

REINSPECTION REPORT

Merseyside Accredited Childcare Training and Assessment Centre

24 March 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

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.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

REINSPECTION REPORT

Merseyside Accredited Childcare Training and Assessment Centre Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Merseyside Accredited Childcare Training and Assessment Centre (MACTAC) is part of the Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council (VNC) which is a voluntary organisation working in the Liverpool inner city wards of Vauxhall and Everton. VNC provides a non-profit making nursery from its premises in Vauxhall. MACTAC was established in 1994 to provide training in childcare and education within the local community. It trains apprentices and learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in health and social care, specifically early years education. MACTAC also provides Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as New Deal for lone parents and a range of commercially funded training courses. The funding streams supporting learners have changed since the previous inspection, and most of MACTAC's funded learners are now on New Deal programmes.

2. VNC is a limited company with charitable status, having 15 trustees drawn from the local community. The company is led by a chief executive and a board of four core staff. The operational side of MACTAC has been revised since the previous inspection. There is now a centre manager, a training co-ordinator, four trainer/assessors and a placement officer supported by a data co-ordinator. The delivery team meets each month and reports to the chief executive of VNC. The trustees meet every other month to discuss performance and development of the company.

3. MACTAC funds its training provision through Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and Merseyside early years partnerships. Since the previous inspection, it is now operating from newly converted premises. According to the 2001 census, the Vauxhall area from which MACTAC recruits its learners has a minority ethnic representation of 1.8 per cent, compared with 5.7 per cent for Liverpool and 9.1 per cent for England and Wales.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

4. Twenty-six participants are on New Deal for lone parents programmes in early years care and education. Of these, 22 are taking level 2 NVQs and four are taking level 3 NVQs. Many of these participants continue with their NVQ with MACTAC when their New Deal funding expires. Six apprentices and one advanced apprentice are subcontracted through MACTAC's partnership with North West Community Services (NWCS). There are also approximately 20 NVQ learners who are not publicly funded.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of inspectors | 2 |
| Number of inspection days | 8 |
| Number of learners interviewed | 20 |
| Number of staff interviewed | 9 |
| Number of employers interviewed | 7 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 1 |
| Number of partners/external agencies interviewed | 2 |
| Number of visits | 7 |

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. At the previous inspection in December 2004, MACTAC's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality assurance were unsatisfactory. Equality of opportunity was satisfactory, but provision in health, social care and public services was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process all aspects of provision are satisfactory apart from quality assurance, which remains unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

| | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Health, social care & public services | | 4 |
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| Early years | | |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 32 | 4 |
| - New Deal for young people | 13 | None |

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

| Health, social care & public services | | 3 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| Early years | | |
| - New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults | 26 | 3 |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 7 | 3 |

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. Retention and achievement rates have improved and are now satisfactory. At the time of the reinspection, all learners were within their funding dates and a number had completed their full frameworks. Learners are developing good skills in their workplaces.

Quality of education and training

7. **The good support for learners, identified as a strength at the previous inspection, has further improved.** The environment at MACTAC is very effective in meeting learners' needs for reassurance, motivation and varied learning.

8. Employers' involvement in programmes is satisfactory. Employers are providing a sound practical environment and support, with good opportunities for skills development. However, employers have little or, sometimes, no involvement in the assessment process.

9. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. Learners attend the training centre weekly for a combination of key skills qualifications and background knowledge delivery and tutorials.

10. Resources are satisfactory. The training centre is spacious and well equipped with an appropriate range of teaching materials and aids.

11. Progress reviews and target-setting are now satisfactory, having been identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Learners are broadly on target and have monitoring sheets in their files.

12. **Assessment is poor**, having been identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. There has been little improvement since the previous inspection in the frequency of observation or the sufficiency of performance evidence.

Leadership and management

13. **Staff development is good at MACTAC.** Staff have significant opportunities to

upgrade and improve their skills. This area was a strength at the previous inspection.

14. **MACTAC has taken good strategic initiatives to develop provision.** It has formed effective partnerships with other training providers, early years partnerships, higher education and the local community.

15. The management structure of MACTAC has been strengthened in the past year and management is now satisfactory. Collaborative working between all staff is much improved.

16. The planning of training is now satisfactory, but employers' involvement in the planning of training and the use of on-the-job training remains poor. Achievement rates have improved but insufficient attention has been paid to the quality of assessment and internal verification.

17. **Quality improvement arrangements are still insufficiently developed.** Internal verification is still poor and the quality assurance systems have not identified this or the insufficient assessment. These were significant weaknesses in the previous inspection and little action has been taken to rectify them.

18. Equality of opportunity remains satisfactory. The equal opportunities policy has been updated and made easier to understand.

19. MACTAC now has a strategy to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. All staff are being trained in awareness of skills for life, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Learners needing support are supported by the key skills tutor and work is in process to identify suitable referral points for more in-depth support.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic initiatives to develop provision
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed quality improvement arrangements

Health, social care & public services

Early years

Strengths

- good individual support to promote learners' self-esteem and return to work

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and internal verification

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDING

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic initiatives to develop provision
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed quality improvement arrangements

20. Good staff development remains as a strength. Staff have significant opportunities to upgrade and improve skills. These opportunities have been further enhanced by MACTAC's partnership with NWCS, with examples including the provision of skills for life awareness training for all staff.

21. There are good strategic initiatives to develop provision. The board of MACTAC recognises the need to develop the organisation. Plans are in place to create MACTAC as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The recent partnership with NWCS has widened opportunities for staff development and the quality of provision through involvement with a wider network of providers. A senior member of staff is charged with developing links with other organisations for the benefit of MACTAC, with examples including links with the local university and early years partnerships to develop commercial work. MACTAC continues to strengthen its links with local community organisations to promote widening participation.

22. Management is satisfactory overall. The management structure of MACTAC has been strengthened in the past year. There are regular staff briefings and meetings involving all staff. The use of regular briefings to rectify learners' slow progress has been effective in improving achievement rates, but MACTAC has paid insufficient attention to the quality of assessment and internal verification. These were significant weaknesses in the previous inspection and have not yet been satisfactorily resolved. Tutors take action to support learners who are making slow progress and this is followed up by the placement co-ordinator. A detailed benchmark sheet clearly sets out the intended rate of progress for each programme and is now mirrored in a monitoring chart for all learners. However, the overall monitoring chart has only recently been implemented and it is too early to judge the longer-term effect of this measure. Monthly performance reviews against targets are being introduced to promote improvements in staff performance. There is much improved collaborative working between all staff, especially assessors, the placement co-ordinator and the management information system officer. The management information system officer is now in a dedicated post in the new building and is working well to ensure all information is up to date and entered effectively, to support the centre manager in performance managing the team of assessors and tutors.

23. The planning of training is now satisfactory. Key skills qualifications and the technical certificate are now integrated with the programme. Key skills qualifications are offered and taken by apprentices as well as participants on New Deal programmes. However, the involvement of employers in the planning of training and the use of on-the-job training remains poor.

24. The management of literacy and numeracy support is now satisfactory. MACTAC now has a strategy to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. All learners have an initial assessment of their skills and a diagnostic test is offered to all who are identified as needing support. All staff are in the process of training in awareness of skills for life and one member of staff is completing a level 3 qualification before commencing level 4. Learners needing support are supported by the key skills tutor and work is in process to identify suitable referral points for more in-depth support.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

25. Equality of opportunity was satisfactory at the previous inspection and remains so. The equal opportunities policy has been updated and made clearer. There is a clear statement of learners' rights and responsibilities. MACTAC's new premises are easily accessible to learners with a disability, but a disability access audit has not yet been carried out. The recent introduction of 'buzz groups' on equality and diversity are an effective forum for discussion to challenge learners' views and understanding.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

26. Quality improvement arrangements are still insufficiently developed. MACTAC has made improvements since the previous inspection. It now has a number of quality improvement initiatives including a quality file and calendar covering most aspects of the learners' experience. However, this paper-based system already has documents that are out of date, and MACTAC has no clear plan to review and update them. There is an increased emphasis on seeking ways to improve the quality of provision. The views of learners and employers are regularly sought and appropriate action is taken. The new 'buzz groups' have considered learners' views on MACTAC and on equality of opportunity. Internal verification activity has recently started to be reported to management meetings on a monthly basis. However, internal verification is still not carried out effectively and the quality systems have not identified this or the insufficient assessment. These were significant weaknesses in the previous inspection and little action has been taken to rectify them. Assessment, reviews and observation of teaching are carried out only on an informal basis and the results of these are not analysed or used to develop the skills of staff. A plan to sample all staff across a range of activities has been devised but has not yet been implemented.

27. The self-assessment report and development plan have only recently been completed. All staff were involved in the production of the report, which identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. However, it does not identify the significant issues of weaknesses in assessment and internal verification.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

| Health, social care & public services | | 3 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| Early years | | |
| - New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults | 26 | 3 |
| - Apprenticeships for young people | 7 | 3 |

Early years

Strengths

- good individual support to promote learners' self-esteem and return to work

Weaknesses

- insufficient assessment and internal verification

Achievement and standards

28. Retention and achievement rates have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. The retention rate on the New Deal programme is above 50 per cent, and between 36 per cent and 50 per cent of participants enter employment. Most New Deal participants continue with their NVQ with MACTAC after gaining employment.

29. At the time of the previous inspection, no learners had completed their apprenticeship frameworks and many learners were out of funding. By reinspection, all learners were within their funding dates and a number had completed their full frameworks. Forty per cent of the 2002-03 advanced apprentices completed their framework, although only 4 per cent of the apprentices starting in that year successfully achieved their qualification. The completion rate rose to 27 per cent for apprentices starting in 2003-04, and the same proportion of the 2004-05 intake have completed with two more learners nearing completion.

30. Learners are developing good skills in their workplaces and employers are very satisfied with them. Many apprentices gain employment and have progressed to level 3 qualifications with MACTAC.

Quality of education and training

31. The good support for learners, identified as a strength at the previous inspection, has further improved. Most learners are on New Deal for lone parents programmes, and some have tried a variety of other courses in the past. The environment at MACTAC is

very effective in meeting their need for reassurance, motivation and varied learning. Learners' comments are very positive, with examples such as 'this is the first place I have ever liked going to', 'staff at MACTAC are interested in me and make me feel like I am worth something'. Learners who are having difficulties in placements are supported well. Their problems are dealt with, they are found new placements as a matter of priority.

32. Employers' involvement is satisfactory. Employers are providing a sound practical environment and support with good opportunities for skills development. They have regular contact with staff from MACTAC, although they are unclear about the content of the training programme. They provide opportunities for learners to carry out relevant tasks. However, they are not generally involved in assessment or regular recording of witness statements, despite at least one of those interviewed being an assessor.

33. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. Learners attend weekly for a combination of key skills delivery and tutorials. They value the key skills input as improving their skills but in a fun environment which makes it easy to learn. They also value tutorials that support them in completing their written tasks and the opportunity to discuss issues with their peers.

34. Resources are satisfactory. The training centre is spacious and well equipped with a range of teaching materials and aids. There is good access to computers. All learners are given a textbook to support individual study. All learners have their own copy of the appropriate textbook and also have learner-friendly worksheets to support background knowledge sessions. They receive regular, written feedback on their work. MACTAC provides a good range of appropriate additional training that most learners have completed early in their programme. Examples include child protection, 'birth to three matters' and sudden infant death syndrome. Learners receive certificates to add to their portfolio.

35. Progress reviews and target-setting were a weakness at the time of the previous inspection but are now satisfactory. The learners interviewed during the reinspection were all broadly on target, and most had a monitoring sheet in the front of their file and could explain their progress. Those who started in November 2005 have already completed several written unit tasks. There still seems to be confusion regarding NVQ assessment, however. Learners believe they have completed units when the written work is completed. Only one learner is currently out of funding.

36. Assessment was a weakness at the previous inspection and remains poor. There has been little improvement since the previous inspection in the frequency of observation or the sufficiency of performance evidence. Most learners have had between two and four observations during their programme, usually towards the end of the programme, and have little evidence of practice other than reflective accounts that are not countersigned. Little or, sometimes, no use is made of evidence from learners' experiences and of placement product evidence in portfolios. The recording of evidence is very poor and it is difficult to assess whether sufficient evidence has been produced in some files.

Leadership and management

37. Management of the early years provision has improved, with improved team working. Staff responsible for the vocational provision and key skills qualifications work well together and with the placement co-ordinator.

38. Internal verification arrangements are poor. The internal verification process has not identified or dealt with the issues of insufficient and weak assessment. There is insufficient and poorly planned internal verification. For example, the first sample for each learner has been done after 12 months on programme. For some learners, no internal verification has taken place until the end of their programmes.