

INSPECTION REPORT

Salford Consortium Reinspection

11 June 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

SUMMARY

The provider

Salford Consortium is part of the arts, leisure and community learning directorate of Salford City Council. Salford Consortium operates at two sites. It offers work-based learning for young people in engineering, technology and manufacturing; retailing, customer service and transportation; hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; health, social care and public services; and foundation programmes. Training is funded by Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council. Currently, there are 101 learners on training programmes with Salford Consortium.

Overall judgement

The ALI's inspection in May 2002 found that training in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; and health, social care and public services was good. Training in engineering, technology and manufacturing; and retailing, customer services and transportation was satisfactory. However, training for foundation programmes was unsatisfactory. Overall leadership and management were unsatisfactory, while equality of opportunity was good and quality assurance was satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the training provision were found to be satisfactory, except training in health, social care and public services which was good, and quality assurance which was unsatisfactory.

Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
Leadership and management	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	2	3
Quality assurance	3	4

	Original	Reinspection
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3

	Original	Reinspection
Retailing, customer service & transportation	3	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3

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	Original	Reinspection
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	2	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	2	3

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

	Original	Reinspection
Foundation programmes	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Life Skills	4	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

KEY STRENGTHS

- very effective links with work-placement providers
- very good support for learners
- good response to learners' social needs
- particularly supportive workplace supervisors
- extensive range of work placements

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in work placements
- inadequate impact of quality assurance on training programmes
- ineffective monitoring of post-inspection development plans
- poor achievement rates

THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of Salford Consortium (the consortium) was carried out over a total of 30 days. The reinspection involved six inspectors. The first visit was on 24 February 2003. During this visit, the post-inspection development plan and some aspects of leadership and management were reviewed. On 18 and 19 March 2003, training in engineering, technology and manufacturing; hospitality, sport, leisure and travel; and customer service and transportation was inspected. On 6 and 7 May 2003, inspectors reviewed health, social care and public services, and foundation programmes. Leadership and management were inspected on 20 May 2003. Inspectors completed the reinspection on 10 and 11 June 2003. In total, inspectors interviewed 36 learners, carried out 32 interviews with the consortium's staff, examined 32 portfolios and graded 18 learning sessions. Inspectors also visited 14 workplaces and interviewed 14 employers. They also examined a range of documents including 40 individual learning plans, new quality assurance policies and procedures, and a new self-assessment report which was produced in November 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Health, social care & public services	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Foundation programmes	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
Total	0	5	5	1	1	0	0	12

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
Total	0	1	7	8	2	0	0	18

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- very effective links with work-placement providers
- good response to learners' social needs

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in work placements
- inadequate impact of quality assurance on training
- ineffective monitoring of post-inspection development plans

2. The consortium is particularly effective at developing good links with work-placement providers. Tutors have close contact with many companies and have a database of those who can provide suitable work placements for learners. The consortium has developed a good understanding of the support these companies can provide for learners with additional support needs. The consortium uses this information productively to ensure learners are placed with a company that can meet their support needs. Most work-placement providers take an interest in learners' progress and allow them to work in different departments to help them develop a wide range of skills. Most work-placement providers have good links with tutors and can informally obtain information about the learners' additional needs, but there is no formal process to record the support which the learners require in the work placements.

3. The management of the central support team, which was identified as poor in the last inspection, is now satisfactory. Following the previous inspection, the central support team was reorganised and staffing changes were made. Until very recently the line management of the central support team was not clear, some staff had not received their appraisal and the central support team did not attend management meetings. However, a training manager, who has line management responsibility for the central support team, has recently been employed. Staff in the central support team have developed good working relationships with the staff in the vocational areas of learning and have meetings with them. The central support team routinely provides learners with additional support, and at times, this support is provided in conjunction with tutors from the learners' vocational area of learning. These support arrangements are satisfactory. Learners are required to take a basic skills assessment, the results of which are used to plan their basic skills training. Support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is linked to the vocational area of learning and learners attend basic skills learning sessions which are incorporated into their timetable.

4. The consortium has a clear strategic direction. There is a business plan, focusing on

financial matters, which was written in 2002. The senior manager, in conjunction with the Salford Local Education Authority (LEA) has recently identified new business objectives. In the past, some staff have not been adequately consulted when business objectives have been identified. Some staff are not clear what the business objectives are or what needs to be done to achieve them. The consortium has taken steps to better involve staff in business planning. Following the changes in management, a new business plan is being produced which will use the findings of the reinspection as part of its development plan.

5. The consortium's management information system is now satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the consortium has put in place a commercially designed management information system, which provides data about learners' gender, ethnicity, and disability, and also data about retention and achievement. This information is now being used satisfactorily to identify trends in learners' performance. The consortium has some good initiatives to further improve the monitoring of retention and achievement. For example, the consortium is thoroughly analysing the reasons why learners leave their training programme before their planned completion date or without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. The consortium is using this information to improve retention and achievement. However, some aspects of the management information system are not fully used. For example, once all the information about learners is put into the system, the system could potentially provide timely information about the learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

6. The senior manager of the consortium is responsible for the operation and promotion of equality of opportunity. The consortium has an equal opportunities policy, which is based on Salford City Council's (the council's) equal opportunities policy. However, unlike the council, these policies and procedures have not been routinely reviewed, and do not fully comply with the current legislative requirements with regards to equality, diversity, and disability. There are detailed procedures covering bullying and harassment. Learners receive clear guidelines about how to make a complaint or express their concerns. Learners receive information about equality of opportunity in a booklet which they are given during the induction. Equal opportunities topics are also discussed during induction.

7. Learners receive good support for their diverse and complex social and pastoral needs. The consortium provides training for many young people who find it difficult to secure places with other training providers. Most learners have additional learning and social needs and have had poor experience of education in the past. For example a number of these learners have misused drugs, or have behavioural problems and there are also a number of young mothers who have unstable life patterns. Staff empathise with these learners and support them by removing some of the barriers to learning. Staff work closely with many external agencies to provide dedicated and specialist support. For example, staff have supported learners to find new accommodation and to resolve complex family, or relationship, problems. The consortium maintains a good record of the additional support provided for its learners. All learners highly value this support.

8. The organisation checks that employers have an equal opportunities policy or are using the consortium's own policy and procedures. The consortium relies too heavily on employers to put these policies and procedures into practice. Many learners are not aware of their rights and responsibilities at work. For example, some learners do not get enough study time at work and the consortium does not routinely monitor this. Some learners do not know how employers decide to allocate work to them and how their work relates to their qualification. Equality of opportunity is not discussed effectively during progress reviews. Access arrangements for people with restricted mobility are adequate at most of the work placements.

9. Following the previous inspection, the consortium has provided equal opportunities training for all its staff. Some tutors are now using this information to promote equality of opportunity through their learning sessions.

10. The consortium's arrangements for staff recruitment are satisfactory and meet with the requirements of the 'Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000'. These arrangements are based on the council's procedures for advertising, interviewing and selection. However, the consortium does not monitor ethnicity and disability of its staff.

11. Data about learner's gender, ethnicity and disability are satisfactorily collected and analysed and are used to monitor the recruitment of learners. However, these data are not routinely used as a basis for marketing activities. There are adequate access

arrangements for people with restricted mobility at the consortium's training centres.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

12. The consortium's system for gathering feedback from learners is adequate. This was identified a strength at the previous inspection. Questionnaires are used to gather the learners' views at interview and also at the beginning, during, and at the end of, the training programme. The consortium evaluates this feedback and responds to problems which the feedback questionnaires identify. However, the consortium's response to feedback has been slow in some cases. For example, learners on the customer services training programme raised concerns about sharing the induction programme with motor vehicle learners, a problem which the consortium was slow to remedy. Employers are also asked to complete a feedback questionnaire, but these responses have not lead to any improvements in the training programme.

13. Internal verification takes place frequently and is adequately planned. Portfolios are internally verified regularly but some of the written feedback about them is insufficiently detailed. There is no effective system to record corrective action taken in response to internal verification.

14. Salford consortium's quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory and their impact on training is inadequate. During the previous inspection, the evaluation of training was identified as a weakness, and this weakness has not been adequately improved. A number of the strengths found in the previous inspection in the areas of learning have not been maintained and there have been insufficient improvements in some of the weaknesses. There has also been insufficient improvement in the learners' retention and achievement rates in some areas. The consortium has recently developed a new quality assurance policy and a corresponding set of procedures for the main aspects of training and assessment. An external consultant was also involved in developing the new policy and procedures. The procedures are still in draft form and have only recently been shown to staff. The consortium does not have an adequate system for monitoring the on-the-job training provided by employers.

15. Post-inspection action plans have not been monitored effectively to ensure their introduction and usage. There was a significant delay in starting some of the post-inspection development plans. For example, many development activities did not start until after inspectors' second monitoring visit, in March 2003. In some cases, this delay has been critical for some learners. For example, to deal with the poor retention rates identified in the previous inspection, the consortium had planned to recruit a retention officer in November 2002, but this was not done until June 2003, the week before the end of the reinspection. Some other actions on the development plan have not yet been completed. For example, not all of the learners' details are on the newly purchased management information system and the new quality assurance policy and procedures are not yet complete.

16. The consortium's self-assessment report produced after the previous inspection, is insufficiently thorough in its assessment of the quality of its training provision. For example, in this self-assessment report, the consortium has found the quality assurance of the training provision to be good. However, the new self-assessment report still contains

those action points identified in response to the previous inspection.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	40	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- good training support for learners
- wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- strong links with the motor vehicle industry

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates
- ineffective progress reviews for learners

17. Motor vehicle learners receive good support from their trainers and work-placement supervisors. Trainers have frequent contact with learners and visit them in the workplace regularly. Learners are visited every eight weeks, or more frequently if required. Staff are sensitive to learners' individual needs, providing appropriate and timely support, sometimes in confidence. Learners who need additional literacy and numeracy support are offered dedicated additional support from trained and experienced tutors. Additional learning support for basic skills is effective. Learners gain confidence from the basic skills provision, both in the workplace and their everyday lives.

18. Learners are offered a wide range of good learning opportunities during their work placements. The consortium provides work placements for its learners in garages, which range from main dealerships to small businesses. These garages cover light vehicle maintenance, vehicle body repair and also fast-fit outlets. There are more than 40 work placements available to the learners. These work placements offer learners relevant opportunities to gain experience of using up-to-date equipment and modern industrial practices, which closely match the requirements of the national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes.

19. The links between the consortium and the motor vehicle industry are strong. The

consortium's staff have extensive experience of the motor vehicle industry and have good local contacts which are used effectively to increase the number of suitable work placements available for learners. Many garages have offered work placements to the consortium's learners for a number of years and some garages have donated equipment, allowing learners to practise basic motor vehicle maintenance and repair skills at the consortium's training centre. The consortium's staff use their contacts successfully to enable learners to gain specific experience and produce NVQ evidence through temporary work placements. The relationship between workplace supervisors and the trainers is very good. They discuss any concerns with learners' progress openly and constructively.

20. Learners' progress reviews were judged to be ineffective during the previous inspection. The consortium has not made sufficient progress to improve this weakness. Learners' progress reviews focus on short-term targets for collecting NVQ evidence and do not include adequate review of equality of opportunity or any concerns learners may have in their work placements. Learners are encouraged to develop their personal skills at the same time as working towards NVQ units in the workplace. Progress with these personal skills is recorded on the learners' individual progress chart, which are provided by the consortium to help employers monitor learners' progress. Some workplace supervisors are not adequately involved in the progress review process and do not make an effective contribution to the evaluation of these additional skills or any actions which the learner may need to take. However, once the trainer and the learner have agreed actions to be carried out after the progress review, the workplace supervisor is consulted. During the previous inspection, inspectors identified that workplace supervisors were insufficiently involved in the NVQ training programme. The consortium has however, used its good links with employers to improve the involvement of workplace supervisors in the NVQ training programme. Some workplace supervisors still do not use the review documents adequately to support the learners.

21. The previous inspection found retention and achievement rates to be poor. Retention rates improved during 2002-03 and are now satisfactory. However, the achievement rate in 2001-02 was 13 per cent for learners following the NVQ at level 1, and 25 per cent for learners following the NVQ at level 2. There is no evidence to suggest that the achievement rate will improve in line with the retention rate. There is also no evidence to establish whether learners are going to achieve their qualification by their target completion date. The wallchart used to monitor learners' progress is not up to date. For example, the chart indicates that one learner has not achieved any units when he has achieved the NVQ. The document used to monitor learners' progress through the NVQ is not available for some learners. The consortium has recently devised a new method for recording learners' progress, but at the time of reinspection this had not been introduced.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	17	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- careful selection of work placements to meet learners' needs
- good pastoral support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- some slow progress
- insufficient additional learning support for employed learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of new resource materials to develop learners' vocational knowledge
- more effective use of individual learning plans to aid recognition of progress
- better progress reviews for learners
- better planning of learners' induction

22. Work placements are carefully selected to meet learners' needs. For example, when matching learners with work placements, the consortium's staff take into account the learner's personality, any personal problems and any additional social or learning needs that the learner may have. There are also discussions between the consortium's staff and employers to ensure that the learner will be supported in the work placement and will receive appropriate help when required.

23. Learners receive good pastoral support. Most learners have additional social needs and staff are supportive and sensitive to this and the learners' personal circumstances. Staff take time and care to ensure that learners develop personally. For example, one trainer provides support for some learners, with the assistance of a personal counsellor and other external agencies. Trainers visit learners in the workplace frequently, often every week, to monitor their progress and to motivate them. The additional personal development provided for learners was also identified as a strength at the previous

inspection.

24. At the previous inspection, the wide range of work placements was identified as a strength. The range of work placements available is now satisfactory. For example, during the previous inspection, employers had a good knowledge of the NVQ requirements but now some are not fully aware of these or the processes involved in the NVQ and are unable to provide learners with the support required. During the previous inspection, employers all had charts to record learners' progress and workplace supervisors were involved in the NVQ programme. However, during the reinspection, some employers were not using this progress chart. The consortium has however reintroduced this system and the consortium's staff have visited all the employers to explain the NVQ and provide them with a guidance book and a wall chart. The optional NVQ units have also been discussed with employers to ensure that they can offer an appropriate learning experience to learners.

25. Resources for retail learners are satisfactory. During the previous inspection and the initial stages of the reinspection, retail learners were supported by qualified trainers, who had a good knowledge of the learners' progress and some of the challenges which they faced. However for the three months during the reinspection, these staffing arrangements lapsed and the staffing arrangements were unsatisfactory. For example, during this period there were insufficient qualified trainers to provide training and supervision for the learners. However, since April 2003, staffing arrangements have been the same as they were during the previous inspection. Staffing arrangements are now satisfactory. There is now one full-time trainer and two part-time trainers, who support the 17 learners on the retail training programme. Since April 2003, a significant amount of work has been done to update or rewrite many of the training materials. Some new training materials have also been purchased. Currently, most training materials are in good use.

26. The well-structured induction programme was identified as a strength at the previous inspection. However, during the reinspection, inspectors identified that this strength has not been maintained. During the three-month period when staffing arrangements on the retail training programme were unsatisfactory, the induction for retail learners was combined with that for the motor vehicle learners. Learners commented that this was not useful. Retail learners did not receive adequate information for their NVQ and some learners had an insufficient knowledge of the NVQ process. Some of the resources used during the induction process were out of date. Since April 2003, retail learners have been receiving a separate induction which provides them with information specific to their NVQ programme. New materials have been produced for these induction sessions. Induction is carried out over a number of weeks. The induction topics are all covered on the first day and then reiterated over the days that follow. Induction is currently satisfactory. However, the induction programme is insufficiently planned, as some of the induction sessions are too far apart.

27. Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified to carry out assessments. Learners are assessed regularly, although during the staff

shortages some assessments were not done. During the staff shortages, there were some trainers and some learners who did not adequately understand the NVQ or if the work they were doing would satisfy the NVQ requirements. This situation has improved significantly since April 2003. The consortium's staff have now visited all the learners in their workplace and have agreed a revised action plan with each learner. The consortium also has a good system whereby learners' portfolios are duplicated so there is always a copy in safekeeping. Learners record their workplace duties every day on a sheet provided by the consortium. Trainers have been provided with guidance about portfolios which was developed to standardise their assessment. At the previous inspection, internal verification was identified as being satisfactory. Improvements have been made to the internal verification system and it remains satisfactory.

28. Some learners' progress is slow and during the three-month in which there were staff shortages, learners made insufficient progress. The previous inspection identified retention and achievement rates as poor. However, retention rates have improved. Of those learners starting in 2002-03, 89 per cent of learners are still in learning on the distribution and warehousing training programme and 62 per cent of learners from the retail training programme are also still in learning. During the period when there were staff shortages, learners' progress was not adequately monitored and their action plans were not sufficiently demanding. Some learners' progress towards their planned completion date was slow during this period. Since the staffing arrangements have improved, learners' target completion dates have been revised on their individual learning plans. Since April 2003, all of the learners have achieved some units of the NVQ and are progressing through the NVQ at an appropriate rate to complete it by their revised completion dates.

29. During the previous inspection, inspectors identified that learners were not receiving additional learning support. Since then, the support team has been restructured and the consortium's different teams now communicate with each other better and have better working relationships. Many of the concerns raised by inspectors at the previous inspection have been adequately improved. For example, the results from learners' initial assessments are now recorded on the learners' individual learning plans. The consortium now holds two learning sessions each week specifically for learners with additional learning needs. Learners who are not employed are now receiving the support which they require. However, learners who are employed, do not receive adequate additional learning support. Some employers do not release learners from their work to attend the training centre for the additional learning support sessions. Although the consortium's staff do visit these learners in their work placements and offer whatever support they can, learners are not receiving the support that they require from qualified and experienced trainers. Currently, staff are developing learning resources which can be taken to these learners in the workplace. The consortium is also considering the possibility of the basic skills tutor visiting these learners in the workplace and providing the necessary learning support there. No decision has been made about this yet.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- particularly supportive workplace supervisors
- extensive range of work placements
- very good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates

30. Learners are offered very good support. In workshop sessions, there are often two trainers supporting small groups of learners, with one trainer providing support for any learners who are new to the training programme. All learners have complex additional social needs and the catering trainers provide ongoing support for them. Trainers have good links to external specialist agencies for help with learners' additional social needs. Outreach workers are used for help in difficult situations or to visit and advise learners who require special advice, such as legal information. Steps are taken to enhance learners' self-esteem. For example, a video was produced which showed learners preparing lunches for dignitaries attending the Commonwealth Games. Learners can join catering courses at any time of the year and there is a week-long induction programme every month for learners who are new to the training programme. If a learner's start date does not coincide with the start of an induction programme they receive an interim one-day induction and then attend the full week induction the following month. Most learners start the training programme in July. A two-week induction programme is offered at this time.

31. Learners benefit from an extensive range of good work placements. Employers include schools, hospitals, restaurants, hotels, civic centres, offices, nursing homes, bakeries, night-clubs and golf clubs. Since the previous inspection, some new work placements have been established which provide placements for several learners. These include a university, a catering contractor and a restaurant. The trainers make good use of their contacts to find work placements, which are appropriate to the needs of individual learners. Some workplaces can provide learners with a wider range of

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learning experiences than others. Workplace supervisors value the information which they receive from, and the regular contact they have with the consortium. They also appreciate the visits which the consortium's staff make to learners.

32. Workplace supervisors are particularly supportive. The consortium's staff assist workplace supervisors who are providing work placements for a number of learners. For example, one employer who has provided placements for four learners since November 2002 and has been supporting these learners to achieve their qualifications earlier than planned, was visited by the consortium's staff a number of times. This employer was also provided with excellent learning materials by one of the consortium's trainers. One of the learners who has a work placement with this employer started her training programme in September 2002 and has now achieved most of her units. Another workplace supervisor has helped learners with the background knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Another workplace supervisor has supported two learners to find catering posts in the armed forces, while another has purposefully engaged a learner in work that involve contact with customers to improve the learner's social skills.

33. Retention rates are poor. Revised data provided during the reinspection show that in 2000-01, the retention rate for learners on an NVQ at level 1 was 45 per cent and for those on an NVQ at level 2 it was 50 per cent. These rates have not improved during the reinspection. The consortium has very recently appointed a retention officer who has introduced a range of new initiatives to improve the retention rate. For example, learners have been invited to attend a breakfast club, a monitoring system has been introduced to record learning and behavioural problems and for learners on the catering training programme, a more thorough initial assessment is offered. In this area of learning, there is also an incentive scheme whereby learners who have appropriate attendance and behaviour for a three-month period are offered a small financial award. However, most of these initiatives are too recent for their impact to be assessed.

34. Revised data about achievement were also provided during the reinspection. For 2001-02, the achievement rate for learners following a level 1 NVQ was 40 per cent, and for learners following a level 2 NVQ, it was 42 per cent. Some learners' progress through the NVQ is slow, but the consortium has taken steps to improve this. For example, the system to monitor learners' progress is now better. Some learners also receive support to achieve their qualification before their planned completion date. For example, of three learners studying for an NVQ at level 2, one achieved the qualification in nine months and two achieved it in six months. One learner, who has achieved the level 2 NVQ is now studying for an additional six units. Trainers have also started to teach key skills in such a way that it now forms an integral part of the vocational training. They have also developed a better approach to teaching literacy and numeracy so that it now forms part of the training programme. Learners are now taking and achieving key skills qualifications. One trainer has recently been working with student teachers to produce a scheme of work so that level one key skills can be taught for three hours each week over 18 weeks.

35. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Most learners are assessed in the

workplace. Internal verification is regular and well-planned. There are also internal verification meetings where staff identify and share good assessment practices. Since the previous inspection, the consortium has made better use of work-based assessors, five of whom are receiving funding to study for training qualifications.

36. During the previous inspection, inspectors identified that there was insufficient equipment of industry standard in the training centre. A range of small equipment has been bought, and the ovens were repaired and subsequently been replaced. New shelving has also been supplied and the kitchen has been reorganised to make two cooking areas.

Good Practice

Learning support trainers use recipes to improve the learners' confidence, communication skills and numeracy skills. For example, learners' writing, reading, speaking and listening skills are improved by the learners producing a shopping list, and discussing and planning cooking. Learners' numeracy skills are also improved by using recipes to reinforce the use of whole numbers, fractions and decimals and basic arithmetic.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	21	2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- innovative off-the-job training
- very good additional support and pastoral care
- effective involvement of workplace supervisors

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates on the care programme

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better development of individual learning plans

37. There are effective and good links with care homes and nurseries. Employers are very satisfied with the consortium's speed to respond to problems, the frequency with which staff visit learners and the way in which learners are able to apply background knowledge training in the workplace. More specifically, there is effective communication between the consortium and workplace supervisors. Trainers at the consortium have good contact with learners through their weekly workplace visits. There are many opportunities to carry out workplace assessments. The consortium offers employers good advice and guidance about how to help learners achieve their qualification. Workplace supervisors have a good understanding of the NVQ standards. Learners receive good feedback about assessments which they do in the workplace. Workplace supervisors have good involvement in the progress review process. During progress reviews, there is good, joint target-setting by the trainer, the workplace supervisor and the learner to ensure that progress benefits both the learner and the employer. All parties agree effective changes in the work environment to ensure the learner gains a full range of competences.

38. The consortium offers a wide range of additional learning support and pastoral care to learners. Staff have a wide range of relevant experience and those supporting

learners with additional learning needs are well qualified. For example, additional support was offered to a learner who was off sick following an accident. Learners also receive home visits to help them maintain their progress towards their qualification. There are appropriate levels of in-class support given discreetly by vocational staff to individuals who find tasks challenging. Learners identified as having additional learning or social needs receive very good learning support from their workplace supervisors to ensure that learners keep focused on their work. The consortium is aware of the problems which learners have and has introduced a programme to help learners' progress and to identify at an early stage any problems which the learners may have. There are good links between the vocational area of learning and the central support team which allow the development of learners with basic skills needs. For example, a basic skills lesson continued the theme of a learning session about making musical instruments. The basic skills lesson developed learners' skills in planning, measuring, estimating and presentation of plans. Learners, especially those on the early years care training programme, understand the importance of developing their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners also receive good additional advice and guidance. For example, one of the trainers has set up a work placement for a learner who has decided to change her career at the age of 21. The learner has carried out the work experience in her own time to help her decide if this is the career she wants to follow. This has been good for the learner's motivation and has made her realise that to complete her current qualification will increase her future opportunities.

39. There is good off-the-job training. It is innovative, well-planned and well-structured. Learners are able to take part in a variety of stimulating practical activities to consolidate their learning and put into practice, lessons learned in the background knowledge training sessions. The practical activities are clearly linked to the NVQ units and assessment. There is effective use of electronic dolls during some learning sessions to allow learners to experience caring for the needs of a baby. Learners find this experience challenging and stimulating and are able to relate it to their work placements. There is good use of specialist staff to provide the background knowledge required for the training programmes in this area of learning. Staff effectively show learners a variety of techniques to achieve the same result. For example, learners are shown a range of ways to assist the people they are caring for to maintain good personal care.

40. Resources to support learning in off-the-job learning sessions have significantly improved since the previous inspection. There is a wide range of display materials, textbooks and practical equipment. A learning environment has been created to adequately simulate learners on both the early years care training programme and those on the care programmes. The learning environment for the early years care training programme now replicates learners' workplaces in nurseries and pre-schools. The learning environment for the care training programme now includes equipment to allow learners to practise making and moving beds. There is also equipment to allow these learners to practise patient-handling. Learners are able to study for a range of additional qualifications, such as first aid, health and safety, fire awareness, children's injuries and food hygiene, which are relevant to their vocational options.

41. The retention rate on the care training programme is currently unsatisfactory at 27 per cent. Many of the learners who leave the training programme before the end of their planned learning or without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan do so within three months of starting the training programme. For example, 13 of the 18 learners who started care training programmes have left the training programme early. Some did however achieve some units and some additional qualifications while they were in training. To improve the retention rate, the consortium has taken a number of steps. The interview and the initial assessment have been improved to ensure learners are put on the right training programme and at the most appropriate level for them. A taster programme has also been devised to enable learners to be better informed when making career decisions. Learners' progress is being monitored more thoroughly and the consortium has been developing a scheme of progression awards. There is also better monitoring of learners' attendance and punctuality. The induction programme has also been reviewed. Learners now receive information at induction about the type of work placements available to them and the type of experience they could expect at these work placements. Learners can change their work placement at any time during their training programme to ensure that the placement meets with the learners' needs and the requirements of the training programme.

42. The leadership and management of this area of learning are effective. Problems identified during the previous inspection have been resolved and the consortium has maintained and developed aspects identified as being good practice. Team meetings have been used as a mechanism for evaluating the learners' experience of on- and off-the-job training and improving the training programmes.

43. Individual learning plans have been improved and are now used for all learners on early years care and care training programmes. Information from the initial and the basic skills assessments are now included in the individual learning plans. However, there remains insufficient record of learners' skills assessment for the vocational area in the individual learning plan. Learners' additional support needs are not provided in sufficient detail in the individual learning plan. For example, there is no information on this document about what specific skills a learner needs to acquire, what timescale the learner is working to, or how the learner will do this. Learners are not sufficiently aware of the purpose of the individual learning plan.

Foundation programmes**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	8	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- very good pastoral support
- significant improvement in learners' confidence

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate recording of specific learning needs

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better evaluation of quality assurance
- better communication between learning support and Life Skills teams
- better support to make basic skills an integral part of the Life Skills programme

44. The learners on foundation Life Skills programmes receive very good pastoral support which has been improved since the previous inspection. During the reinspection, 80 per cent of learners had poor attendance at the training centre, 70 per cent have poor basic skills, 60 per cent have previously committed offences and all learners have poor communication and social skills and low levels of confidence. Learners receive prompt and effective support from experienced staff. The consortium has increased the frequency of the meetings with a range of external agencies such as with youth justice team and residential hostels to twice a month and now has weekly meetings with Connexions. The consortium's work with external agencies and also with learners' parents increases learners' attendance and participation. The learner support team identifies and analyses the learners' individual support needs and makes effective arrangements to support them. The team discusses the progress of the learners in meetings and maintains a good record of these discussions. Trainers also keep excellent detailed records of specific examples of the support given to learners. Learners' access to counselling has been further improved as a member of staff has recently achieved appropriate counselling qualifications. Learners value the recently established breakfast club, which encourages them to attend regularly and arrive at learning sessions on time.

There is still a high proportion of staff to learners, enabling staff to provide very effective individual support in learning sessions. Since the previous inspection, 60 per cent of learners have progressed to further education and 8 per cent have gained employment.

45. Learners' confidence has improved significantly. Learners continue to value their excellent relationships with staff and the opportunities available to develop team-working and social skills. There is a good range of practical activities for learners, including sports and competitive games. Learners effectively help plan visits to historic cities and maintain photographic evidence of these visits. Staff record individual learner's contributions to learning sessions. Trainers then provide feedback to support learners who find group discussions challenging. Learners have progress reviews every week, in which their performance during the previous week is evaluated. Learners appreciate the continuous monitoring of their progress and the contribution which these reviews have towards their personal and professional development.

46. Since the previous inspection, the consortium has offered learners a range of challenging learning opportunities, which is now satisfactory. Learners can access a number of eight-week personal development programmes. These structured programmes include anger management, equality of opportunity, health and safety and food hygiene. There is also effective individual learning support during learning sessions. Trainers challenge learners' understanding and encourage participation. During these learning sessions, learners' contributions are valued and trainers provide effective explanations about complex topics when required. The handouts and learning resources have been much improved. Trainers have developed good learning materials linked to the basic skills core curriculum. However, links between the basic skills learning support sessions and the personal development programmes are insufficiently developed.

47. The previous inspection identified the management of the central support team as weak. A training manager, a vocational manager and a retention officer have all recently been appointed and this has established a clear management structure in the Life Skills programme. Trainers have been appraised and their training requirements have been identified. For example, there is now an action plan to increase trainers' understanding of how to provide basic skills training as a part of the vocational training programme. Recently, staff from the Life Skills programme have been attending senior management meetings and have effectively contributed to the strategic planning of the Life Skills provision. Learners and staff now have access to laptop computers, the Internet and email. Management of the Life Skills programme is ineffective in providing progression routes for learners.

48. The system to record learners' learning needs is insufficiently developed. Assessments do however adequately identify learners' individual learning needs, personal development requirements and basic skills needs. Learners can also carry out a self-assessment to find their strengths and development needs. This information is not used as a basis for learners' individual learning plans. Instead, the individual learning plans contain the generic needs of the learners and mostly comprise a list of the training

programmes available.

49. The quality assurance of the Life Skills programme is now satisfactory. There are weekly team meetings to review learners' progress and participation in learning sessions. Trainers also evaluate the teaching and agree revised teaching strategies at these meetings. However, effective monitoring of the training provision and recording of learners' progress is still insufficiently developed.