

INSPECTION REPORT

Employment Unit

21 April 2006



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
- 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.

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*

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Employment Unit is part of Sheffield City Council's children's and young people's services directorate. It was formed in 2000 and provides a wide range of training, including Workstep, work-based learning for young people, the environment task force and voluntary sector options of New Deal, learning net and further education-funded provision. Employment Unit also works in partnership with individual secondary schools as part of the 14-16 vocational agenda. Employment Unit operates from four sites in Sheffield and provides work-based learning for 213 learners in health, public services and care, agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and construction, planning and the built environment, information and communications technology (ICT), and business administration and law. It also offers entry to employment (E2E) programmes for learners with additional learning and social needs. Employment Unit has approximately 100 staff, of whom 90 work full time.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The provision is good in health, public services and care, and agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and preparation for life and work. The provision is satisfactory in construction, planning and the built environment, ICT, and business administration and law.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process adequately involves staff, learners and employers. The self-assessment report is critical and evaluative enough. There was good correlation between inspectors' findings and those in the self-assessment report, although some of the aspects considered to be strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** It has acted to improve the provision, and achievement rates have gone up and are now at least satisfactory in all areas of learning. The monitoring of learners' progress is good and the observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Internal verification is thorough and takes place frequently.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR EMPLOYMENT UNIT:

- increase the timely progress of learners
- improve the outdoor construction training resources at the Sheaf Training Centre
- increase construction learners' understanding of health and safety
- improve the effectiveness of the learners' reviews
- improve the sharing of best practice in teaching and learning

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- improve the gender balance in participation across all areas of learning
- further promote equality of opportunity to the learners
- establish a coherent quality improvement process

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Health, public services and care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Early years</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	86	2	

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Horticulture</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	19	2	

Construction, planning and the built environment			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Construction crafts</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	41	3	

Information and communications technology			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>ICT for users</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3	

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Employability training</i>		2	
Entry to Employment	15	2	

Business administration and law		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Administration</i> Apprenticeships for young people	30	3 3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. Health, public services and care, and agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and construction, planning and the built environment, ICT, preparation for life and work, and business administration and law were inspected, reported on and graded. The retail and commercial enterprise area of learning was not reported on or graded separately, but contributed evidence that was used to support the inspectors' key findings. Similarly, the subcontracting arrangements for the further education provision were examined and contributed to the judgements on Employment Unit's leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	9
Number of inspection days	29
Number of learners interviewed	74
Number of staff interviewed	59
Number of employers interviewed	18
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	30

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **Learners on E2E programmes make good progress**, moving onto apprenticeship programmes in early years care, construction and horticulture. Achievement of qualifications on short courses such as food hygiene is also good.
7. Learners' work and their practical skills are at least satisfactory in all areas of learning and are good on the E2E programme.
8. **Learners' achievement in horticulture and ICT is good.** In early years care, E2E and business administration it is satisfactory. **Some horticulture learners are achieving their technical certificate early.**
9. There has been an improvement in business administration learners' performance since 2004. For apprentices, the overall success rates rose from 14 per cent in 2003-04 to 26 per cent in 2004-05. So far in 2005-06, the framework completion rate is 59 per cent.
10. **Learners' motivation and confidence increases** during their programmes. Their teamwork and communication skills also improve.

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11. Some learners in business administration, early years care and ICT are making slow progress. Learners in horticulture are slow to build their portfolios.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	0	3	0	0	3
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	0	1	1	0	2
Construction, planning and the built environment	0	0	2	0	2
Preparation for life and work	0	1	2	0	3
Business administration and law	0	1	1	0	2
Total	0	6	6	0	12

12. **In early years care and E2E, teaching and learning are good**, and in all other areas of learning they are satisfactory. **However, teaching in E2E is not sufficiently planned.**

13. Assessment is satisfactory in all areas of learning, and **literacy and numeracy support is particularly good on the E2E programme.**

14. **Learners have frequent and very thorough progress reviews.** However, **in construction, target-setting during reviews is ineffective** and **in ICT there are some unsatisfactory reviews and short-term action-planning.**

15. Training programmes meet the needs of the learners in the E2E programme particularly well. Learners try out various skills and vocations before deciding what is the best area for them.

16. **Learners in horticulture and construction progress well** into employment and further education.

17. **Learners are well supported by employers and tutors.** Employers provide good practical skills training in the workplace, and additional training and staff development. Staff work sensitively with learners, offering individual support and encouraging them to succeed.

18. **Learners on construction programmes have insufficient understanding of their responsibility for health and safety.** Staff do not use progress reviews effectively to develop the learners' understanding of these issues.

Leadership and management

19. Employment Unit has developed **successful partnerships in the local community** to promote education, training and job opportunities.

20. **Strategic planning is good.** Employment Unit's priorities are to provide regeneration and lifelong learning in the community.

21. The **good performance management systems** have improved success rates across all areas of learning. Staff meet learners individually to set targets and review their

performance.

22. All programmes are well managed and managers set a clear direction that has led to improvements in the quality of training across all areas of learning. The subcontracted provision is managed well. Employment Unit ensures that the external providers have the appropriate quality improvement systems. There is ongoing monitoring of the subcontracted provision.

23. The use of data is satisfactory. Data is used to set improvement targets, but it is not yet used to analyse the performance of learners with specific learning and social needs.

24. **Arrangements to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are good in E2E and early years care**, and satisfactory in all other areas of learning.

25. Health and safety monitoring is satisfactory. Employment Unit monitors all provider and employer sites before the learners are placed.

26. There is good communication through team meetings and through informal daily contact. However, the action points from meetings are not always reviewed at the next meeting.

27. All staff are qualified or are working towards appropriate assessor or trainer qualifications. They also attend training events to enhance their teaching skills. **ICT staff are well qualified and experienced.**

28. Resources in most areas of learning are satisfactory. **In construction, the practical outdoor training resources are poor.**

29. Employment Unit has **good initiatives to widen participation** among learners from deprived areas in the community, those who have little or no prior achievement, and learners from minority ethnic groups.

30. The provider has identified a gender imbalance in learners' participation in some areas of learning. Managers are dealing with this by targeting learners in the community and improving the organisation's marketing materials.

31. **Employment Unit promotes equality of opportunity very effectively at management level.** There is a comprehensive equality of opportunity policy which is reviewed by a dedicated team in the organisation. Staff promote dignity and respect, and during award ceremonies the provider celebrates the learners' achievements. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, although some tutors do not reinforce the topic sufficiently.

32. Employment Unit has implemented a range of improvements in recent years to improve staff and learners' motivation. Success rates are now better. The quality assurance framework is well designed, but the policy and quality statement have not been updated in recent years. There is little evidence of horticulture tutors sharing good practice. **The quality improvement strategy is insufficiently coherent** to identify areas of good and poor practice and use them to improve standards. Audit procedures do not take sufficient account of the quality assurance system.

33. Staff are adequately involved in the self-assessment process, identifying strengths and weaknesses for their areas of learning.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective partnership arrangements
- effective performance management to improve success rates
- good initiatives to widen participation
- very effective promotion of equality of opportunity at management level

Weaknesses

- insufficiently coherent quality improvement process

Health, public services and care

Early years

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- particularly effective learner progress reviews
- good support for learners from provider and employers
- good management of childcare programmes

Weaknesses

- slow progress by some learners

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Horticulture

Strengths

- good framework achievement
- early achievement of technical certificates
- good learning support for learners from provider and employers

Weaknesses

- slow portfolio-building process
- insufficient employer awareness of NVQ

Construction, planning and the built environment

Construction crafts

Strengths

- good progress by learners
- good level of progression into further education
- good specialist and motivational support for learners

Weaknesses

- ineffective target-setting in learners' progress reviews
- poor practical training resources at one training centre
- insufficient understanding of health and safety by learners

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- good achievements by apprentices
- well-qualified and experienced staff
- particularly well-structured provision

Weaknesses

- slow progress by learners on the NVQ element of the framework
- some unsatisfactory progress reviews and short-term action-planning

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- good progression
- broad range of activities and projects to meet the learners' needs
- good literacy and numeracy support

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of teaching and learning

Business administration and law

Administration

Strengths

- significant improvement in learners' performance
- rigorous assessment and progress reviews
- good involvement of employers in supporting learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress by some learners
- inadequate arrangements for mentoring new staff in teaching and training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT UNIT:

- the support - 'we get treated with respect'
- the classes - they are better than school
- the staff - 'they are very helpful, friendly and supportive'
- 'I am really enjoying the programme and find it useful in my job'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK EMPLOYMENT UNIT COULD IMPROVE:

- the quality of the training - 'sometimes it is boring'
- 'more information for my boss on what the course involves'
- 'a vending machine at the Sheaf Training Centre'
- 'a canteen facility at the AVEC building'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- particularly effective partnership arrangements
- effective performance management to improve success rates
- good initiatives to widen participation
- very effective promotion of equality of opportunity at management level

Weaknesses

- insufficiently coherent quality improvement process

34. Employment Unit has particularly effective partnership arrangements that encompass industry, community groups, colleges and higher educational institutions, as well as other work-based providers. Partnerships are developed to meet Sheffield City Council's priorities to promote education, training and job opportunities across the city to meet the regeneration objectives and strategy. These good links have been instrumental in developing a range of provision that targets the most disadvantaged groups in the city. The council has established eight vocational pathways, including business administration, management, catering, construction, health and social care, creative and digital industries, retailing, and motor vehicle. Employment Unit has responded by developing the curriculum in these areas to provide good progression routes within the organisation and with partner organisations. There is innovative curriculum development. For example, the creative and digital centre is developing an extended curriculum to meet the employment needs of local industry. The council has partnerships with major local employers who recruit apprentices from Employment Unit's programmes. The council is one of the largest employers in Sheffield and has increased its recruitment of apprentices from eight to over 150 over a two-year period.

35. Strategic planning is good. Employment Unit's mission statement and key aims support the council's objectives as part of the Children and Young People's Directorate. An annual conference is held for all staff where the business plan is evaluated and the staff contribute their ideas towards the new business plan. The reorganisation of Employment Unit into the Children and Young People's Directorate has placed the provider in a good strategic position to provide better facilities, improve the curriculum offer and contribute to the rationalisation of education for 14 to 19 year olds and adults. The strategic plan for Employment Unit includes further education and European Social Fund funded provision in addition to work-based learning. The work-based element is linked well to the council's key priorities of regeneration and lifelong learning to provide a broad, area-wide curriculum linked to the skills needs and local economic well-being of Sheffield. The 2005-07 development plan sets out specific targets for work-based learning. Good progress has been made in achieving many of the targets.

36. Employment Unit has introduced good performance management systems and its success rates have improved in most areas of learning. Progress and success rates are monitored at all levels through regular meetings that involve all staff. Communication is

good and lines of communication are clear. Line managers hold monthly meetings with individual staff, and these are very effective in reviewing staff's and learners' performance. Learners' progress is carefully monitored and staff intervene in a timely way to offer good support to learners who are falling behind with their programmes. Actions are well recorded and rigorously monitored. Success rates have improved year on year in horticulture, ICT, E2E and business administration programmes.

37. Employment Unit manages resources well to support its priorities. One training centre was closed and the provision transferred to a centre with better facilities and resources for the learners. Resources to support learning are good in all areas apart from construction. At the Sheaf training site, the accommodation is inadequate for practical activities and learners work in a polythene-covered tunnel, which leaks when it is raining and is too hot in hot weather.

38. Subcontracted provision is managed well. Employment Unit has detailed arrangements to ensure that external providers are financially sound and have appropriate quality and management systems. Managers monitor the subcontracted provision in a regular and systematic way. Service-level agreements and contracts set out clear parameters and describe the obligations of the council and the subcontractor.

39. The use of data is satisfactory. Data is used to set improvement targets and to make the judgements in the self-assessment report. All staff are trained to use the new measures for success data and they show a good understanding of it. Management information reports are generated frequently, and managers have access to a variety of reports. However, managers tend to use LSC contract data on recruitment and completions to measure success in different areas of learning. Data is not yet used to analyse the performance of learners with specific learning and social needs.

40. Arrangements to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are good in E2E and early years care, and satisfactory in all other areas. Information, advice and guidance is well established on the E2E programme. On other programmes, advice and guidance are good at recruitment and induction, but less formalised during and at the end of courses.

41. Staff development opportunities are satisfactory. The annual appraisal system effectively reviews staff members' performance against their job role, and identifies training and development needs linked to personal and business planning objectives. Staff are appropriately qualified. Eighty-nine per cent hold a recognised teaching qualification and the remainder are working towards one.

42. Health and safety monitoring of providers' sites and employers' premises is satisfactory. All work placements are monitored before learners take them up, and again at learners' progress reviews. Staff training in health and safety is good. Twelve staff hold a foundation certificate in health and safety in the workplace. All learners take a foundation certificate in health and safety at induction and are made aware of their responsibilities for health and safety. Apprentices and E2E learners are issued with the personal protective equipment they need, free of charge. However, the reinforcement of health and safety for construction apprentices is unsatisfactory and the apprentices do not fully understand their responsibilities.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

43. Employment Unit has good initiatives to widen participation by learners who come from deprived areas within the community, learners who have little or no prior achievement, and learners from minority ethnic groups. Some of these initiatives consist of influencing large investing companies to recruit employees from these deprived areas after the Employment Unit has improved their skills. Other initiatives have been designed to engage unemployed people in a particularly deprived area in the community. Engagement officers approach potential learners through community centres and other local interfaces. Employment Unit trains these learners and helps them to find a job. In the past two years, 150 learners have achieved a qualification and received literacy and numeracy support. Fifty per cent of them gained employment at the end of the programme. A programme designed to enable learners to gain a qualification in construction and obtain a job in the sector has placed 100 people in jobs since April 2005. Forty-seven per cent of these were young people, 33 per cent were from minority ethnic communities and 11 per cent were women.

44. Employment Unit has identified gender imbalances in some areas of learning, such as the shortage of women learners in ICT. Employment Unit's action plan to deal with this includes the use of marketing materials specifically targeting women. These include offering tasters in schools to engage young women, and holding open days in community centres aimed at recruiting learners from community groups.

45. Employment Unit promotes equality of opportunity very effectively at management level. There is a very comprehensive equality of opportunity policy that includes the latest legal updates, and covers behaviour, social identity, discrimination cases and harassment and bullying policies. The provider has a dedicated policy review group whose purpose is to review equality of opportunity issues. Complaints and learners' feedback are analysed by the review group and any problems are promptly rectified.

46. Employment Unit raises learners' awareness of equality of opportunity. Learners receive effective training on equality of opportunity at induction, highlighting the policy, and discussing harassment and bullying. However, some tutors do not reinforce these issues sufficiently during the course. Employment Unit has a particularly effective way of testing learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Learners complete an equality of opportunity questionnaire to measure the increase in their awareness from the start of the programme through to the end. Any feedback on bullying or harassment is investigated by Employment Unit, to identify the sites and learners affected, and to implement a corrective action plan. According to the latest analysis, learners have a good awareness of equality and diversity and they know what to do if they encounter discrimination, harassment or bullying. However, tutors in some areas of learning do not use all the possible opportunities to promote equality of opportunity and diversity to the learners.

47. Employment Unit has a very detailed complaints procedure. All the complaints have been resolved promptly and successfully, and there is evidence that the outcomes have been formally communicated to all involved parties. However, there is no analysis of the complaints over time in order to identify any trends.

48. Employment Unit makes very good use of marketing materials to promote equality and diversity. Leaflets display positive images, and often contain stories of role models. Many information brochures are translated into the different languages spoken in the community.

Classrooms often display promotional leaflets reflecting diversity and equality.

49. The monitoring of employers' and subcontractors' equality and diversity arrangements is good. Employment Unit carries out regular checks on the arrangements, although it does not analyse the results to identify any patterns.

50. Staff have received training on equality of opportunity legislation and on some diversity and cultural issues. However, there is no formal plan for the continued development of staff on equality and diversity issues.

51. The provider has made all reasonable adjustments to its training sites to ensure compliance with legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

52. Since Employment Unit was reorganised within Sheffield City Council, it has made significant improvements in a number of areas of learning. For example, on the E2E programme, quality monitoring processes identified significant shortfalls in learners' satisfaction. Good support has been directed by the quality development officers, and the action plan for improvement has been successfully implemented through the manager and team leader responsible for the programme. The standards of teaching, learning and programme management have been improved.

53. The arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. There are clear processes, sampling plans and observations, and regular standardisation meetings. However, quality assurance processes and internal verification procedures have failed to identify significant issues that have resulted in external verifiers imposing sanctions on two areas of learning. The provider has responded efficiently to remedy the weaknesses and minimise the effect on learners.

54. The quality improvement framework is well designed, but the policy and the quality statement have not been updated for a number of years. Individual centres were allowed some autonomy in the development of their quality improvement framework, and consequently this differed from centre to centre. As part of regular standardisation meetings, staff teams are reviewing key documents and amending procedures to standardise the organisation's approach to quality improvement and ensure that the processes are fit for purpose.

55. The use of feedback is satisfactory. Learners' and employers' views are sought regularly through a range of questionnaires. The results are evaluated and improvements are made.

56. The self-assessment process is inclusive. All staff are involved in developing the report for their area of learning, and the views of learners and employers contribute to the judgements. Success rates and other data are used effectively. The quality improvement team provides good support to programme teams, analysing the evidence used to make judgements, and moderating the findings to ensure consistency and accuracy. There is good correlation between inspectors' findings and those in the self-assessment report.

57. The quality improvement strategy is insufficiently coherent to systematically identify good and poor practice and enable standards to be improved. Audit procedures do not

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take sufficient account of the quality improvement framework. They measure compliance and quality against the key questions in the Common Inspection Framework. The links between the quality improvement framework and the audit strategy are incomplete. The quality improvement team visits the training centres at least once a week, but its planning of which areas are to be scrutinised and evaluated lacks focus. The criteria used to measure the effectiveness of quality processes are vague. The attempt to measure both compliance and quality against each Common Inspection Framework key question minimises the effectiveness of the process. There is insufficient focus on the key processes that will directly affect the learners' experiences. Planning does not take into account the best time to evaluate the processes to ensure maximum benefit to learners if development needs are identified. Staff are observed teaching at least three times a year, either by the quality improvement team or their line managers. Records of observations of teaching and learning are too descriptive, insufficiently evaluative and focus too much on teaching and not enough on whether learning has taken place. They do not identify good practice that can be shared. Observation records by line managers and the quality team are not amalgamated to give a coherent view of the quality of teaching and learning to contribute effectively to the quality improvement process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		2
Apprenticeships for young people	86	2

58. There are 86 learners in Employment Unit's early years care and education programme, of whom 45 are apprentices and 41 are advanced apprentices. All the learners are on work placements in private nurseries, schools, pre-schools or children's centres, and attend off-the-job training at Employment Unit once a week. Trainers incorporate key skills training and support for literacy and numeracy into each training session. There is a choice of training days during the week, and an evening session once a month for those who cannot attend during the day. Trainer/assessors carry out assessment and quarterly progress reviews in the workplace with the full involvement of the employer. In the past, Employment Unit has offered national vocational qualification (NVQ)-only training, but this has been discontinued.

Early years

Strengths

- good teaching and learning
- particularly effective learner progress reviews
- good support for learners from provider and employers
- good management of childcare programmes

Weaknesses

- slow progress by some learners

Achievement and standards

59. It is not possible to publish full qualification success rates as the data from the Provider Performance Report is unreliable. Based on the provider's own data, which inspectors judged to be reasonably accurate, the achievement rate is satisfactory. There has been a steady improvement in the rate of achievement of frameworks in the past three years, particularly for apprentices, and success rates are now satisfactory, with 28 per cent of the learners having achieved the full framework. In the advanced apprenticeship programme, success rates are also satisfactory. Most learners are making good progress. Thirty-seven learners achieved progression awards in December 2005.

60. A minority of learners is making slow progress. Some have passed the date on which they were expected to complete their training. Employed learners who attend training for one evening a month do not receive the same level of support as learners attending during the day. Some have found it hard to balance employment with training, and others have had personal difficulties.

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Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	21	48	55	0	27
		timely	17	18	31	0	15
	2004-05	overall	*	*	*	*	*
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	1	100	49	0	21
		timely	1	100	20	0	7
	2004-05	overall	*	*	*	*	*
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	86	55	48	0	0
		timely	88	36	25	0	0
	2004-05	overall	81	56	53	0	0
		timely	80	48	33	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).
* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

61. Teaching and learning are good, both on and off the job. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives and a variety of teaching techniques. Learners are motivated and respond well. They work collaboratively and share experiences. The standard of work is appropriate for the level of the qualification. At the end of the lessons, learners are asked to reflect on how their learning will change their practice. Schemes of work are well organised, with good handouts and learning materials to support each lesson. Lesson plans are detailed, but they do not clearly identify trainers' and learners' activity, or different teaching and learning techniques. Lessons cover a wide range of subjects and are linked well both to the old and the new qualification standards. Good progress has been made on implementing the new standards, but there is further work to be done. Learners attend weekly training sessions, which include NVQ training, literacy and numeracy, key skills, and time for individual work on portfolios with effective support from the trainers. Some employed advanced apprentices attend twice a month for an evening session on their NVQ and key skills. Learners develop good skills in the workplace.

62. The teaching accommodation is very good. The main base room has attractive and educational displays, a good range of textbooks, videos, journals and other learning materials, children's books, practical resources and several computers. Trainers give learners lists of recommended books and websites.

63. Learners' progress reviews are particularly effective. Learners have detailed monthly progress reviews in the centre on their training day, to plan and review their written work. They also have a quarterly review in the workplace with their assessor and employer. This review is very thorough and comprehensive, and fully involves the employer. Progress with portfolio work and the development of skills in the workplace are effectively reviewed and

recorded. At the reviews, trainers negotiate specific targets with the learner. Health and safety and equality of opportunity are checked thoroughly. The employer has the opportunity to suggest areas for further training for the learner. There is good reference to the individual learning plan.

64. Learners are well supported by the provider and their employer. A large percentage of the learners have additional learning and/or social needs, and low self-esteem. Staff work sensitively with them, giving much praise and encouragement, and help them to develop the confidence to achieve their qualification and gain employment. They help the learners develop the ability to work independently and plan their own learning. They develop the more able learners and encourage them to aim for higher grades. There are always at least two assessors available to give support during training sessions. If a learner is making slow progress, their employer is asked to allow them to spend extra time in the centre. Learners with additional learning needs receive good support for literacy and numeracy in small groups or individually, from staff with appropriate expertise. Trainers give additional support to learners to help them achieve their qualification. All support is recorded on a basic skills review form. However, planning for the support is not shown adequately on the learning plans. Five learners with dyslexia attend a dyslexia centre for specific support. One member of staff is a trained counsellor, and if learners have personal difficulties she counsels them or, if necessary, refers them to an appropriate external agency. Employment Unit has developed a good network of supporting agencies. Trainers instil in learners a real sense of pride in their achievements. The small steps they take towards their qualification are celebrated in star charts displayed in the classroom, and there are certificates for completion of each element of the framework.

65. Employers are fully involved in the training, and support learners well. Employment Unit keeps them well informed through meetings and letters, so that they can offer effective support. Employers provide good practical skills training in the workplace and additional training and staff development. Some employers give learners the opportunity at staff meetings to share good practice learnt in their training session. For example, one learner designed a settling-in procedure for young children and this was adopted by the nursery.

66. The assessment process is satisfactory. Portfolios show a good standard of work and a wide range of evidence. Assessors observe learners regularly in the workplace. Learners understand their NVQ and plan their work independently as they become more confident. However, there is only a written assessment plan for observation, not for other types of evidence. Too much importance is placed on written work, and there is little oral questioning or professional discussion. Internal verification procedures are well defined, with satisfactory sampling plans.

67. The training programmes effectively meet the needs of learners and employers. There are good examples of progression from the 14-16 programmes and E2E, where learners often have very serious difficulties, to apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships, and into employment. One learner achieved qualifications and is now running an after-school and holiday play scheme.

Leadership and management

68. The childcare programmes are managed well. The staff team is well established and works effectively together. They have shared responsibilities for each aspect of training

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and very clear roles and responsibilities. Accommodation and resources are used effectively and off-the-job training is very well organised. Staff have been fully involved in producing the self-assessment report, and it accurately reflects the findings of the inspectors.

69. There is good communication both formally through team meetings and informally by daily contact. Minutes of meetings are detailed, but action points are insufficiently clear and are not reviewed at the next meeting.

70. There is effective management of staff performance, with targets set at individual meetings. Learners' progress is reviewed regularly, with good use of a learner profile database.

71. Staff have good opportunities for development to support the improvement of the programmes. All staff have completed a level 2 key skills qualification in communications and plan to study application of number to give them more confidence in delivering and assessing key skills. Staff have taken part in a training day on the new qualification standards and have made significant progress in implementing them in the training programme.

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Horticulture</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	19	2

72. Employment Unit has 19 horticulture learners, of whom 14 are apprentices, 10 with employed status and four on work placements. Five learners have recently begun an advanced apprenticeship programme. Learners receive a minimum of one day a week off-the-job training at one of Employment Unit's training centres. The other working days are spent in on-the-job training with employers and at work placements in Sheffield. Twelve of the 14 apprentices are identified as having additional learning needs. There is one horticulture assessor and one internal verifier at the training centre. In the past, Employment Unit has offered NVQ-only training, but this has now been discontinued.

Horticulture*Strengths*

- good framework achievement
- early achievement of technical certificates
- good learning support for learners from provider and employers

Weaknesses

- slow portfolio-building process
- insufficient employer awareness of NVQ

Achievement and standards

73. There is good framework achievement by the learners on the apprenticeship programme, and the success rates are improving. In 2003-04, 67 per cent of all learners who started the programme, completed the framework. In 2004-05, 71 per cent of the learners achieved.

74. Learners achieve their technical certificates early in the programme, enabling them to use their skills in their workplace. Some learners have completed all three of their technical certificates within three months of starting the programme. The certificates achieved are mostly in first aid, health and safety, and pesticide application. Early completion of these certificates equips the learner with valuable employment skills, which are of immediate use during the on-the-job training.

75. Learners enjoy their work, both on and off the job, and say that they prefer work-based learning to their previous experiences of education and training. They make satisfactory progress in acquiring new vocational skills and in personal development. Many of the learners have low self-esteem when they begin their training, but their motivation and practical work skills quickly improve. They gain self-confidence and improve their communication skills and soon realise that they are able to achieve a valuable vocational

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qualification. All the learners are engaged by their training and learning programme.

76. The standard of learners' work and the level of their practical skills are satisfactory. Learners' workplaces provide all the skill requirements to achieve the qualification they are working towards.

77. Learners' attendance, punctuality and behaviour are satisfactory, and when they decline, the employer and provider are quick to act. Employment Unit also encourages parental involvement if necessary to motivate the learner.

78. The portfolio-building process is slow. Many learners who have been on programme for six months have only completed the general knowledge questions for two units and finished one unit of their NVQ. The portfolio-building process is mainly carried out off the job and does not use the workplace supervisor or other work colleagues. The evidence available is not always collected and employers are sometimes left out of the learning process. The process of gathering portfolio evidence is slow and relies mostly on the training provider. The range of evidence used in the learners' portfolios is limited.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	3	100	54	67	30
		timely	3	100	25	67	13
	2004-05	overall	7	71	53	71	32
		timely	7	14	25	14	16
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	11	45	43	0	0
		timely	11	36	28	0	0
	2004-05	overall	4	50	64	0	0
		timely	4	50	41	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

79. The provider and employers provide good learning support. For instance, learners with additional learning needs are frequently given individual training sessions. A learner with dyslexia was given an additional half-day each week of off-the-job training to work on portfolio-building. Parental support has been used in an attempt to deal with poor behaviour in the workplace. In a further example, employer and provider worked together to resolve a problem with attendance, timekeeping and attitude. The horticultural tutor provides machinery training for two learners in their workplace to ensure they have specific knowledge of the machines they will be using. Some employers provide additional learning to complement the off-the-job training, particularly in plant identification. Tutors have a good working relationship with the learners and provide a supportive role. Many of the learners state their appreciation of this support.

80. Learners' recall of subjects covered in induction is good, and the induction is well

documented and thorough. Learners remember the subject material covered and can provide an explanation of equality of opportunity when asked.

81. All learners have an initial assessment to determine their literacy and numeracy support needs. Where a need is identified, staff provide support. Health and safety is a high priority, and learners display good awareness of health and safety issues in the workplace.

82. Thorough monthly progress reviews are conducted between the tutor and the learner. They cover learners' attendance, skills and knowledge, evidence gathered, work completed to previously set deadlines, attendance for key skills, skills training and support, and action-planning. However, the monthly reviews are not shared with the employer. A quarterly review is also conducted between employer, tutor and learner. Action points are set during these reviews.

83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. For example, plant-naming training sessions are well planned and are taught by a vocationally qualified tutor. The tutor demonstrates a good knowledge and genuine interest in the vocational area. Training sessions are well structured and learning objectives are clearly stated and understood by learners. There is good interaction between the learners and the tutor. Learners are motivated and involved in these sessions. Tutors check and review the learning points periodically throughout the lessons.

84. Assessment is satisfactory. It is well documented and thorough. Learners are questioned appropriately to assess their level of understanding. All assessment is carried out in the workplace.

85. The development of literacy and numeracy is satisfactorily covered in key skills training sessions. Learners attend a one-hour session each week and if the need is identified, additional support is provided.

86. All learners have an individual learning plan. Employment skills are developed early through work for the technical certificates. The qualification meets the needs and interests of the learner and there have been very few instances when it has been necessary to move a learner from the programme.

87. The learners' work placements are varied and include local authority environment teams, parks and an ornamental glasshouse. The learners are matched with an appropriate workplace. On occasions, learners have been moved when workplaces did not meet their needs.

88. Learners progress well into employment. Seventy-eight per cent of leavers from the 2003-04 intake progressed into employment, most of them in the horticultural industry. Recently the provider has been accredited to offer NVQs at level 3 in amenity horticulture, and five learners have progressed to the advanced apprenticeship programme.

89. Employers are insufficiently aware of the NVQ. They have a basic awareness of the framework content but they do not understand the NVQ assessment process or how a portfolio is built by using evidence gathered from the workplace and answering general knowledge questions. The provider helps the learners to build their portfolios, but the

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concentration on the early achievement of technical certificates allows the portfolio-building process to fall behind. The results of monthly progress reviews are not shared with the employer. The employer is not aware of the action points and does not assist the learner in achieving the monthly targets set.

Leadership and management

90. Good partnerships with other departments in the local authority are providing work-placement opportunities for learners. Managers identify and respond to staff development needs, and teaching and learning are improved. Staff are appropriately qualified and are used in their areas of expertise.

91. The resources available to learners are adequate. There are enough hand tools and machines available for on- and off-the-job training. In some work placements, there is a range of good-quality machinery. The training centre has extensive grounds, which enables off-the-job training to be meaningful and realistic. Teaching rooms are adequate for the size of the groups, and appropriate vocational learning materials are displayed on the walls.

92. Monthly review meetings between the deputy manager and tutor/assessors identify issues and set targets to overcome them. Learners' progress is monitored, but this process is weak and is having little effect. There is little evidence that good practice is shared between the areas of learning. However, there are standardisation meetings that focus on quality improvement and the needs of learners.

93. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity and diversity is satisfactory and the organisation has dealt effectively with an issue relating to bullying and harassment.

94. Staff are involved in the self-assessment process. The process is satisfactory and is linked to the development plan.

Construction, planning and the built environment**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		3
Apprenticeships for young people	41	3

95. Employment Unit offers training for apprentices in painting and decorating and general construction operations at two off-the-job training sites. There are 41 apprentices, of whom 25 are in the construction programme and 16 in the painting and decorating programme. Learners work towards a level 2 technical certificate, key skills at level 1 or 2 in communication and application of number, and an NVQ at level 2 in their chosen area. There is a full-time training manager, two internal verifiers and four full-time training staff who carry out training and assessment both on and off site. In the past, Employment Unit has offered NVQ-only training, but this has been discontinued.

Construction crafts*Strengths*

- good progress by learners
- good level of progression into further education
- good specialist and motivational support for learners

Weaknesses

- ineffective target-setting in learners' progress reviews
- poor practical training resources at one training centre
- insufficient understanding of health and safety by learners

Achievement and standards

96. Learners at Employment Unit make good progress. Eighty per cent have identified learning support needs and many have had significant behavioural and learning problems. Their attendance rate at off-the-job training and work placements is very good. In 2005-06, the proportion of learners leaving early is satisfactory, and progress towards qualifications is improving.

97. It is not possible to publish full qualification success rates as the data from the Provider Performance Report is unreliable for this area of learning. Based on the provider's own data, which the inspection team judged to be reasonably accurate, the achievement rate is satisfactory and learners with additional support needs make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. The achievement rate for apprenticeship frameworks in 2004-05 was 36 per cent. Apprentices' achievement of NVQs improved from 24 per cent in 2003-04 to 43 per cent in 2004-05.

98. Learners develop satisfactory practical skills and are able to apply their background knowledge to their work. For example, construction learners can calculate quantities and the cost of materials required for concreting a path. They are able to record their results on

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detailed order forms and include calculations for value added tax. Learners have carried out a substantial amount of external ground work and interior decoration at one training centre to a satisfactory standard. Employment Unit provides learners with a realistic work environment to carry out learning. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory and include a range of clearly referenced on-site evidence such as observation, written field notes, working drawings, site instructions and some photographic evidence.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Apprenticeships	2004-05	overall	*	*	*	*	*
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	5	0	24	0	0
		timely	6	0	16	0	0
	2004-05	overall	14	43	46	0	0
		timely	13	0	22	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

99. There are good levels of learner progression into further education. Fifty-six per cent of current painting and decorating learners and 64 per cent of construction learners have progressed from E2E programmes. A further 19 per cent have progressed from 14-16 programmes through the E2E programme and onto apprenticeships. Six of the 20 learners who left the programme in 2004-05 progressed into employment.

100. There is good support for learners. The large number of learners with identified support needs are given effective support to improve their performance. All learners are routinely tested for their literacy and numeracy level at the start of their programme and offered the support they need. Specialist support is also provided for learners with, for example, dyslexia, or learners for whom English is an additional language. This specialist support has been effective in ensuring learners are retained and make satisfactory progress towards their goals. Staff work effectively with learners who have previously failed to realise their potential, developing their confidence alongside their vocational skills. Staff have a good range of industrial experience. There are sufficient qualified assessors in painting and decorating, but in construction there are none currently licensed to assess the technical certificate. This problem is being dealt with satisfactorily by the provider.

101. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The sessions observed had clearly planned outcomes that were shared with learners. However, the background knowledge sessions were very tutor-centred, and learners were seldom actively involved. Off-the-job background knowledge resources are satisfactory.

102. The practical training area at one training site is inadequate. Learners work under an open-ended plastic tunnel that lets in rainwater and has no system for regulating heat. The work-space is cramped and the rainwater has damaged some materials. The provider has plans to improve the area, in line with other practical training areas.

103. The assessment process is satisfactory. Learners are clear about the process including the appeals procedure. Assessment planning is good in painting and decorating. Assessment records are clear and accurate, and assessment reviews set effective targets for learners.

104. There have been insufficient adequate work placements in painting and decorating. However, this has been dealt with and the work placements are now satisfactory. In December 2005, only five learners in this area of learning had work placements, but at the time of inspection the number had risen to 15 and only one learner was awaiting placement. The construction training programme has been restructured to provide appropriate work placements for learners after they have developed skills through training for the technical certificate.

105. The target-setting during the progress review process is unsatisfactory. Targets are vague and do not include clear, measurable outcomes. They are not sufficiently clear to ensure that learners understand what they need to do. For example, a target simply may be to start on a task. Some progress reviews provide targets for the assessors or trainers, but none for the learners. Learners do not receive a copy of their review documents.

106. Learners have insufficient understanding of their responsibility for health and safety, and formal reviews are not used to develop that understanding. Assessors ask learners one basic question about any accidents that have taken place. Only one learner questioned could satisfactorily identify their responsibility for health and safety and few were aware of the industry-standard health and safety certification scheme.

Leadership and management

107. Managers set a clear direction that has led to improvements in the quality of training offered both on and off the job. Standardisation meetings are focused on quality improvement and the needs of the learners. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and involves staff at all levels of the organisation. Employment Unit has effective links with employers, which ensure the curriculum is updated to meet their needs. Equality of opportunity is covered satisfactorily during induction, but not reinforced effectively in progress reviews or during the learning programme.

108. Staff performance has been improved by the effective use of individual meetings and the implementation of the resulting action plans. All staff have appropriate qualifications or are working towards the relevant assessor or trainer qualifications. However, the provider's quality improvement systems did not identify an administrative error that resulted in the removal of assessment rights in construction by the awarding body.

Information and communications technology**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users		3
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

109. There are currently 22 learners in the ICT programmes for information technology (IT) practitioners and professionals. Employment Unit uses its own recruiting and selection activities to recruit learners. These include involvement in careers events in the city. There is a significant number of referrals by friends and families. New learners attend an open day, followed by suitability interviews and an assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs. The apprenticeship programme starts with a six-week period at the training centre. Learners receive a basic induction and take part in health and safety training, and training on ICT software and hardware to support their subsequent employment and the NVQ. They also carry out some key skills work. During this period, the provider helps learners find a work placement. Assessors visit learners at their workplace every month. Learners also attend the training centre weekly, for a half day or full day, where they receive support on portfolio development or key skills. Advanced apprentices who are not employed also receive help in finding a work placement. They attend the training centre for one day a week for technical certificate and key skills training. In the past, Employment Unit has offered NVQ-only training. This has now been discontinued.

ICT for users*Strengths*

- good achievements by apprentices
- well-qualified and experienced staff
- particularly well-structured provision

Weaknesses

- slow progress by learners on the NVQ element of the framework
- some unsatisfactory progress reviews and short-term action-planning

Achievement and standards

110. Apprentices have achieved well. In 2004-05, 65 per cent of the learners successfully completed their framework, and another 15 per cent achieved an NVQ. In the current year there has been good achievement of key skills, and all apprentices have gained a health and safety qualification and a vendor qualification that can be counted towards the apprenticeship framework. Learners acquire good skills in the workplace. The success rates for the now discontinued NVQ programmes were also good. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Portfolios contain well-presented evidence.

111. All learners are progressing slowly with the NVQ element of their framework. Few have any work of significance in their portfolios. Where there is work, most is clearly described, well referenced and nicely illustrated. Employment Unit has clear indications of

this slow progress. For example, the internal verifier has not been presented with enough of the learners' work to verify. A progress chart shows that apprentices have only completed two of the 90 planned units and must complete the remaining 88 units in only four months. The self-assessment report noted similar slow progress in the previous year, and action was planned at that time to overcome the difficulties. At the time learners started on their NVQ, this section of Employment Unit moved premises, and there were several changes of manager and assessor. The new managers have now acknowledged the problem and have taken action to deal with it. Some actions are having an immediate effect. For example, regular and effective visits to the workplace are helping learners take a more active role in gathering appropriate evidence for assessment. Learners remain motivated and most seem positive that they will achieve on time. Although managers remain hopeful that NVQs will be achieved around the planned end date, there is limited staff time available for visits and workplace assessment.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	1	0	57	0	50
		timely	2	0	36	0	31
	2004-05	overall	1	100	56	0	49
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	0	0	0	0	0
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
	2004-05	overall	20	80	64	65	49
		timely	32	41	50	34	36
	2005-06	overall	0	0	0	0	0
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	10	50	48	0	0
		timely	10	20	37	0	0
	2004-05	overall	4	75	64	0	0
		timely	4	75	51	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

112. The current provision is particularly well structured. The concentration on qualifications in systems development is meeting the national need for more technically trained ICT people. This has led to some good work placements as employers seek to take advantage of the availability of learners who wish to acquire relevant skills, and there is a good rate of employment arising from work placements. The ICT section of Employment Unit has become part of a digital and creative centre. This is supporting local regeneration plans that are introducing this type of industry to inner Sheffield. Some exciting initiatives are providing learners with new entry routes into learning, for instance through linked 14-16 programmes and the involvement of local businesses. There is a well-planned and generally effective range of off-the-job training opportunities and support sessions for learners, and some good developments in respect of opportunities for advanced

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qualifications. Progression is good, with all the current advanced apprentices having previously completed an apprenticeship with Employment Unit, although most have begun an advanced apprenticeship without formally considering any other alternatives.

113. Staff working directly with ICT learners are particularly well qualified and experienced. As well as the standard assessment and verification qualifications, two-thirds of the ICT staff have teaching qualifications. They also have an impressive range of ICT-related qualifications, including degrees and prestigious vendor qualifications. Staff also have training responsibilities outside the work-based learning programme. This maintains their expertise in a range of applications and contexts. The key skills tutor is also well qualified and experienced. Managers review staff development needs appropriately, and Employment Unit has supported staff in obtaining some of their qualifications.

114. Learners' recruitment and initial induction is satisfactory. Support for individual learners is satisfactory, and there is a good involvement of parents or guardians during recruitment and induction.

115. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are assessed effectively during the recruitment stage. Few learners need significant support. Where support is required it is appropriately delivered through the key skills programme.

116. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory and lessons are planned well. A few learners find the pace of advanced lessons a little slow, but most enjoy the mature and supportive approach to their training. Most of the lessons that had been observed by the provider were judged to be satisfactory. The new advanced technical certificate course has begun well. Out of the 23 learners who started the programme at the beginning of the year, 22 are still in learning.

117. There are some unsatisfactory aspects to learners' short-term action-planning and quarterly reviews. Visits to the workplace, scheduled to take place monthly, have varied in frequency and effectiveness in the past, but are currently satisfactory. The action plans arising from the visits are left with the learners, and staff do not have a reminder of the actions agreed until they arrive for the next meeting. The formal quarterly reviews have an appropriate structure, except in the areas of health and safety and equality of opportunity, where the approach is basic. Some of the action-planning is ineffective. There is some good employer involvement in the quarterly reviews, but some employers are unaware of their learners' achievements in the technical certificate courses. Where concerns are raised in reviews, about matters such as slow progress, there is no obvious follow up. Staff and managers have several different ways of recording learners' details and progress. Although there is regular informal discussion about learners, the many systems militate against a clear focus on key problems and targets.

Leadership and management

118. There is some good strategic planning for the ICT area, which is reflected in the improving structure of the provision. There are appropriate operational processes in place, such as individual progress reviews, target-setting and action-planning, and standardisation meetings. Although these are being applied satisfactorily at present, they have been used less effectively at times over the past year or so.

119. The accommodation and equipment are adequate for the programme. There is

appropriate formal and informal communication between staff, and a properly structured and implemented appraisal system.

120. Learners have a satisfactory session on the main aspects of equality and diversity during their initial training, but little reinforcement of the topic during the subsequent programme. Strategic planning includes some good initiatives to increase the proportion of learners from under-represented groups, but these ideas have yet to affect recruitment.

121. All staff are committed to and are properly involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report and development plan have broadly recognised the weaknesses seen at inspection. Some aspects of the provision identified as strengths by the self-assessment are no more than satisfactory.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		2
Entry to Employment	15	2

122. Employment Unit provides E2E programmes for young people between the ages of 16 and 18. During 2005-06, 75 learners joined the programme, 15 of whom were in learning during the inspection week. In 2004-05, 81 learners joined the programme. The provider delivers the programme from one centre in Sheffield. The learners are referred by Connexions personal advisers and through other agencies such as schools, other providers and word of mouth.

123. The area of learning has a team leader and two full-time tutors, and uses some external visiting speakers. The programme covers skills for life which is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, personal development and employability. Learners study English, mathematics, IT, outdoor education, employment skills such as jobsearch, and practical skills in childcare, construction, horticulture, hospitality, retailing or customer care. Some learners attend work placements. Learners can gain external accreditation through short additional courses and entry-level qualifications in some vocational areas.

Employability training*Strengths*

- good progression
- broad range of activities and projects to meet the learners' needs
- good literacy and numeracy support

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

124. Learners make good progress on the E2E programme. The data from the Provider Performance Report is unreliable, but according to Employment Unit's figures, progression rates have been good at 48 per cent in 2004-05 and 52 per cent in 2005-06. Learners make good progress onto apprenticeship programmes in care, construction and horticulture. For example, 56 per cent of the current construction learners have progressed from E2E. The achievement rate is also good on short courses such as food hygiene, health and safety, and entry-level qualifications in the care sector. For example, 80 per cent of the learners who started in 2005-06 have gained one or more qualifications through short courses. These qualifications enhance learners' confidence, improve their self-esteem and give them the chance to enter apprenticeship programmes. Many of the learners have poor experiences of learning and have suffered from bullying. They gain self-confidence and learn to relate well to other learners. Many of them make friends very

quickly, displaying social skills that were not previously apparent. They rapidly learn what vocational area they want to work in and concentrate on developing appropriate skills including English and mathematics. Learners also develop good employability skills such as the discipline of attending work, punctuality, teamwork and communication skills, and most increase their motivation. The number of learners that Employment Unit refers back to Connexions has fallen, as has the number of dismissals for poor behaviour. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.

The quality of provision

125. The programme offers a broad range of flexible activities and projects that meets the learners' needs well. The programme hours are flexible. Each learner has an individual timetable that meets their interests and needs. The range of work placements and vocational tasters is good. Learners broaden their knowledge and experience by trying out various skills and vocations before deciding what is best for them. Learners are taught in small groups of four or five, and enjoy outings that widen their experience and horizons. Learners are taught independent living skills. They enjoy e-learning as well as input from visiting speakers on relevant topics such as drugs and their effect on people. The centre is in a very deprived ward of the city and is easily accessible to most learners. The provider uses its good links with the rest of the council to organise work placements. Jobsearch is satisfactory. Learners develop short but effective curriculum vitae, and learn to search for jobs by methods including visits to the local jobcentres.

126. Literacy and numeracy support is good. The learners produce good work in individual and small-group sessions. Most learners work on individualised programmes of learning after their needs are carefully identified through a good range of initial assessments such as screening, diagnostic assessment and learning style tests. Tutors give learners appropriate support and all learners have improved their level of literacy and numeracy by at least one level. They do not, however, take any qualifications. Some of the examples of good skills development include improved financial literacy on issues such as taxation, and the ability to calculate averages, fractions, decimals and percentages. Construction learners, for example, are now more capable of working out the area of a building in order to cost the materials. Their spelling has improved, as well as their reading and writing. Many of the learners report that they have made better progress than they did at school. All of them have greater confidence in their own literacy and numeracy skills. Learners' ESOL needs are identified and the provider makes satisfactory arrangements to meet them. None of the current learners has such needs. Pastoral support is satisfactory. The provider has good links with a range of agencies to provide learners with specialist support.

127. The teaching is satisfactory, but is not sufficiently planned. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced but do not have the teaching skills necessary to fully meet the needs of the learners. Tutors do not anticipate the range of problems the learners might face and plan for them adequately. In an e-learning session, for example, all learners made the same mistake and the teacher had to correct them individually. Tutors do not use incidental opportunities to reinforce specific points of learning. Lessons are based on worksheets and handouts, and some have a slow pace. Learners do not contribute fully to the discussions. The tutors dominate the sessions and talk for most of the time. They do not introduce their lessons by drawing from the learners' own experiences and using appropriate questioning techniques. Learners' folders are poorly organised, and tutors very rarely write any evaluative and useful comments on the learners' work. Tutors do not

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sufficiently guide learners on how to practise their learning through daily routine activities at home or at work.

128. Initial assessment and ongoing verbal assessment are both satisfactory. Progress reviews are satisfactory. They are thorough and detailed, and they keep learners focused by monitoring their progress effectively.

Leadership and management

129. The learning resources for the E2E programme are adequate. Staff are appropriately qualified. They are supported well by their managers and work closely in a team. Communications are very good. Managers meet staff individually to manage their performance and suggest improvements. Tutors have had satisfactory training to enhance their skills and to improve the learners' experience. Tutors work effectively to improve the quality of experience for the learners. Staff use a range of effective mechanisms to seek feedback from the learners, and respond to the results. They meet other local E2E providers to share best practice, and use data effectively to monitor the learners' participation and achievement.

130. Employment Unit actively promotes respect and dignity to the learners. Staff celebrate learners' achievements well at award ceremonies.

131. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Tutors share good practice effectively in their teams, but not with other tutors or providers. Managers observe teaching but do not give the tutors sufficient guidance as to how they could improve it. They focus on the input from the tutors and not on learning and standards, and they make very few judgements on the quality of teaching and learning.

132. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It involves all staff and includes learners' views as well as management data. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, with most of the strengths matching those found by inspectors. However, it does not identify the weaknesses in teaching, although the managers were aware of them.

Business administration and law**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	30	3 3

133. Employment Unit offers apprenticeships and NVQ training in business administration. There are currently 30 learners, of whom 23 are apprentices and seven are advanced apprentices. Employment Unit actively promotes the provision at careers fairs and similar awareness-raising events. Learners begin their programme at different points during the year. Most are in work placements in a variety of organisations including council departments and private businesses. Learners attend a half day a week training session at Employment Unit's training centre for off-the-job training in key skills, and the background knowledge for the technical certificate.

Administration*Strengths*

- significant improvement in learners' performance
- rigorous assessment and progress reviews
- good involvement of employers in supporting learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress by some learners
- inadequate arrangements for mentoring new staff in teaching and training

Achievement and standards

134. In 2003-04, the timely success rates on the apprenticeship programme were poor both for frameworks and for NVQs. Overall success rates were poor in 2003-04 and 2004-05 for framework completion, and in 2003-04 for NVQs. However, in 2004-05, overall success rates for apprenticeships rose from 14 per cent to 26 per cent. The weaknesses in achievement were identified in the 2005 self-assessment report and managers took a range of actions to remedy them. There has been a significant improvement in learners' performance since 2004-05. The provider's data for 2005-06 shows that so far, overall success rates have improved, with the framework completion rate at 58 per cent and the NVQ completion rate at 80 per cent. Some learners hope to progress to an advanced apprenticeship but at present, the number of advanced apprentices is very small.

135. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Portfolios are well structured and provide ample evidence of competence. Learners take a pride in their portfolios and are confident about interpreting the competence statements. Learners demonstrate good skills development and application.

136. Some learners on the apprenticeship programme have made slow progress in recent

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years. Action has been taken to deal with this, and there has been some improvement, but some learners are still making slow progress. For example, two apprentices scheduled to complete by November 2005 and January 2006 respectively, and who have received additional learning support, had not completed at the time of the inspection in April 2006.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2004-05	overall	0	0	0	0	0
		timely	2	0	34	0	22
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	7	14	54	14	41
		timely	5	0	24	0	18
	2004-05	overall	27	59	57	26	48
		timely	36	22	33	3	28
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	12	50	40	0	0
		timely	12	50	29	0	0
	2004-05	overall	7	14	52	0	0
		timely	7	14	41	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

* indicates unreliable data.

The quality of provision

137. Assessment and progress reviews are rigorous. All assessment is carried out in the workplace and is subject to regular internal verification. All assessments are planned, and learners and their employer know when they will take place. Assessors carefully check learners' evidence and understanding during their visits to the workplace. They also give constructive written feedback. Many learners receive monthly or even fortnightly assessment and review visits. There is frequent contact between Employment Unit's tutors and learners' supervisors. Employers participate in quarterly progress reviews with the assessor and learner, and receive a written copy of the actions and targets agreed. Reviews are thorough and well documented, and lead to clear action plans and targets, which learners understand. These targets are systematically reviewed at the following review visit.

138. There is good involvement of employers in supporting learners. A wide range of private and public sector organisations provides work placements, or in some cases employs learners. Employers and work-placement providers are closely matched to learners' needs. They are enthusiastic about the training provided and actively support learners in identifying opportunities to provide evidence for competences. They also enable learners to use their time at work flexibly to meet the demands of the training programme.

139. Initial assessment and induction are carried out to a satisfactory standard. Learners receive additional learning support where required and they are well briefed on health and safety, and equality of opportunity. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and of how these apply in the workplace. Similarly, they have a high degree of awareness

of health and safety, and potential hazards in the workplace.

140. Learners' individual learning plans are used to monitor their progress. Learners' key skills needs are identified at the start of the programme and additional off-the-job training sessions are held for those who need them. The standard of training in these sessions is good. Learners are set interesting and stimulating activities to give them a good understanding of key skills. For example, in a communications session, learners were set a range of individual and group activities on the use of the apostrophe. This was very effective in helping them understand its different applications.

141. Teaching and training are satisfactory. Training sessions are well structured with clear session plans. Attendance rates are good and learners enjoy the sessions. Learners' interest is maintained through a range of activities but insufficient attention is paid to their individual needs and there is insufficient checking of individual learners' understanding. Some training takes place in IT rooms, which restricts group activity.

Leadership and management

142. A new team leader has recently been appointed and has established new systems and procedures aimed at ensuring a consistent approach to quality improvement. Standardisation meetings are held regularly to ensure consistency across programmes and to ensure standards are being maintained. This is particularly useful for the new staff involved in the programme. Internal verification is satisfactory and is properly documented.

143. Formal observation of training sessions takes place but is not sufficiently rigorous. Records of observations are not always evaluative enough. Staff are well informed about developments in the organisation.

144. The learning resources for business and administration are satisfactory. Learners are given detailed handouts of relevant information to support their work on the technical certificate, and facilities at the training centre are of a good standard.

145. The self-assessment process at Employment Unit includes the staff, and is sufficiently evaluative. Inspectors agreed with some of the findings in the self-assessment report, but also found some additional strengths and weaknesses.

146. The arrangements for mentoring new teaching and training staff are inadequate. New tutors sometimes shadow other inexperienced staff. The programmes are taught by two tutors who report to a team leader. They carry out all the workplace assessments and reviews, together with off-the-job training sessions for the technical certificate. They both joined Employment Unit within the past six months and have good occupational experience and assessor qualifications. They are enthusiastic and supportive of their learners, but they are not experienced or qualified as tutors. The provider plans to provide appropriate teacher training for new teaching staff.

