insufficient application of quality assurance system

32. Communications within SRTC are good. The NCRP board of management is kept informed about SRTC in a number of ways. The director has a monthly support and supervision meeting with his line manager, the chief executive officer, in which, among other things, the performance of SRTC is discussed. A project committee oversees SRTC's strategic direction and monitors its performance. This committee meets every two months and receives a report from the SRTC director; the report is also sent to the NCRP board of management. Three members of the project committee are also members of the board of management and provide further information to the board about SRTC's performance. A range of meetings provide communication with the rest of SRTC's staff. All meetings are well recorded with actions and responsibilities clearly identified, and effectively monitored at subsequent meetings.

33. SRTC has a good system of support and supervision meetings for all its staff. These take place monthly with line managers. The meetings are well recorded and discuss a range of issues, including staff development needs, the member of staff's particular area of responsibility, and his or her performance. Appraisal meetings take place annually. These meetings are effective in assessing the member of staff's performance in the previous year and setting targets for the following year. The targets are monitored during the year and at the monthly support and supervision meetings.

34. The strategic planning process is satisfactory, with all members of staff having the opportunity to contribute. A first draft is distributed to all staff to allow them to comment on its contents before it is modified to produce the final version. This is submitted to the project committee for approval and then to the board of management.

35. SRTC works with a range of partners to the benefit of learners and the wider community. The organisation has close links with the other projects operated by NCRP. Some learners have previously been involved with Step-up, the programme to assist

homeless people. Similarly RAMP, the project to work with refugees and migrants in the Forest Gate area, refers learners to SRTC. The project committee consists of three members of the NCRP board of management, and representative from a local university, a local college of further education, a local school and three voluntary sector bodies.

36. SRTC has difficulty in producing data in a form which shows retention and achievement rates by learner intake. However, data required by funding bodies is readily available and SRTC uses this as a performance measure.

37. Some aspects of curriculum management are poor. SRTC has no specialist member of staff to lead curriculum development in each of the curriculum areas. The assistant director has this responsibility, but is not a subject specialist in two of the areas. In one area the provision does not fully meet the needs of all learners. In other areas there are either too few workplace visits by staff, or they are too short to be fully effective. Staff absences are not always effectively covered. At the time of the inspection, a key member of staff had been absent for several weeks and a number of key parts of the training processes have not been covered effectively. At the time of the inspection, one staff position had been vacant for two months and had not been advertised. Much of the work had been covered by another member of SRTC's staff but she was not a specialist in the area of learning. Staff training in health and safety, and equality of opportunity is limited and does not ensure that all staff are sufficiently knowledgeable in these areas. Work placements do not have sufficient health and safety monitoring.

38. The management of literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory overall although there is some unsatisfactory teaching in this area. There is not enough support for learners with language needs; at present SRTC has no learners who need this support, but it has no strategy for provision should it become necessary.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

39. SRTC responds very effectively to the needs of disadvantaged groups. The training centre has a clear objective to increase equality by widening participation and improving learners' employment prospects within the local community. Its provision is aimed in particular at the unemployed, members of minority ethnic groups, and lone parents. This objective is particularly appropriate for Newham, an area of considerable social and economic deprivation. Training provision is supported through the many links that SRTC has within the community. For example, the organisation has helped young homeless people living in a nearby hostel to access its courses, and has run a special course for disaffected school students. The centre has been very successful in recruiting from targeted groups, demonstrated by its learner profile. All learners qualify for fee remissions.

40. SRTC's programmes are relevant to the needs of learners. For example, NVQ and other ICT accreditation supports entry to employment and reflects local community needs. An ICT access to higher education course, developed in partnership with the local university, is open to those learners with minimal formal qualifications and guarantees a university place to those who successfully complete the course.

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41. SRTC offers good support to learners with childcare needs by providing a crèche on the premises, and through financial support for childminding, support that is of particular help to lone parents. Surveys show that learners value this support. At the time of inspection, 11 learners were using the crèche and seven were receiving financial support towards childminding costs. With the help of successful bids for additional funding, SRTC has made considerable, and increasing, financial investments in the crèche facility. Unfilled places are offered to a local college when available.

42. The equal opportunities and complaints policies are satisfactory. The equal opportunities policy makes appropriate reference to bullying and harassment, and to all recent legislation. The expectation that employers will comply with the principles of the policy by, for example, not displaying offensive graphical material, is made helpfully clear. The training centre checks that employers have appropriate equality of opportunity policies and procedures.

43. Learners show a good awareness of SRTC's equal opportunities policies and procedures, which they are introduced to during induction. They understand SRTC's mission to widen participation and know how to complain if necessary. The policies are also included in the staff handbook.

44. Arrangements to identify and support learners with additional needs are satisfactory. The organisation has policies on initial assessment and on support for learners. Staff have access to information about agencies able to offer specialist help to learners with additional needs, such as dyslexia.

45. Although SRTC takes steps to ensure that learners are treated fairly, it does not take sufficient action to implement and develop the equal opportunities policy. Equality of opportunity is not dealt with systematically through staff meetings and there is no wider strategy, or action plan to promote equality and diversity. Although some staff training has taken place, it has not included curriculum design and delivery. Data is not used sufficiently to support equality of opportunity issues. For example, SRTC does not analyse the retention or achievements of different groups by gender or ethnicity. Data for the ethnic and gender profiles and for the proportion of learners with disabilities was not available for the ICT area of learning. Slow progress has been made in improving access for people with disabilities. At the time of inspection, the Sebert Road premises had not been audited, and as the result of a long-standing problem with the lift, the premises were not accessible for wheelchair users.

### Quality assurance

### Contributory grade 4

46. Clearly written policies and procedures linked to an annual cycle of activities form a good foundation for the quality assurance system. One very positive feature is the focus on the learning process through observations and through learner satisfaction surveys administered after induction, during, and at the end of each course. Staff have taken action to improve the curriculum and the learning environment in response to learners' feedback. For example, a new ICT course is available, and air conditioning has been

installed in one part of the building. An employer survey has been carried out recently. A questionnaire is sent to learners after they have left the course to gather data about learners' progression, but the response rate has been poor. The results of these surveys have been discussed at team meetings.

47. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and makes a useful contribution to quality improvement. All staff are encouraged to contribute at a specially convened workshop. The report draws on a range of evidence, including the outcomes of learner surveys. An action plan is formulated to resolve the weaknesses identified. The self-assessment report identifies many of the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

48. The well-established and systematic use of individual support and supervision meetings helps SRTC monitor aspects of curriculum delivery. At these monthly meetings, the assistant director and each member of the training staff review learners' attendance and progress on the course, and agree actions to rectify issues of concern.

49. Although many features of the quality assurance system are satisfactory, it is not complete and is not implemented consistently. This is recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Some procedures, for example the teaching observation arrangements, are not supported by written guidance. Arrangements for monitoring, reporting and reviewing the outcomes of observations and learners' and employers' surveys are unclear. Although all staff have been observed, teaching observations are not frequent enough. Plans to observe other aspects of training and to review the use of individual learning plans are included in the quality cycle, but have not been implemented. Observations of the assessment process are not up to date, and other aspects of internal verification are weak, including the support and development of assessors and standardisation of assessments. Internal verification has not identified the slow progress of some learners and weak assessment practices in ICT.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business administration</b> - Adult and community learning	38	4

#### **Business administration**

##### *Strengths*

- good development of personal and vocational skills
- good training support for learners

##### *Weaknesses*

- poor assessment practices
- insufficient internal verification

#### **Achievement and standards**

50. Retention rates on administration programmes are satisfactory although there was a decline between 2001-02 and 2002-03 from 95 per cent to 55 per cent respectively. Achievements showed a similar decline in 2002-03 to 27 per cent, from 47 per cent in 2001-02 and 100 per cent in 2000. SRTC is aware of this situation and early indications would suggest some improvement for the 2003-04 year. Overall, the level of achievement is satisfactory. All current learners have English as a first language and most are able to cope well with written and spoken communications for the NVQ at level 2, although some have been identified as having numeracy needs. Learners' work is of an appropriate standard but progress in developing NVQ portfolios is extremely slow.

51. Approximately 33 per cent of learners progressed into employment or further or higher education, in the years 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03. Of the 48 learners enrolled so far during 2003-04, five have gained employment and two have entered further education, with 38 still in training. Overall, from 2001 to 2003, of the 52 learners who started, 15 gained employment and a full NVQ, which is 29 per cent overall, and six entered further education. There has been a growth in the number of learners on the business administration programme to meet increased demand, from 19 starters in 2001-02 to 48 in 2003-04.

## Quality of education and training

52. Learners' personal and vocational skills are developed well. There are good opportunities for learners to gain nationally recognised qualifications. NVQ knowledge and understanding is covered systematically in taught classes. Tutors take time to set homework which is carefully marked, with helpful feedback for learners. Teaching is satisfactory, but not enough allowance is made for individual learners' needs. Learners are able to build upon previous learning from week to week and have good recall of aspects of business administration background knowledge and computer functions. Learners have a carefully planned variety of activities and responsibilities on work placements and are able to generate relevant evidence for NVQ units. Time management and teamwork skills are encouraged during training and reinforced in the workplace.

53. Learners receive good support from tutors and workplace supervisors. They have monthly progress reviews with their vocational tutors, as well as monthly meetings with a different tutor if they wish to discuss any personal issues. Some learners on work placements are encouraged to apply for full-time employment by their employer who supports them during this process. Learners value the free childcare and travel arrangements they receive, which enables them to attend training and work placements. Learners work in a supportive atmosphere which is very conducive to learning; relationships with tutors and workplace supervisors clearly contribute to learners' increased confidence and self-esteem and help overcome learners' personal difficulties.

54. Resources are satisfactory. The learning environment is bright and spacious and there are sufficient computers, although writing space around the computers is cramped. Learning materials are up-to-date and well produced. Learners have good access to computer and library facilities for private study.

55. Learners are initially assessed for literacy and numeracy skills. SRTC aims to prepare learners for qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Literacy and numeracy teaching is organised on a flexible basis according to need and learners are supported on an individual basis, especially for numeracy. On NVQ administration programmes, learners are able to work towards key skills in numeracy, literacy and IT. These are taught separately from the NVQ, although some NVQ evidence is used to gain key skills qualifications. This is not highlighted by the vocational assessors.

56. Assessment practices are poor, which is a significant disadvantage to the learners. There are no comprehensive, individual learning plans to cover all aspects of a learner's programme and no clear monitoring of changes during programmes, such as working towards units only, rather than a full NVQ qualification. Personal learning goals are not recorded. Assessment and action plans are not individualised, they are simply a summary checklist for the whole group, and are not maintained. There is no clear cycle of planning, assessment and review. Insufficient consideration is given to any relevant prior learning or achievements.

57. Progress reviews are not thorough enough and target-setting is poor, with insufficient

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detail and challenge for learners. The same IT option units are assumed for the whole group at the start of the programme, whereas once on work placement, other units such as customer service may be more appropriate. Learners spend too much time producing written answers to background knowledge questions which some learners find a burden.

58. Assessor observations and real work evidence are not used as evidence of learners' application of knowledge in the workplace. Learners are issued with prescriptive lists of evidence, but these do not emphasise real work evidence sufficiently. Health and safety and database units are signed off during training from evidence produced in the training centre, not real work situations. Better evidence is available later from work placements, but is not used. Assessors do not visit learners in the workplace sufficiently and observation reports are simply tick lists for each element, with little useful feedback.

### **Leadership and management**

59. The self-assessment report identified some strengths and weaknesses, but inspectors identified further weaknesses. Staff felt that they had been consulted in the process and agreed with the report.

60. SRTC does not designate clear responsibility for management of these programmes. The assistant director leads all curriculum development, but is not a specialist in business administration. Curriculum responsibilities have not been effectively dealt with during a period of staff shortage. Team meetings are generalised and do not deal with curriculum issues effectively, although staff supervision is used to check learners' progress. A partner organisation arranges work placements, but this arrangement is due to finish very soon. SRTC plans to work with other local training providers in arranging work placements when the current contract finishes, but progress towards implementing their plans is slow. The monitoring of current learners on work placements has lapsed, other than for assessment. Learners' records are incomplete and not maintained to monitor their progress.

61. The structure of the programmes does not allow sufficient time for learners to be on work placement and there is not enough time for workplace visits by assessors. Staff replacements are slow. Staff do not receive sufficient training in health and safety, and equality of opportunity. Some staff have attended external training events, such as awarding body networking events, and assessor/verifier updates.

62. SRTC does not provide enough internal verification. There is no current sampling plan. The lead internal verifier has been away for some time and no arrangements have been made to cover for this absence. Only one portfolio has been internally verified during the past seven months. This contains action points which have not yet been checked. Some learners who have already left have units signed off by their assessor which have not been internally verified. Observations of assessments are not up-to-date. There are no records of standardisation activities, or any evidence that internal verification has identified poor assessment practice.

## Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Using IT</b> - Adult and community learning	49	4

### **Using IT**

#### *Strengths*

- very good attendance rates for classroom-based courses
- good use of assessments on level 2 and 3 classroom-based courses
- good programme design promotes achievements of additional qualifications by NVQ learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor achievement rate for main qualifications
- poor individual learning plans
- very weak assessment practices on NVQ courses
- insufficient opportunities for learners to gather evidence in work placements
- insufficient internal verification

## Achievement and standards

63. Learners attend classroom-based courses regularly and punctually. The average for unauthorised absences from courses is below 10 per cent. Reliable data about overall annual retention rates was not available. In one classroom-based course retention rates have recovered after a recent fall, and are now good, at 75 per cent.

64. Learners make significant gains in confidence, and a satisfactory proportion are able to use their new skills at home or at work, for instance in writing formal letters, in using spreadsheets to control personal budgets, and in creating databases to improve efficiency at work. Others are better able to relate to, and help their children. A satisfactory proportion progress to courses with SRTC or local further education colleges, or gain jobs. Good evidence was available to show the progression of 12 learners into employment since 1999. Although there was some anecdotal evidence for a number of others gaining jobs there was little reliable evidence to support this.

65. The overall achievement of qualifications is poor. The most recent group of learners on the Access to IT course achieved a good pass rate of 67 per cent. However, achievement rates on all other courses are low. Reliable data about annual achievements overall was not available. However, on one level 1 course achievement rates have fallen from 57 to 50 per cent. In a level 2 course only six of the 17 learners who started

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achieved the qualification. SRTC is aware of the decline in achievements during 2002-03 and early indications would suggest some improvement for 2003-04. Learners on the level 3 NVQ course make slow progress. None of the learners had achieved any units nine months after starting the course.

### **Quality of education and training**

66. Assessment is used effectively to promote attainment and raise learners' confidence on classroom-based courses at level 2 and 3. Tutors set group target dates for assignments and make good use of mock examinations. They assess work regularly and give useful feedback. Learners develop confidence as they realise that their rate of progress will enable them to achieve the qualification. Initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language needs, and vocational skills is satisfactory.

67. The design of the NVQ programme is very effective in promoting the achievement of additional qualifications. Learners have a timetable which encourages them to take a computer literacy course and key skills or literacy and numeracy skills courses during the first few months of their programme. Although this is optional, most take up the offer. Reliable data on the achievement rate of these additional qualifications was not available. The jobsearch element of the programme, provided by a partner organisation, is satisfactory, although one group of NVQ learners which was close to the end of the programme had not yet received this support. Programmes are well designed to allow weekday learners to progress, but those attending at weekends cannot progress beyond level 1.

68. Most learners develop good relationships with their tutors. Learners enjoy their lessons and the pace of learning in classrooms is appropriate for most of them. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Tutors support slower learners well, with additional materials. The work set does not provide sufficient challenge for a minority of more able learners. Teaching methods are not varied enough. Too many lessons are based on working through standard exercises that may be irrelevant to the learners.

69. Resources are generally satisfactory. Tutors have appropriate teaching and assessing qualifications to meet the demands of the programme and the range of learners. Their professional development as IT tutors is satisfactory. Computer hardware and software meets industrial standards, and seating is appropriate. Learning technology, such as screen projectors, are not used sufficiently and workstations are too cramped. Learners cannot make notes, use their workbooks, keyboard and mouse at the same time.

70. Overall, support for learners is satisfactory. Initial advice is appropriate and none of the learners interviewed felt that they were on the wrong course. The induction process is satisfactory and most learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and health and safety. Induction to the NVQ programme is not satisfactory and most learners do not have sufficient understanding of their part in identifying and collecting evidence of their skills. Tutors and other staff are supportive of learners. They provide extra support for portfolio-building after the end of the learners'

funding periods. Tutors use progress reviews to inform learners of their rate of progress, but the reviews concentrate on individual courses, and do not consider learners' progress as a whole. Tutors do not promote independent work effectively for those falling behind the group target dates. Learners have good access to personal support through a personal tutor, but SRTC's promotion of this facility is not satisfactory, and attendance at tutorials is often poor. Personal tutors do not pay sufficient attention to requests for support in vocational training. In two tutorial records, learners had asked for extra support but none was recorded. Both learners subsequently withdrew from their courses.

71. Individual learning plans are poor. They do not reflect the results of initial assessments, or learners' personal learning goals sufficiently and tutors do not use them to co-ordinate all aspects of learners' progress. Tutors on level 1 courses do not use initial assessments, individual learning plans, or review learners' progress.

72. NVQ assessments are not thorough enough. Assessors have a poor understanding of the evidence requirements. Some evidence in learners' portfolios is not sufficient to demonstrate competence. Assessors do not assess in the workplaces frequently enough. None of the NVQ learners interviewed had been visited more than once in their work placements. Learners are not encouraged sufficiently to identify potential evidence opportunities themselves, they rely too much on standard lists supplied by the assessors. They do not develop a good understanding of evidence-based assessment. Witness testimonies and observation records are not detailed enough to substantiate assessment decisions. Most assessment takes place at the end of the learners' programmes, when the work placement has finished and opportunities for learners to provide further evidence if required are limited.

73. Learners' opportunities to gather NVQ evidence in their work placements are restricted. The learners attend their placements for up to 17 weeks, but possibly for only two days each week. The job roles they have during this time often do not provide sufficient opportunities to meet the evidence requirements for their NVQ and employers are not always able, or willing, to provide additional opportunities for them.

## **Leadership and management**

74. The process of observation of the teaching and learning programme is satisfactory. Communications are effective, and all staff interviewed understand the place of ICT in the overall business strategy. Physical resources are managed satisfactorily. Staff are involved in the self-assessment process and managers respond adequately to learners' feedback.

75. The internal verification of NVQs is weak. Internal verifiers do not plan to verify all assessors and units and the process does not identify the slow progress and weak assessment practices identified by inspectors. Internal verifiers do not support and develop assessors sufficiently. Internal verifiers give insufficient attention to standardising assessment decisions, to improving the efficiency of the NVQ process, and to supporting assessors who are not familiar with the NVQ standards. Course reviews are ineffective.

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76. SRTC has been effective in recruiting learners from minority ethnic groups, but tutors and assessors are not sufficiently aware of the equal opportunities policy. Managers do not analyse the performances of different groups of learners and have not taken action to rectify the gender imbalance in recruitment. Staff have not been trained sufficiently to support the recruitment and progress of a diverse group of learners.

77. Overall, management of the area of learning is unsatisfactory. SRTC has no co-ordinator to lead curriculum development and managers do not use targets sufficiently to monitor performances. They monitor overall recruitment and retention rates, but there is no use of targets for achievement, widening participation, or progression. A partner organisation has responsibility for monitoring health and safety and equality of opportunity in work placements, but SRTC's managers do not monitor this thoroughly enough. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Not all of SRTC's staff have job descriptions. Physical resources are managed satisfactorily.

## Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Literacy and numeracy</i></b> - Adult and community learning	53	3

### ***Literacy and numeracy***

#### *Strengths*

- good access to accredited courses
- good preparation for employment
- good pastoral support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- some unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate assessment and setting of individual targets
- poor implementation of literacy, numeracy and key skills strategies

## Achievement and standards

78. Achievement rates are satisfactory. In 2001-02, 57 per cent of literacy and numeracy learners successfully achieved entry, level 1 and level 2 of unitary examination body qualifications. This increased to 60 per cent in 2002-3 and 2003-04. Internal and external progression is satisfactory, 21 per cent of learners join vocational programmes at the training centre or go on to further study or gain jobs. Retention of learners is satisfactory. In 2002-3 the retention rate for literacy and numeracy courses was 75 per cent, although this has decreased to 64 per cent for 2003-4. Learners' work is of an appropriate standard and in the better lessons improve their skills significantly. They make good progress, building on prior learning and increasing their confidence. Programmes are designed to encourage and support progression towards key skills qualifications at level 1 and 2. Learners on vocational courses reach appropriate levels in literacy and numeracy, but such teaching programmes do not focus adequately on the requirements of the NVQ programme.

## Quality of education and training

79. Foundation learners have good access to accredited courses. They can study for and achieve appropriate qualifications. Accreditation is offered to all literacy and numeracy learners from entry level 1 to level 2. Learners welcome this opportunity to make progress and achieve a qualification that will help them to progress to further education or employment.

80. Literacy and numeracy learners are well prepared for employment. The focus of learning is on employment and preparing them for the demands of the workplace. In addition, learners are offered training in jobsearch, curriculum vitae preparation and opportunities for work experience.

81. Learners are well supported. This strength is recognised in SRTC's self-assessment report. Learners receive a range of personal and financial support. Financial assistance is provided through travel expenses, and childcare support is good. This motivates learners and contributes to their ability to participate in learning at the centre. Learners are offered effective personal support to help them to complete their courses, including access to specialist support services. Guidance and support are sensitive to equality of opportunity. Induction ensures that learners understand their rights, responsibilities, and the demands of their courses. They are aware of equality of opportunity policies and the complaints procedure. Attendance is monitored and there are satisfactory procedures to identify incidents of poor punctuality and attendance.

82. Resources are satisfactory. The library and childcare facilities are good. Some of the teaching rooms are a slightly cramped and there is insufficient desk space, but this does not impede learning. SRTC does not have sufficient numbers of specialist literacy and numeracy staff. Staff interviewed commented on the good access to training and professional development made available to them.

83. Some teaching is unsatisfactory. In these lessons teaching is not well planned and the range of teaching and learning activities is restricted, with an over-dependency on the completion of worksheets. Not enough attention is given to developing learners' communication skills and learners remain uninvolved for long periods. In the better lessons, however, learners acquire new knowledge and skills. In one lesson, numeracy learners at entry level who were having difficulty with the addition and subtraction of fractions worked productively, asking questions and clarifying what they did not understand. The teacher very patiently and clearly outlined and reinforced how to calculate fractions and provided learners with additional support on an individual basis. All learners were able to complete the set tasks accurately. Learners comment on the good individual support provided in these lessons and the constant checks on their learning.

84. The current assessment practice is not satisfactory. Assessment and the setting of individual targets is inadequate. Learners are given initial and diagnostic assessments, but the information collected is not used to set individual targets and rarely informs the planning of teaching and learning. Targets are set for the group, but the more able learners are not challenged sufficiently. Learners' prior learning is not recognised and they are not set specific, individual goals and targets at an appropriate level, based on their individual needs. Learners on NVQ programmes have learning plans, but their learning is not sufficiently linked to the literacy and numeracy demands of their vocational course. They spend too much time in lessons on the same group task, often repeating learning exercises on worksheets. Insufficient attention is given to consolidating acquired skills and building and developing new ones.

## Leadership and management

85. Staff appraisals and supervision are good. Training needs are identified. Staff hold regular meetings and communications are good. Improvement targets are set for improving retention rates, and staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Learners' feedback is collected, but is not used sufficiently to promote or influence improvements to the service. The self-assessment report identified some of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

86. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Groups that are traditionally disadvantaged and from diverse local communities are significantly involved in training. SRTC successfully recruits learners from a wide range of backgrounds. They find out about the centre from local advertising campaigns and friends. However, the content of the programmes, and materials used in lessons, do not reflect the diversity of SRTC's learners.

87. Curriculum management is unsatisfactory. SRTC has no curriculum specialist to lead developments within the area of learning and there is not enough sharing of good practice. SRTC is aware that the language provision does not meet the needs of its client group and is currently reviewing this. The organisation has not established how appropriate the current course is for learners for whom English is an additional language.

88. The implementation of literacy, numeracy and key skills strategies has been poor. Managers have been slow to respond to national changes in this area. A position report has been prepared recently, but the current policies have not been updated, or effectively implemented.