

INSPECTION REPORT

Key Training Ltd

30 September 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Key Training Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Key Training was established in 1965 and is a privately owned national training provider. It operates from 10 sites in England, all in towns or city centres. Key Training offers training for young people and adults in six areas of learning, and contracts with 10 Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). Key Training works with approximately 550 employers, which provide jobs or work placements for learners in a variety of settings. There are currently 870 young people on work-based learning programmes, and the provider also holds periodic contracts for European Social Fund, employer training pilot (ETP), and 14-16 training. The company also has a commercial division, Key Solutions, which focuses mainly on delivering bespoke information and communications technology (ICT) training for commercial organisations. Learners and staff of Key Training have access to some of the training run by Key Solutions.

2. The senior management team consists of the chairman, who is also one of the company owners, the managing director, the training and the operations directors. Directors hold responsibilities for finance, operations, training and marketing, respectively. Key Training has also recently engaged the services of a group chief executive. He was appointed as part of a management succession strategy initially concentrating on sales activity, but with a broadening remit across the next 12 months. Supporting the senior managers are 11 managers who have a variety of areas of responsibility, usually related to a regional centre for training. The company employs 67 full-time and 24 part-time staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Key Training's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Its measures to ensure equality of opportunity are satisfactory. In preparation for life and work, provision is good, and in business administration and law provision is satisfactory.

4. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is thorough, inclusive, and has good connection with the company's development planning. Most of the weaknesses found in areas of learning and leadership and management were identified by the company's self-assessment process. The process is widely understood by staff and managers across the company in the regional centres.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Key Training has been carrying out successful action to promote improvement, and the quality of provision has improved since the previous inspection. There has been effective action by managers and staff to deal with weaknesses identified by the company's self-assessment process and by inspectors.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR KEY TRAINING LTD:

- maintain the increase in achievement and retention rates
- implement an effective strategy for dealing with additional learning needs
- ensure that quality assurance arrangements are completed
- improve the planning of individual learning

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		2	
Employer training pilot	37	2	

Business administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Administration</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	358	3	
Employer training pilot	20	3	
NVQ training for young people	30	3	
<i>Customer service</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	211	3	
NVQ training for young people	13	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Preparation for life and work and business administration and law were reported on and graded. Within business administration and law, contributory grades were given for customer service and business administration. Provision in retail, call centre training, warehousing, ICT and access programmes was not inspected. Inspectors visited Key Training, at sites around the country, on six days.

Number of inspectors	11
Number of inspection days	57
Number of learners interviewed	136
Number of staff interviewed	94
Number of employers interviewed	55
Number of subcontractors interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	79
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Learner progression and development is particularly good in administration and customer service.** Learners develop good personal and professional skills, and employers have recognised significant improvements. These include skills in time management, telephone techniques, computer applications and increasing confidence. Learners' portfolios are well presented and demonstrate work of a high standard. Many gain additional qualifications and skills through employer training. Most learners take on additional responsibilities in their jobs and a significant number are promoted during the programme. Progression from level 2 to level 3 is good, and some learners progress to higher education.
8. Achievement of numeracy qualifications is satisfactory. During the six-month pilot programme, 47 learners started the numeracy programme and 34 stayed until the end. Twenty-seven learners achieved numeracy qualifications. Work is good and is relevant to their job role. For example, they work on charts and graphs on performance against work targets.
9. Achievement of literacy qualifications is satisfactory and is slightly higher than that for numeracy. Of the 45 learners who started the literacy programme, 34 completed and 31 achieved the qualification. However, some learners achieved a pass after attending only a few learning sessions. Some learners were assessed by their previous provider at level 3, but took the level 2 test and little learning took place. Key Training has dealt with this problem for the second intake of learners.
10. Achievement rates in administration are satisfactory overall and have improved significantly over the past three years. The rate of leavers completing their full framework has increased from 27 per cent in 2002-03 to 34 per cent in 2003-04 and to 45 per cent in 2004-05. However, there are some centres where achievement is still poor. Overall retention rates are satisfactory.
11. **For some learners in customer service there was initial slow progress** but this is now satisfactory. Achievement at some centres is still low but there is improvement across all

centres and some have good achievement rates. Overall, framework completion is satisfactory with improving trends each year. Retention rates are satisfactory overall, and are good in some centres.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Business administration and law	0	6	1	0	7
Total	0	6	1	0	7

12. **Support for learners with poor numeracy skills is good.** Two trainers are responsible for supporting learners during training sessions and they offer effective support. Trainers regularly check that learners are not experiencing difficulties and provide clear, concise information in a way that learners understand. Numeracy sessions are made fun and learners find them interesting.

13. **In administration, training workshops are good.** Courses include key skills training, presentation skills, health and safety, storage and filing systems, telephone techniques and time management. A variety of activities are used to maintain the learners' interest and match individual learning styles. Learners complete an evaluation at the end of every training session which is sent to the employer. However, a significant number of learners do not have access to these workshops.

14. **Assessment processes are very effective for learners in administration and customer service.** Assessors arrange regular monthly visits to meet the learners' and employers' requirements, and use a full range of assessment methods. There are many examples where assessors have visited learners out of office hours, including evenings and weekends, to ensure that the maximum amount of relevant workplace evidence is collected and assessed. There is good flexibility also, to meet shift and other work patterns. Action-planning is a key part of the process and assessors agree short-term targets to drive the programme forward. Portfolios have a wide range of evidence and are cross-referenced well. However, in some cases, assessors give learners too little responsibility for referencing evidence. Assessors offer very good support to learners, particularly when learners have to change employers.

15. **Employers and work placements are good in administration,** and Key Training has a good working relationship with employers. Learners are carefully selected to attend company interviews and are well matched to employers. Key Training ensures that work activities are appropriate to the qualification and learners are able to generate good evidence in support of their national vocational qualification (NVQ). Learners are often given additional responsibilities to cover NVQ requirements, and job rotation is organised when appropriate. Most employers are enthusiastic and committed to the support of their learners, allowing time during work to complete portfolios.

16. **Very effective short-term action-planning is completed as part of the assessor visits for customer service learners.** They are set realistic targets to agreed timescales which take into account individual needs and workplace requirements. These targets are detailed and well-recorded on an assessment record which is left with the learner. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of what is to be achieved and how it relates to their

qualification.

17. The process of initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners complete a diagnostic assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. Learners receive a satisfactory introduction to the learning programme that was jointly developed by Key Training and the employer.

18. The arrangements for delivering key skills training are satisfactory. Work towards key skills and the technical certificate is started at the start of the programme and is seen as an integral part of the NVQ. Learners generally have a satisfactory understanding of what they need to do to achieve the key skills, and how these fit into the framework.

19. Resources are generally satisfactory, with appropriate learning materials, well motivated and experienced staff and good accommodation. However, this varies between centres. In some centres, computers are out of date and there is no access to the internet. Some centres do not have suitable materials for individual coaching sessions. Some do not provide suitable formal group training sessions.

20. Planning of learning and recording of the learners' progress are inadequate in literacy and numeracy. Individual learning plans were introduced late in the pilot programme, and all plans record that learners are working towards level 2, even though some learners have started at entry level 3. Targets on each plan are the same or similar, and some are very vague. Learning plans do not reflect key learning objectives from the initial assessment. It is not possible for Key Training's staff to measure the learners' progress effectively over a period of time. Reviews are completed for each learner during their programme, but comments are vague.

21. Initial assessment is inadequate in administration. Nationally recognised assessment tools, including a diagnostic assessment of key skills, are available but not all learners receive a full initial assessment. Learners with additional learning needs such as dyslexia are not always identified at an early stage in their programme. The results of initial assessment are not used to plan individual training. Learners who could achieve their qualification early are not identified. Additional learning support is inconsistent.

22. The progress review process is poor for learners in administration. Many learners and supervisors do not recognise the significance of the progress reviews. Most learners do not understand that the review process is separate from assessment. Some review meetings take place at the learner's desk often in an open plan office with learner's work colleagues in close proximity. Many of the review meetings do not involve the learner's supervisor. Records on the training in equality of opportunity and health and safety are often superficial. Copies of the review documents are not always given to the learner and the supervisor. However, there is some good practice where slow progress is being effectively dealt with through the review process.

23. Planning of training and individual learning is insufficient in administration and customer service. Training for the learners' qualification is insufficiently structured, and there is no coherent system for planning and co-ordinating training. Some employers are not sufficiently involved in the training and assessment. Some employers do not understand the requirements of the learners' framework sufficiently to relate training to the qualification. Assessment records sometimes include reference to training but these are transient and often have little effect on the learners' progress towards framework

completion. Long-term target dates are set at the beginning of the programme and refer to the end of funding. They do not take into account the learners' experience or prior achievement and are not revised during progress reviews. The provider has recognised this weakness and is piloting new documents to improve the planning of training.

24. Identification and planning of support for additional learning needs is ineffective in customer service. A basic skills diagnostic initial assessment is available, but it is not carried out for most employed learners. There are no assessors with specific qualifications to provide support for learners with literacy or numeracy needs, or for those with dyslexia.

Leadership and management

25. Key Training has particularly effective communications that involve staff in business decision-making. All staff have access to a good company intranet, which contains much useful information about programmes, some useful resources and a full set of standard company documents, together with instructions on their use. Managers and directors maintain very effective communications with staff throughout the organisation. A very popular and productive directors' road show involves staff meeting with directors to discuss company performance and draw up a collective analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their centre and the company as a whole. At the start of each business year, the company holds a residential conference for all staff, where self-assessment activity and development planning takes place.

26. Data is used well to manage performance. Managers across all centres have access to a good range of data which is prepared centrally and distributed frequently. Managers and staff routinely review performance data on retention, success and achievement rates. Targets are discussed and agreed annually for each assessor. In most cases, targets have been met in the past year. Where assessors have fallen behind their target, managers have arranged support or, in some cases, have changed assessor allocations to improve the learners' performance. Senior managers frequently review centre and national data to identify areas of weakness and rectify shortcomings.

27. Staff development is good and staff are well supported by Key Training. There is an extensive monthly programme of company-wide training and development courses which is circulated to all staff. There are good opportunities for staff to request training through the appraisal scheme or, between appraisals, by discussion with managers. There are good processes for staff induction, job-shadowing, mentoring, and succession planning across the company. Staff turnover is satisfactory nationally, but high in some locations. Many staff have received good support in the form of flexible working patterns to accommodate domestic or other responsibilities, and have been able to vary their work patterns at times of personal difficulty or illness.

28. Staff fully understand the importance of equality of opportunity in their own work. They are conscious of the need to ensure that learners are not harassed or discriminated against, and monitor this appropriately. Most assessors, particularly in customer service, cover the topic as part of the learners' NVQ work. However, many staff are unaware of some recent legislation and of the detailed responsibilities of trainers for their learners.

29. Key Training has a well-established and particularly comprehensive system to collect feedback. Surveys are carried out on an annual basis using good questionnaires that have

been developed to focus on the learning process. The surveys are given to learners to complete in their own time and they are returned for central analysis at head office by post. This ensures confidentiality. Return rates are high and have increased from the previous year. Analysis is particularly thorough, giving statistical data nationally and at a local centre level. Comparisons are made each year and sometimes over three years.

30. Key Training has a participative and effective self-assessment process. All centres produce an annual centre self-assessment report. All centre staff are involved and take the process seriously. Discussions of quality improvement and self-assessment take place at weekly centre staff meetings and there is a mature attitude to the process that encourages the identification of weaknesses as well as strengths. The effective judgements made on performance include comparisons with national data, although some national data reflects poor achievement. As well as a national development plan, there are individual centre development plans. These are reviewed and updated several times each year. The current report is easy to understand, well presented and owned by staff.

31. The company does not have an effective strategy to deal with additional learning needs. While a basic skills diagnostic initial assessment is used for learners who are placed in employment, those learners who are already employed receive no assessment. Many learners do not have their needs identified in a timely fashion. Often needs are only recognised when learners have difficulties achieving some element of their programme. None of the staff are trained in basic skills support, and those who are being trained have no clear strategies to improve learners' skills. The provider partially recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report.

32. There is insufficient reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Most learners have a satisfactory basic knowledge of equality of opportunity, much of which is based on previous experience or training. Most learners cannot recall the topic being covered in detail at induction. Few have easy access to reference material. The topic is covered in reviews and until recently this was only a check of whether the learner was having problems at work. Assessors now use standard prompts to explore the topic in a little more depth, but many assessors still do not use the opportunity to extend or improve their learners' genuine understanding of the topic and their responsibilities.

33. Key Training has incomplete quality assurance arrangements to cover the sharing of good practice and the observation of key training processes. The observation of training processes is not complete. Key Training has produced a standard document for all centres, which is used for observing training sessions. The introduction was not supported by staff training to ensure a consistent approach in its use. Observation has not yet been extended to reviews or the initial assessment process.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective communications involving staff in business decision-making
- good use of data to manage performance
- good staff development and support
- good collection, analysis and use of feedback to promote continuous improvement

- participative and effective self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- ineffective strategy to deal with additional learning needs
- insufficient reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity
- some incomplete quality assurance arrangements

Preparation for life and work

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 2

Strengths

- good support for learners with poor numeracy skills
- good involvement of employers
- good use of feedback to improve the programme

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning of learning and monitoring of progress

Business administration and law

Customer service

Grade 3

Strengths

- good development of learners' personal and vocational skills
- good assessment practice
- effective action to improve achievement rates

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning of individual learning
- ineffective identification and planning of support for additional learning needs

Administration

Grade 3

Strengths

- particularly good progression and development by learners
- good training workshops
- very effective assessment process
- good employers and work placements

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- poor review process

- insufficient planning of training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT KEY TRAINING LTD:

- the good variety of enjoyable work
- motivating and encouraging assessors
- the levels of support
- learning while working
- gaining a qualification

WHAT LEARNERS THINK KEY TRAINING LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of training workshops
- the learners' understanding of programme structure
- the time available for learners to complete tasks
- employers' understanding of programmes

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- particularly effective communications involving staff in business decision-making
- good use of data to manage performance
- good staff development and support
- good collection, analysis and use of feedback to promote continuous improvement
- participative and effective self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- ineffective strategy to deal with additional learning needs
- insufficient reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity
- some incomplete quality assurance arrangements

34. Key Training has particularly effective communications that involve staff in business decision-making. There is an appropriate range of meetings across the company, and these are well recorded, with minutes of meetings disseminated to staff at all centres. Centre staff meetings are well focused on learners and their progress and needs. Area-based assessor meetings and national internal verifier meetings allow the sharing of good practice. In centres in the north of the country, there is good use of company laptop computers to improve the use of ICT and enhance communications by e-mail. All staff have access to a good company intranet, which contains useful information about programmes, some useful resources and a full set of standard company documents, together with instructions on their use. Managers and directors maintain very effective communications with staff throughout the organisation. A very popular and productive directors' road show takes place at least annually. Staff meet with directors to discuss company performance and future direction, drawing up a collective analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their centre and the company as a whole. Actions in the development plans for the company and aspects of its strategy derive from such planning and review events. At the start of each business year the company holds a residential conference for all staff, at which self-assessment activity and development planning take place. Throughout the company, staff have a good understanding of the company's aims and feel that they have made a contribution to its future direction.

35. Data is well used to manage performance. Managers across all centres have access to a good range of data, prepared centrally, and distributed frequently. The data deals with learners' progress, success rates and retention rates, as well as the financial position of their centre and its performance against contract targets. This data is linked to an effective integrated budget and target system that provides good planning and recording of centre progress at a local level. Each centre's business plan information is used well to focus quality improvement activity. Managers and staff routinely review performance data on retention, success and achievement rates. Data on learner completions is used effectively

to review and improve individual assessors' performance and the overall performance of each centre's assessors. Targets are discussed and agreed annually for each assessor. In most cases, targets had been met for the past year. If assessors fall behind their target, managers discuss support requirements and sometimes change the assessor allocation to improve the learners' performance. Senior managers frequently review centre and national data to identify areas of weakness and to rectify shortcomings.

36. Staff development is good and staff are well supported by Key Training. Staff have a good professional development log and have a good annual allocation of days for development. There is an extensive monthly programme of company-wide training and development courses which is circulated, and staff are encouraged to attend. Many of the commercial courses offered by Key Solutions are open to staff and sometimes to learners. In addition, there are good opportunities for staff to request training through the appraisal scheme or, between appraisals, by discussion with managers. A new appraisal scheme involving competency-based assessment of performance is currently being introduced, but it was too early to judge its effect on training and development. Staff feel that their requests for training and development are positively received by managers. Staff are well qualified and have good occupational expertise. When staff need to update their qualifications, for example assessor or verifier awards, they are supported by the company. There are good processes for staff induction, job-shadowing, mentoring, and succession planning across the company. For example, at one centre an assessor who is going on maternity leave is being shadowed over a month by her replacement to ensure continuity for learners. The new chief executive is engaged in a lengthy period of familiarisation and job-shadowing to gain a good understanding of company structures and personnel. Staff turnover is satisfactory nationally, but high in some locations. Many staff have received good support in the form of flexible working patterns to accommodate domestic or other responsibilities, and have been able to vary their work patterns at times of personal difficulty or illness.

37. Key Training's business and strategic planning are satisfactory. The company consults widely with its staff on strategy and maintains an effective control over finances. Managers are well informed and have a good understanding of business processes.

38. The company does not have an effective strategy to deal with additional learning needs. Across centres and areas of learning, there are varying procedures to identify and deal effectively with learners' needs. While a basic skills diagnostic initial assessment is used for learners who are placed in employment, those learners who are already employed have no assessment. Many learners do not have their needs identified in a timely fashion. Often needs are only recognised when learners have difficulty achieving some element of their programme. Many learners who already have key skills qualifications are not given an assessment test to identify their needs. None of the staff are trained to deliver basic skills support, and those who are doing so have no clear strategies to improve learners' skills. The provider partially recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

39. Key Training outlines its approach to equality of opportunity in a satisfactory manner. The main company policy statement was produced in 2000. Although it is now out of date in some minor respects, the general concepts are outlined appropriately. All staff have continuing professional development logs which have a section on the equality of opportunity policy, but in most cases this consists of a simple statement that urges staff to read the policy. Most staff are familiar with the policy. There are appropriate displays for

staff, such as posters explaining the levels of approach to equality, and some displays for learners, which usually are summaries of the policy.

40. There are good guidelines for learners and employers, which have been recently revised. They give clear guidance on the rights and responsibilities of learners, Key Training and employers. The information is now being distributed widely, but it has had limited effect as yet. Equality is discussed at the initial induction. For employed learners this is carried out by Key Training's staff in the workplace in a fairly limited way. For school leavers, equality is part of their off-the-job induction training, and is covered in a variety of ways at different centres. These are some examples of innovative approaches, such as quizzes, explorations of website information, or the use of a wheel to examine aspects of diversity. However, in other centres the induction is a fairly basic session. Key Training has prepared well-written guidelines on how to deal with problems relating to equality of opportunity in the workplace. This is available on the intranet, and as a standard document, but it is only given to learners by a few centres.

41. Staff fully understand the importance of equality of opportunity in their own work. They are conscious of the need to ensure that learners are not subject to harassment or discrimination, and monitor this appropriately. Most assessors, particularly in customer service, cover the topic as part of the learners' NVQ work. However, many staff are unaware of some recent legislation such as the responsibilities required in the Children Act 2004 or the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. Some staff training on equality has been delivered to centre staff by a Key Training director. Centre managers have also arranged some local training or discussion on equality and diversity impact measures. Despite these initiatives, some staff could not recall having received any recent training on equality.

42. Key Training provides staff and learners with good support in a variety of ways. Many staff have received sympathetic assistance at times of illness. Others have had the opportunity to adopt flexible approaches to working at times of personal difficulties. A profoundly deaf staff member has been able to significantly improve her routine contact with learners since the company provided laptop computers for e-mail communication. Many learners have had good support from their assessors to overcome personal problems that affected their learning. This support has mainly been provided by the assessors or through Connexions. In a few instances, other external referral agencies have been used. Key Training celebrates learners' success, particularly where learners have made significant progress to overcome difficulties.

43. Key Training makes satisfactory progress in ensuring equality and diversity in recruitment. Across the country around 10 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups. This proportion varies significantly across the regions, from none in the Northeast to around 35 per cent in Birmingham and London. In most cases the ratio reflects local demographics. Key Training's advertising and recruiting procedures are good, and are either neutral in content or context, or emphasise the company's positive approach to equality of opportunity. The provider's website has some good options to help with accessibility for those with visual impairments or other difficulties. It also has a clear statement on the company's positive approach to respect and integrity. There are a few examples of attempts to improve the widening of participation in training by under-represented groups, but no significant company-wide initiatives. The relative performance of minority ethnic groups is part of frequent business review analysis. This has

identified some locations where achievement and success in gaining employment for minority groups is lower than that expected, and further analysis and action have taken place. The company's self-assessment report recognises that it is making improvements in many areas, but its approach to equality of opportunity remains only satisfactory.

44. Most of the Key Training centres are in city centre sites, with good access for most of the learners. However, most sites have poor accessibility for those with restricted mobility. In some cases, satisfactory alternative arrangements are available for learners who are not able to access centres. Few centres have carried out accessibility audits as yet.

45. There is insufficient reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Most learners have a satisfactory basic knowledge, but much of this is based on previous experience or training. Most learners cannot recall the topic being covered in detail at induction. Few have easy access to reference material. The topic is covered in reviews, but until recently this was only a check of whether the learner had problems at work. Assessors now use standard prompts to explore the topic in a little more depth, but many assessors still do not use the opportunity to extend or improve their learners' understanding of the topic and their responsibilities. Key Training makes satisfactory checks on employers' approaches to equality of opportunity, but does not review detailed policies except at the start of a placement.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

46. Key Training has a well-established and particularly comprehensive system to collect feedback from learners, employers, staff and Connexions. Surveys are carried out on an annual basis using good questionnaires that have been developed to focus on the learning process. Questions have been structured to allow collection of qualitative and quantitative data. For example, participants are encouraged to identify what they feel about Key Training in terms of satisfaction, and to make comments on what they like and dislike. The surveys are given to learners to complete in their own time and they are returned for central analysis at head office by post. This ensures confidentiality. Return rates are high and have increased from the previous year. For learners there was an increase from 53 per cent to 65 per cent, while employers' responses increased from 46 per cent to 53 per cent. The return rates are collated by centre, and improvements and their reasons are noted. Analysis is particularly thorough, giving statistical data nationally and at a local centre level. Comparisons are made each year and sometimes over three years. The analysis of each question includes remarks from learners or employers by local centres. The particularly thorough analysis by the operations director is used for the company's national development plan and individual centre development plans. Information is particularly relevant to the delivery of work-based learning, such as checking if formal reviews take place with learner and employer every 12 weeks. Reasons for missing reviews were examined at centre level. Key Training was already aware of the quality and frequency of the reviews as an issue from audits that had taken place and has revised the review document to one it perceived as more user-friendly. Information from employers gave feedback on assessors, the usefulness of the employer pack and on the general understanding of how training is being delivered. Questions were asked on learners attending workshops and whether the employer felt it helped with their training. Information from the employer survey is being acted upon to improve training. A good survey is also carried out of Connexions staff locally at each centre, with a high 70 per cent return rate. This focuses on the relationship between Key Training and Connexions, including being invited to visit learners in the workplace, learners' understanding of

apprenticeships, the welfare of learners and the likelihood of them gaining qualifications. Staff also complete surveys as part of the annual Investors in People accreditation process. Investors in People is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

47. Key Training has a participative and effective self-assessment process. Judgements are critical and largely accurate. All centres produce an annual assessment report and all centre staff are involved and take the process seriously. Discussions of quality improvement and self-assessment take place at weekly centre staff meetings and there is a mature attitude to the process that encourages the identification of weaknesses as well as strengths. The draft report is then discussed with staff to gain consensus on content and grades before being forwarded to the national office. One centre that had underperformed as there were staffing problems, reflected this in their report and grades. Once the national report has been put together, further consultation with the centres takes place before the report is finalised. In the past, Key Training has used external consultants to validate the final report, but this is no longer needed. The weaknesses identified by each centre are included as a separate area of the report to ensure that they remain at the forefront of development planning. The judgements made on performance include comparisons with national data. They are also supported by data that shows which centres are performing well and those which are not. The self-assessment cycle is well linked with the quality assurance cycle so that timely information is provided. Good development planning arises from the self-assessment report and is a key feature of subsequent reports. As well as a national development plan, there are individual centre development plans. These are reviewed and updated several times each year, when information becomes available. Progress with weaknesses is discussed with staff in each centre. The current report is easy to understand, well presented and is owned by staff. Staff at Key Training are committed to improving the quality of training and there is a three-year upward trend in retention and achievement rates across the company.

48. Internal verification at Key Training is well managed. With the exception of one region, it is planned in advance. Internal verifiers have regular national meetings where they carry out standardisation exercises to ensure consistency at the different centres. Discussions and activities are replicated at centre level. Sampling includes a range of diverse evidence, portfolios and regular observations of assessments in the workplace. Appropriate written and verbal feedback is also given to assessors. New assessors are mentored by more-experienced assessors and undergo more frequent internal verification. New internal verifiers are also mentored by experienced ones. There are examples of poor assessment practice being picked up and rectified through support. External verifier reports are discussed nationally and at centre level. Learners are aware of appeals procedures and know who their internal verifiers are.

49. Key Training has satisfactory audit procedures in place to identify inconsistencies in the completion of learners' paperwork and assessments. Documents for key processes are standardised and controlled across the company. There were some minor problems in two centres where documents were out of date and there were inconsistencies in the completion of documents. Complaints are encouraged and logs are maintained in each centre, showing how they are resolved.

50. Key Training has incomplete quality assurance arrangements for sharing good practice and for the observation of key training processes. Although it has put mechanisms in place

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to manage the sharing of good practice, and there are many examples of it taking place, there are also many examples of good practice not being shared. For example, one centre makes good use of promoting understanding of equality to learners by giving them a series of publications that cover topics such as racial discrimination, which are then discussed. However, some centres do not use a standard booklet that Key Training has produced on equality. One centre carried out staff training using a useful online tool on diversity that a member of staff had used during external training. Although it has been placed on the local centre intranet it has not been more widely shared. Key Training has produced a standard document for all centres for the observation of training sessions. However, this was not supported by staff training to ensure a consistent approach. Although it is being used in centres, it has been implemented with varying degrees of success. Observation has not yet been extended to key training processes such as reviews or the initial assessment process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> Employer training pilot	37	2 2

51. Key Training has 37 learners on literacy and numeracy programmes. Twenty-seven learners are attending numeracy programmes and 10 are attending literacy programmes. They can take national tests for literacy and numeracy up to level 2. Some learners complete a portfolio of work towards their key skill in application of number or communication at level 1 or 2. This programme is provided through the ETP programme for learners in work and aged 19 years and over. Key Training provides this programme through an employer called EDS Limited (EDS). The learners work in EDS's call centre. Key Training administers this programme from its centre in Durham. There are two trainer/assessors and an internal verifier responsible for the delivery and qualifications. The programme lasts for 26 weeks and learners receive training in the workplace in groups for two hours each week. Key training delivered this programme as a pilot between March 2005 and August 2005.

Literacy and numeracy

Grade 2

Strengths

- good support for learners with poor numeracy skills
- good involvement of employers
- good use of feedback to improve the programme

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning of learning and monitoring of progress

Achievement and standards

52. Achievement of numeracy qualifications is satisfactory. During the six-month pilot programme, 47 learners started the numeracy programme, of whom 34 stayed until the end and 27 achieved the qualification. A few learners are completing work towards the achievement of their key skills. Work is of a high standard and relevant to their job role. For example, they work on charts and graphs on performance against work targets.

53. Achievement of literacy qualifications is satisfactory. Of the 45 learners who started the programme, 34 completed it and 31 achieved the qualification. However, some learners achieved a pass after attending only a few learning sessions. Some learners were assessed at level 3 but took the level 2 test and little learning took place. Key Training has now rectified this and current learners are attending programmes that are at the appropriate level for their ability.

54. Attendance at sessions is satisfactory. Some learners find it difficult to attend sessions because of shift patterns, so trainers provide them with exercises to complete at home. Key Training's staff and the employer work closely together to follow up attendance problems.

The quality of provision

55. Support is good for learners who have poor numeracy skills. Two trainers are responsible for supporting learners at sessions and they offer effective support. Trainers regularly check that learners are not experiencing any difficulties and provide clear, concise information in a way that learners can understand. Numeracy sessions are fun and learners find them interesting and remember the skills that they have learnt. For example, a game of bingo is used to introduce number patterns. Learners comment on how much their numeracy skills have improved.

56. Session planning is satisfactory, although some of the earlier session plans did not include detailed objectives and a range of activities to meet the needs of different abilities. Literacy sessions do not always meet the needs of learners with higher skills levels. Key Training took over this contract at short notice and kept the learners on the programme level that had previously been identified through basic skills initial screening. However, after further diagnosis of skills, it realised that many learners were attending the wrong programme level. Key Training has rectified this for the new learners.

57. The process of initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners complete a diagnostic assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. They have a satisfactory introduction to the learning programme that was jointly developed by Key Training and the employer. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their programme content, rights and responsibilities.

58. Learning resources are satisfactory. There is an appropriate range of paper-based resources including hand-outs and textbooks. The internet is used regularly for relevant literacy, numeracy and key skills resources. As the programme has developed, more resources have been gathered and used.

59. Planning of learning and recording of learners' progress are inadequate. Individual learning plans were introduced late in the pilot programme. All plans show that learners are working towards level 2, even though some learners started at entry level 3. Targets on each plan are the same or similar, and some targets are very vague. Learning plans do not reflect the learners' starting point or key learning objectives identified from their initial assessment. It is not possible for staff to measure the learners' progress effectively over a period of time. A review is completed for each learner during their programme but comments are vague. For example, on one review a target recommended individual support, but gave no comment on the nature, frequency or timing of such support. The employer is not involved in the review process, although it receives some feedback on its progress through regular contact with Key Training's staff.

Leadership and management

60. The employer is fully involved in the programme. Senior managers from the employer work closely with Key Training's staff to provide the service for learners. At the beginning of the pilot, meetings were held every week between the two parties to plan and

implement the programme. As the programme developed, meetings were held on a monthly basis. Meetings are well recorded and are effective in identifying and implementing strategies to improve the programme, such as improving attendance and the content of induction. Communication is good and there are regular informal discussions on learners' progress and attendance. Data on achievement and retention is frequently shared with the employer.

61. Feedback is used well to help the provider and employer improve the programme. Key Training's staff and the employer have worked closely together, using feedback from learners and a review of the pilot programme to identify and implement changes. It was identified that some learners were leaving the programme early because it was not what they expected. A more detailed induction has now been devised and all new learners have had this induction. Group sizes are smaller and more individual support can now be provided. Learners are now only recruited for the programme if they are below level 2. Plans are in place to introduce milestones for learners to work towards. The new programme has just started so it has not been possible to measure the effect of the milestones.

62. Arrangements for assessment, moderation and internal verification are satisfactory. Written feedback on performance is provided to assessors. Most qualifications are externally marked.

63. Staff have relevant expertise and qualifications. Training and assessment staff have achieved their key skills in application of number and communications at level 3 and have satisfactory training qualifications. All assessors and verifiers are appropriately qualified.

64. The pilot programme was not included in the self-assessment report. However, many of the weaknesses identified at inspection have already been identified by the provider and plans are in place to rectify them. Some previous weaknesses that the provider had identified have already been rectified.

65. Observation of training sessions took place frequently at the beginning of the pilot programme. A standard company form is used and feedback is shared with the trainer. Observation records are satisfactory but do not include enough examples of how criteria were or were not met. There is currently no system in place to identify how frequently observations should take place.

Business administration and law**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		3
Apprenticeships for young people	358	3
Employer training pilot	20	3
NVQ training for young people	30	3
Customer service		3
Apprenticeships for young people	211	3
NVQ training for young people	13	3

66. There are 408 learners working towards business administration qualifications, of whom 99 are advanced apprentices, 259 are apprentices, 30 are working towards an NVQ, and 20 are on an ETP programme. All advanced apprentices and nearly all apprentices are employed. Learners are either matched with employers that offer them a job or are referred to the provider by their existing employer.

67. There are 61 learners working towards management qualifications, of whom two are advanced apprentices, 36 are apprentices and 11 are working towards an NVQ. There are also 12 on the ETP programme. Management was not included in the inspection.

68. There are 224 learners working towards a customer service qualification. They are registered with centres in Birmingham, Durham, Hampshire, Ipswich, London, Northamptonshire, Swindon, Tyne and Wear, and Wakefield. Across all centres there are 62 advanced apprentices and 149 apprentices. A further 13 are working towards an NVQ at level 2. Most learners are employed in office environments, while others are in retail outlets and call centres, with large and small employers. Assessors usually visit the learners once a month for assessment, and reviews are scheduled to be completed every 12 weeks. Most staff are qualified, and some are working towards the assessor or internal verifiers awards.

Customer service**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good development of learners' personal and vocational skills
- good assessment practice
- effective action to improve achievement rates

Weaknesses

- inadequate planning of individual learning
- ineffective identification and planning of support for additional learning needs

Achievement and standards

69. Learners develop good personal and vocational skills. Most of the learners are in work placements that operate good commercial practices enabling the development of effective

customer service skills. Learners gain a good range of interpersonal skills. Key Training offers a range of good off-the-job workshops to further develop personal and vocational skills. However, attendance varies and learners in two regions do not have access to workshops. Most of the employers offer extensive on- and off-the-job training to develop the learners' work skills with a specific focus on customer service. Many learners make significant progress in their job roles, and some take on additional responsibilities at work. Learners are able to use their new knowledge and skills in the workplace to improve their prospects. Many learners have progressed in the workplace through promotion and from apprenticeship to advanced apprenticeship programmes and beyond. For example, one learner has progressed onto a degree programme after completing the advanced apprenticeship. Learners are well motivated and confident and employers value their contributions. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory, and good in some cases. Key skills are developed through appropriate work and assignments.

70. For some learners there was initial slow progress but this is now satisfactory. Achievement at some centres is still low but improvements have been made across all centres. Framework achievement for advanced apprentices was 30 per cent in 2001-02, for 2002-03 it is currently 51 per cent with one learner still in learning, and for 2003-04 is currently 25 per cent with 21 learners still on programme. Apprenticeship achievement was 27 per cent in 2001-02, 38 per cent in 2002-03, and for 2003-04 is currently 44 per cent with 11 learners still in learning. Retention is satisfactory overall, and good in some centres.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	50		53		41		46	100									
Retained*	0		13		20		21	46									
Successfully completed	3		13		21		14	30									
Still in learning	40		21		1		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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	240		205		168	100	90	100									
Retained*	34		95		84	50	37	41									
Successfully completed	34		90		64	38	24	27									
Still in learning	138		11		0	0	0	0									

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	13		1	100	17	100											
Retained*	0		1	100	8	47											
Successfully completed	0		1	100	8	47											
Still in learning	13		0	0	0	0											

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

The quality of provision

71. Assessment practice is good. Learners are assessed in the workplace at least every four weeks by assessors from Key Training, and in many cases even more frequently depending on individual learner requirements. Assessments visits are planned flexibly in advance to ensure learners' and employers' needs are met. There are many examples where assessors have visited learners out of office hours, including evenings and weekends, to ensure that the maximum amount of relevant workplace evidence is collected and assessed. There is good flexibility also, to meet shift and other work patterns. Assessments are well recorded and most evidence is clearly cross-referenced to the qualification. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of the programme and use NVQ standards when completing work. Overall, a good variety of assessment methods are used, including the use of personal recording machines, observation, questioning, witness testimonies and case studies. However, in two centres there is an over-reliance on observation as an assessment method.

72. Very effective short-term action-planning takes place as part of the assessors' visits. Learners are set realistic targets to agreed timescales which take into account individual needs and workplace requirements. These targets are detailed and well recorded on an assessment record which is left with the learner. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of what is to be achieved and how it relates to their qualification. Short-term targets are effectively reviewed at the next assessor visit and comprehensive feedback is given to the learner. Most learners confirm that they are challenged by the work and appreciate the fact that they can contact their assessor at any time by telephone or e-mail. Learners state that they are making progress towards their framework because of the support given by their assessor.

73. Arrangements for dealing with key skills are satisfactory. Work towards key skills and the technical certificate begins at the start of the programme and is seen by learners as an integral part of the qualification. Learners generally have a satisfactory understanding of what they need to do to achieve their key skills.

74. Induction is satisfactory and is generally valued by learners. However, in one region learners have a poor recollection of health and safety and equal opportunities.

75. Resources and learning materials are satisfactory. Physical resources for the off-the-job workshops are good, including ICT equipment.

76. Planning of individual learning is inadequate. Individual learning plans are completed

at the start of programme but they are ineffective. Key Training provides good off-the-job training workshops at some centres around the country, and includes topics such as health and safety and customer service. However, these are not available or accessible for all learners. Training and coaching is provided by assessors and employers separately in the workplace, but there is little co-ordination between the two. Some of the employer training is very relevant to the learners' programmes, but it is not being captured, observed or recorded. Reviews of learners' should take place every 13 weeks to involve the learner, assessor and employer. However, they are poorly planned and many are completed after the quarterly target. Specific progress is not evaluated at the review and there is no medium-term target-setting. Long-term targets are set at the beginning of the programme and refer to the end of funding date. They do not take into account the learners' experience or prior achievement and are not revised during progress reviews. Employers are not adequately prepared for the review visit, they rarely take part in the discussion and most just sign the paperwork. In most cases, copies of the review are not left with the learner or the employer. Employers do not sufficiently understand the programme and in many cases are not giving learners sufficient time to work towards their qualification.

77. Identification and planning of support for additional learning needs is ineffective. A basic skills diagnostic initial assessment is available, but it is not carried out for most of the employed learners, even when they have low general certificate of secondary education grades. For some learners, additional learning needs have not been identified at the start of the programme, but have been identified later through slow progress or poor work. In one case, a learner's additional support needs were not identified and they struggled to achieve the key skills tests. None of the assessors have specific qualifications to support those learners with literacy or numeracy needs or those with dyslexia. Key Training's assessors provide some useful support, but this is only developed as and when necessary. Examples of support given include extra workplace visits, purchase of specialist equipment such as telephone headsets, and use of alternative assessment methods.

Leadership and management

78. Effective action has been taken to improve the achievement rates. Over the past three years, the provider has identified weaknesses in the provision, particularly in the poor achievement rates at its centres around the country. Many changes have been introduced in the working practices and procedures, and most of these have been effective in improving the quality of provision each year. At one centre, a member of staff has been given specific responsibility for retention. At another centre, underperforming assessors were identified and action was taken to support and improve their performance or replace them with other staff. Across most centres there is now a very effective monthly meeting between managers and staff to monitor performance. The internal verification system is thorough and includes effective standardisation meetings to share good practice. Learners' progress records and the assessors' performance records, are effectively used to monitor the learners' progress towards achievement. Targets are continually reviewed and action is taken when required. The provider has also introduced a procedure to identify learners who can be fast-tracked through their programme and some have made rapid progress towards achievement. These actions have helped to improve retention and achievement rates significantly, although there are still some significant variances between centres.

79. Communications are generally satisfactory. Internal communication is good in all centres. Staff have a good understanding of the aims and objectives of the organisation. They work effectively in their teams, with regular meetings to discuss concerns and agree

actions. However, while there are good working relationships with employers, the communication with them is sometimes less than satisfactory, particularly relating to their involvement in their learners' programmes.

80. Staff are well qualified and have appropriate occupational experience. They keep records of their continual professional development which show a wide range of development activities.

81. Most learners have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity. It is covered at induction and their understanding is checked during their training. Learners work with good employers that have relevant policies and procedures. In some cases, learners' understanding is not sufficiently checked during reviews, although recent action has been taken to deal with this shortfall.

82. There are some incomplete aspects of quality assurance. Although assessments are observed, other processes such as induction and reviews are not observed to identify good or poor practice.

83. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Individual centres produce their own local report, which feeds into the national report. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were also identified by inspectors. Development plans have been used to identify and deal with weaknesses.

Administration

Grade 3

Strengths

- particularly good progression and development by learners
- good training workshops
- very effective assessment process
- good employers and work placements

Weaknesses

- inadequate initial assessment
- poor review process
- insufficient planning of training

Achievement and standards

84. Learners' progression and development is particularly good. Employers and learners have recognised significant improvements. These include skills in time management, telephone techniques, computer applications and increasing confidence. Learners' portfolios are well presented and demonstrate work of a high standard. Many of the learners gain additional qualifications and skills through employer training. For example, one learner has completed a secretarial course during the programme. At some centres, learners are encouraged to take higher key skills and higher-level technical certificates. Learners who attend workshops receive certificates which they value. Most learners take on additional responsibilities in their jobs and a significant number are promoted while on programme. Progression from level 2 to level 3 is good, and some learners progress to

higher education. Where learners remain at the same level they are encouraged to gain further appropriate qualifications.

85. Achievement rates are satisfactory overall and have improved significantly over the past three years. The rate of leavers completing the full framework has increased from 27 per cent in 2002-03 to 34 per cent in 2003-04 and to 45 per cent in 2004-05. However, there are some centres where achievement is still poor. Overall, retention rates are also satisfactory. Learners' progress is generally satisfactory and the proportion of those making slow progress has reduced significantly over the past three years. A level 2 leadership programme in London has achieved very poor results and is being closed. There are currently 11 learners on this programme

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%									
Number of starts	41		33		71		58		152	100							
Retained*	0		1		22		43		56	37							
Successfully completed	0		1		22		23		34	22							
Still in learning	41		29		22		7		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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%									
Number of starts	40		244		402		483		527	100							
Retained*	0		171		151		233		213	40							
Successfully completed	0		16		141		178		133	25							
Still in learning	40		191		26		2		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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	6		15		33												
Retained*	0		0		18												
Successfully completed	0		0		15												
Still in learning	6		11		3												

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		34		4		10	100	56	100						
Retained*	0		6		2		9	90	22	39						
Successfully completed	0		6		2		9	90	18	32						
Still in learning	3		26		1		0	0	0	0						

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

The quality of provision

86. Training workshops are good. Key Training offers a structured programme of relevant courses at most centres throughout the year. Of the seven sessions observed by inspectors, six were good and one was satisfactory. Learners and employers receive a copy of the programme and agree appropriate training with their assessor. Courses include key skills training, presentation skills, health and safety, storage and filing systems, telephone techniques and time management. Training is well planned to meet learning needs. A variety of activities are used to maintain the learners' interest. Tutors check learning by regular questioning and there are quizzes and questionnaires to consolidate learning. In a health and safety session, activities were constantly changing to maintain interest and momentum. A video was used to illustrate the power of fire and this was followed by a group discussion. The session included aspects of risk assessment, where the trainer used a box with a tape recorder hidden inside to make odd noises. Learners were asked to debate how much money they would accept to open the box and risk injury. This demonstrated the basis and thought processes behind decisions about risk assessment very well. Learners complete an evaluation at the end of every training session which is sent to the employer. However, a significant number of learners do not have access to these workshops.

87. Assessment processes are very effective. Assessors arrange regular monthly visits flexibly, to meet learner and employer requirements. Assessors use a full range of assessment methods and record their decisions. Action-planning is a key part of the process and assessors agree short-term targets as a key driver for the programme. Portfolios have a wide range of evidence and are cross-referenced well. Employers add their comments and sign off work tasks with witness testimonies. Employers often manage learners' work so that evidence can be collected and competences gained. At each assessment, assessors check progress on actions from the last plan and discuss gaps in current evidence collection. Action points are detailed and give learners a clear plan of how to move onto their next objectives. However, in some cases, assessors give too little responsibility to learners when referencing their evidence. Assessors offer very good support to learners, this is particularly evident when learners have to change employers.

88. Employers and work placements are good. Key training has a good working relationship with a wide range of employers. Learners are carefully selected to attend company interviews and are well matched to employers. The provider ensures that work activities are appropriate to the qualification and learners are able to generate good evidence in support of their NVQ. Learners are often given additional responsibilities to cover NVQ requirements and job rotation is organised when appropriate. Most employers are enthusiastic and committed to the support of their learners and allow time during work

for them to complete their portfolios. One manager meets with her learners every fortnight to review action plans to ensure that the learners have the help they need before the next assessment visit. Learners work in well-resourced, up-to-date office environments, often as part of a supportive and experienced work team. Many employers offer additional training opportunities through in-company training programmes. For example, one learner is about to take an insurance examination.

89. Overall, induction is satisfactory, although it varies across the country. Learners generally have appropriate knowledge and understanding of programme requirements and administrative arrangements.

90. Resources are satisfactory, with appropriate learning materials, well-motivated and experienced staff, and good accommodation. However, this varies between centres. In some centres, computers are out of date and have no access to the internet. Not all centres have suitable materials for individual coaching sessions. Some centres do not provide suitable formal group training sessions.

91. Initial assessment is inadequate. Nationally recognised assessment tools, including a diagnostic assessment of key skills, are available, but some learners do not have a full initial assessment. Those with acceptable qualification levels do not take any diagnostic assessment. Learners with additional learning needs such as dyslexia are not always identified at an early stage in their programme. The results of initial assessment are not used to plan individual training. Learners who could achieve their qualification early are not identified and are not targeted as potential accelerated achievers. Additional learning support is inconsistent. It is often reactive rather than planned from an effective initial assessment. However, there is some good initial assessment practice and, where a need has been identified during the programme, some individual support has been effective. For example, a company which employs two learners who have hearing impairment has employed an interpreter to support the learners during assessment visits.

92. The progress review process is poor. Many learners and supervisors do not recognise the significance of review meetings. They often take place at the end of an assessment session, and most learners do not understand that the review process is separate from assessment. Some review meetings take place at the learner's desk, often in an open plan office with learner's work colleagues in close proximity. Many do not involve the learner's supervisor. The review process concentrates on the progress of the learner and places insufficient emphasis on forward planning. They seldom set timed, measurable and challenging medium-term targets. The review process uses documents which do not allow adequate recording of the meeting. Recording of equality of opportunity and health and safety is often superficial. Targets for unit completion are not related to the individual learner's capability or progress. Copies of the review documents are not always given to the learner and the supervisor. The supervisor does not always have a training plan so that the training can be focused on learners' progression. Completed review dates are often not recorded on learners' files. Sometimes reviews are not timely. However, inspectors identified some good practice where slow progress is being effectively dealt with through the review process where longer-term target-setting has facilitated faster progress.

93. Planning of training is insufficient. Training for the learners' qualification is insufficiently structured, and there is no coherent system for planning and co-ordinating training. Key Training's overall plan records the units a learner will complete to satisfy the framework

requirements, the assessment methods which will be used, and sometimes identifies where additional work experience will be required to fulfil the qualification's criteria. However, there is no system for recording additional training needs or training opportunities and how these will be matched with the learners' programme. Some employers are not sufficiently involved in the learners' training and assessment. Most employers provide good training which relates to the learners' job role but some do not understand the requirements of the framework sufficiently to relate this training to the learners' qualification. Most supervisors provide good support and coaching for their learners in their job role, but some do not have sufficient knowledge of the qualifications to help them progress. Assessors and employers do not often co-ordinate the on- and off-the-job training. In some centres there is insufficient off-the-job training, and some learners have insufficient formal training to support the elements of the framework. For some learners the learning process is assessment driven, and there is no formal guided study. Assessment records sometimes include reference to training and training requirements but often these have little impact on the learners' progress towards framework completion. The provider has recognised this weakness and is piloting new documenters with the purpose of improving the planning of training. Inspectors identified some good use of session planning and learning diaries and found a few examples of effective planning of training.

Leadership and management

94. The programme is generally well managed. Internal communications are good, with regular and effective meetings. Continuing professional development is encouraged and assessors are committed, supportive and experienced. They have good working relationships with employers and learners.

95. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory with regular and useful standardisation meetings. Good use of data allows the assessors' caseloads to be monitored at monthly internal verification meetings.

96. The learners' knowledge of equality and diversity is satisfactory, but it is not appropriately reinforced at reviews. The inclusion of equality and diversity training at induction is not memorable. Learners and employers appreciate and value the presentation evenings where learners' success is celebrated.

97. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the action-planning is relevant. The assessment was evaluative and accurate and broadly recognised the strengths and weaknesses identified in the inspection.

