

INSPECTION REPORT

European Social Fund - Yorkshire and the Humber Region

23 January 2007



**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 over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

INSPECTION REPORT

European Social Fund – Yorkshire and the Humber Region

CONTENTS

Overview	1
Terminology	3
Description of the region	4
Inspection rationale and scope	4
Key themes	5
Annex 1: SOVA	8
Annex 2: North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership	10
Annex 3: South Yorkshire Women’s Development Trust	12
Annex 4: Local Labour Initiative Training Enterprise	14
Annex 5: Voluntary and Community Sector Training Consortium	17
Annex 6: Bradford Youthbuild Trust Limited	19
Annex 7: Latitude	21
Annex 8: West Yorkshire Learning Consortium	23
Annex 9: Mechanical and Electrical Training – UK	25

OVERVIEW

European Social Fund

Context and a brief overview

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the European Union's (EU) structural funds developed to help reduce the differences in living standards between the people and the regions of the EU. The EU Commission is responsible for distributing the money among the member states of the EU. Under current EU regulations, ESF support is available to the United Kingdom (UK) until 2008 and is used to support the annual UK national action plan for employment (NAP).

The financing of ESF projects

In the UK and Gibraltar, ESF is managed by the national ESF division, which reports directly to the national programme monitoring committee (PMC). The ESF unit within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administers the fund. The money is distributed according to identified needs through national government offices (NGOs) in each region of the country. ESF generally pays for approximately 45 per cent of a project's costs. The remaining amount is known as match funding. Although public and private match funding can be used, a public authority must provide at least 10 per cent of the fund. Most match funding is provided by Jobcentre Plus, local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and other organisations such as regional development agencies and local authorities. These organisations are known as co-financing organisations (CFOs). In general they will bid through the NGO for ESF money to help co-finance projects identified in their regional development plans.

Some projects can apply for direct funding through government offices. This is referred to as alternative bidding. In addition a small amount of ESF is allocated to national projects. Projects usually run for 24 months although some can be longer. ESF may occasionally support projects for up to 36 months.

The focus of ESF

The aim of the ESF is to meet three key objectives.

- Objective 1 To promote the development of regions where economic expansion and growth is required. These areas include Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Wales and the Valleys, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly.
- Objective 2 To support the economic and social needs of areas with specific difficulties.
- Objective 3 To provide funding in regions not identified under Objective 1 to help improve education, training and employment policies and systems.

The ESF can provide support to achieve a range of policy fields within each objective. Policy fields are designed to help member states of the EU develop their job markets and the skills of people who are either in, or looking for, work. Each member state decides on which policy fields they will focus on. ESF is derived from the European Employment Action Plan which lays down five key areas (pillars). These will be delivered through ESF which can be included under the various objective 1, 2 and 3 programmes. It is possible that objective 2 programmes may not include any ESF dependent on the region and that any programme may not include all five elements. The five key areas are:

1. developing and promoting active labour market policies;
2. promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion;
3. promoting and improving training, education and counselling as part of a lifelong learning policy;
4. promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce, innovation and adaptability in work organisations, and developing entrepreneurship, and
5. specific measures to improve women's access to and participation in the labour market.

These policy fields are further broken down into measures.

Terminology and acronyms

Below are some of the terms and acronyms used in ESF provision.

Beneficiaries

This refers to those who benefit from the ESF and is another name for learners, clients, customers, students and participants, for example.

CFO

Co-Financing Organisation. This will usually be Jobcentre Plus or the LSC, but can also be, for example, local councils.

DEA

Disability Employment Advisers.

EQUAL

This is a transitional programme that tests new ways to reduce inequality in the labour market.

ERDF

European Regional Development Fund.

ILM

Intermediate Labour Market.

NAP

The national action plan for employment for England, Wales, Scotland and Gibraltar supported by the ESF.

NGO

National government offices. There are eight government offices responsible for education and training in specific regions of the UK.

PMC

Programme monitoring committees. There are regional committees linked with each national government office and a national committee that reports to the ESF Division.

RDA

Regional development agencies. These are non-departmental government bodies funded by central government responsible for promoting economic growth and competitiveness.

More detailed information about the ESF can be found at www.esf.gov.uk

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION

1. Yorkshire and the Humber Region has a population of approximately five million. It includes the counties of Yorkshire and the Humber, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. The region includes many large urban areas, such as York, Leeds, Sheffield, and Bradford alongside large rural areas. Across the region the declining sectors are coal, steel and traditional engineering industries. Food production has also seen a large decline with the closure of several long-established businesses. The fastest growing sectors in the region are construction and services industries. There are several new development projects in the region such as the development of the new airport at Fylingdales.
2. This inspection focuses upon ESF provision in the Yorkshire and the Humber Region co-financed by the LSC and/or Jobcentre Plus only. The newly formed regional LSC is based in Bradford and is divided into the four county areas. Each area has a local office. Jobcentre Plus also has offices based in these areas with its regional office in Leeds.
3. Humber is made up of the authorities of Kingston upon Hull, the East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire, and North East Lincolnshire. There are in excess of 130,000 people with poor numeracy and/or literacy skills. Participation and attainment levels across all age groups are below the regional average.
4. North Yorkshire has a population of approximately 750,000. The working age population totals 375,000, of whom 84 per cent are economically active. Eighty-two per cent of businesses have fewer than 10 employees. Around 50 per cent of the workforce is employed in wholesale/retail, manufacturing, health and social work, and real estate and business.
5. South Yorkshire consists of the three metropolitan districts of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham, and the city of Sheffield and has a population of about 1.3 million. The total working age population is about 740,000. The largest employers are in public services, business and financial services, manufacturing, transport, hospitality and catering, retail, and construction. South Yorkshire has ESF objective 1 funding.
6. West Yorkshire's population is just over two million. The largest employers are in public administration, health and education, manufacturing, banking, finance and insurance, and construction.

INSPECTION RATIONALE AND SCOPE

7. All providers across the region were taken into account and inspectors reviewed 24 inspection reports from those providers already inspected. The sample of providers whose reports appear in the annex of this report are an agreed representative sample taken from the 37 providers not already inspected. Some providers hold ESF contracts that are match-funded by either the LSC or Jobcentre Plus and some have contracts with both. The sample was chosen after consultation with Jobcentre Plus and the LSC. Account was given to the different objectives, policy fields and measures, as well as the size and variety of projects across the region.
8. Inspectors spent between two and three days on each inspection visit. They examined a sample of self-assessment reports for those providers not visited. They also reviewed additional paperwork such as the regional development and business plans and local ESF

development plans, and carried out key interviews with those responsible for ESF provision in the region.

9. Individual reports on the following providers of ESF provision are written as annexes to this report:

Annex 1 - SOVA

Annex 2 - North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership

Annex 3 - South Yorkshire Women's Development Trust

Annex 4 - Local Labour Initiative Training Enterprise

Annex 5 - Voluntary and Community Sector Training Consortium

Annex 6 - Bradford Youthbuild Trust Limited

Annex 7 - Latitude

Annex 8 - West Yorkshire Learning Consortium

Annex 9 - Mechanical and Electrical Training - UK

KEY THEMES

Key strengths

10. Retention and achievement rates on many programmes are good. Achievement rates are sometimes considerably higher than those contracted for. In some cases, however, providers achieved good results with learners despite not always achieving their contractual requirements. Some providers have been successful in attracting high numbers of learners onto their programmes and in some cases retention is 100 per cent. Many providers work well in improving attendance, which is generally good. Learners often achieve useful additional qualifications to those funded.

11. Learners develop good practical skills on some projects. These include good construction skills in painting and decorating, carpentry and joinery and tiling, as well as good skills in information and communications technology (ICT), customer service, and disc jockeying. Many learners who come onto programmes have previously lacked the confidence to go straight onto a vocational training programme. They now demonstrate good levels of competence and ability and many go onto further education courses or into employment.

12. Many learners develop particularly good employability skills and also demonstrate good personal and social skills. They improve in confidence and self-esteem and many learners are highly motivated. Many learners have improved their communication skills such as reading, writing and speaking.

13. Teaching and learning are generally good. Most providers have appropriately experienced and qualified staff, and learning sessions are generally well planned. Some providers have developed innovative approaches to teaching such as the highly effective use of dance and drama to introduce initial advice and guidance. Learners identified as in need of learning support are often well provided for. Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) support is usually given where needed, although the quality of support varies between satisfactory and good.

14. There is particularly good additional support for many learners. Provider staff are often sensitive and caring in their approach to learners, and many are highly committed to improving people's lives, particularly in the voluntary and community care sector. They are highly skilled at working with a wide range of learners, which includes ex-offenders, those at

risk of offending, and those who have been long-term unemployed. Many learners have multiple barriers to learning and/or employment. Some learners have been able to improve their lives significantly and are now able to function better as valuable members of society. Care is taken to ensure learners are kept motivated and have good opportunities to succeed.

15. Leadership and management vary between inadequate and outstanding although in many providers, leadership and management are good. Most providers have created strong and productive links with employers, other training providers and outside agencies. Learners are able to benefit from a wide range of advice and guidance. Many learners have received good practical advice with housing, debt, and drug and alcohol misuse. Learners on some programmes have very useful work placements or tasters for employment. Good partnerships have been developed by many providers with other training agencies to ensure learners have access to a wide range of provision.

16. One provider, the Voluntary and Community Sector Training Consortium (VC Train), has developed an outstanding and highly successful consortium led provision that benefits large numbers of learners under ESF objective 1. Management of this provision is outstanding. VC Train leads and manages a large group of training providers, many of whom are small and require strong support and guidance. It provides particularly good and well-structured staff training for these providers as well as giving them sound practical help in managing a diverse range of provision. Learners are often able to gain good skills from local community provision across a wide area of South Yorkshire.

17. Quality improvement is often good and the best providers have clear procedures for checking and amending programmes accordingly. However, there is insufficient monitoring of subcontracted provision by a small number of providers and there is often poor use made of feedback from learners and employers by these providers. Equality and diversity is adequately reinforced by many providers although in a few providers few checks are made of learners successes and achievements by ethnicity, age, gender or disability.

Key areas for improvement

18. There is a wide range of quality improvement arrangements. Some were found to be good, some satisfactory, and some to be inadequate. In those providers where there is poor monitoring of subcontractors, there is too much use of informal checks and a poor understanding by staff on how or what should be checked. In these providers there were often poorly written service level agreements and inadequate use of learners' feedback.

19. There were insufficient progression opportunities to move into further education or employment for a small number of learners. Aspirations were raised with these learners but they were often too old to progress onto apprenticeships and, in some cases, suitable training or employment opportunities were not locally available.

20. Target-setting and progress reviews are sometimes poorly recorded. Many targets do not have clear measurable outcomes. Progress reviews are not always routinely carried out and are often poorly recorded, except in the better providers. Soft outcomes and distance travelled are not always recorded on reviews and analysis of soft outcomes is sometimes weak.

Self-assessment

21. At many providers, self-assessment reports are generally well written. The reports are generally accurate and have clearly identified key strengths and areas for improvement. Self-assessment involves appropriate action-planning in most providers. However, some new providers' reports are poorly written and often overly descriptive. In many cases, those providers interviewed were clear about their provision and found the process of self-assessment helpful. Although many large mainstream providers have well-developed self-assessment practices, some reports contain little or no information about their ESF-funded provision.

ANNEX 1

SOVA – January 2007

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

22. SOVA was formed as a charity in 1975 and is now a national voluntary organisation operating across England and Wales. Its mission is to strengthen communities by promoting social inclusion and reducing crime and re-offending. SOVA was inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) in December 2003. The organisation delivers a large number of projects across the country specialising in helping offenders and ex-offenders. South Yorkshire Offender Partnership Skills Network (SYOP - SN) was developed by a multi-agency partnership, with SOVA as the managing agent, specifically to help ex-offenders and those at risk of offending. SYOP - SN is a project funded through objective 1, measure 17, and is co-financed by South Yorkshire LSC. The partnership comprises a group of learning providers in South Yorkshire and is managed by SOVA from its office in Sheffield. The project provides learners with literacy and numeracy support along with initial advice and guidance and employment opportunities. The project funding also provides training for volunteer mentors as well as capacity building opportunities for organisations outside the partnership. SYOP - SN subcontracts the delivery of its provision to five providers in the partnership. These are DACRO in Doncaster, SOVA in Barnsley, Rotherham and three South Yorkshire prisons, and Rainer in Doncaster prison and Sheffield. The project started in October 2004 and is due to end in December 2007. Most learners are referred by the probation service to the project and there are 448 learners currently on programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

23. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

24. Learners' achievements are good and exceed contractual requirements. Many learners complete a wide range of courses and qualifications including those for literacy and numeracy, the contractors' safety passport, and information technology. Most learners who start a qualification achieve it, and several learners have gained additional qualifications over and above those funded. Some learners progress into employment or go into further education. Providers work well with learners to ensure they have access to the best opportunities to prevent them from offending or re-offending. There is good, continued support for learners when they leave. Learners are generally well motivated and many learn good employability skills. Many learners gain in self-confidence and self-esteem during their time on the project.

The quality of provision

25. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. Learning sessions and individual training sessions are planned well and learners adequately improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Staff have good relevant experience and work well with learners to help them achieve.

26. Learners are given good initial advice and guidance, although targets set are not adequately reinforced. Initial assessment is generally good although learners are not always given copies of their individual learning plans or progress reviews. Learning and pastoral support is good. Particularly effective and sensitive support is given to learners to help them overcome barriers to learning and employment. This includes the purchase of clothing and travel costs.

Leadership and management

27. Leadership and management are good. Partnership working is highly effective and project partners hold productive quarterly meetings. Partners work particularly well with a wide range of other relevant organisations and agencies that provide good personal support and help for learners. There is good sharing of best practices across the partnership. SYOP - SN held a well-managed conference last year to celebrate success and share information among the partnership and the wider community. This was well attended.

28. Quality improvement is good. The self-assessment process is thorough and inspectors agreed with many of the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. Most provider staff have a good understanding of the Common Inspection Framework and of the key issues and challenges facing the partnership. Feedback from learners is analysed well and used to make improvements. There are thorough procedures to monitor and check the quality of the provision within the partnership. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of recent improvements to the observations of teaching and learning.

29. The partnership's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. Data on ethnicity, age and gender is clearly recorded, although there is insufficient analysis of the outcomes and achievements of learners. For learners with mobility difficulties, access is poor to one of the provider's sites.

30. There has been slow progress on the capacity building aspect of the project, although this represents only a small part of the overall funding. Work has recently started to help improve the provision within smaller providers and to help a wider range of employers find employment for ex-offenders. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this work. There is insufficient monitoring and recording of soft outcomes. This has been identified in the self-assessment report and actions are in place to rectify it.

ANNEX 2

North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership – January 2007

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

31. The North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership (NYBEP) was formed in 1992 and became a company limited by guarantee in 2000. It provides training services to 58 mainstream secondary schools, 15 special schools, 26 independent schools, eight colleges, training providers, and over 380 primary schools in North Yorkshire. It bids independently for funding for new vocational developments and advises schools on all aspects of managing learning for pre-16s away from their home institution. Each year NYBEP's services are accessed by some 32,800 students, 580 teachers, and 1,430 business partners.

32. NYBEP holds an ESF contract, co-financed through North Yorkshire LSC, for a curriculum intervention programme (CIP). The project started in September 2006 and is due to end in September 2007. The aim of the project is to assist young people who face barriers to education and employment. The programme is intended to provide a range of activities to improve teamworking, communication and interpersonal skills. Learners work towards nationally recognised qualifications. Another key aim of the project is to increase the skills of key school staff so that programmes of this type will continue after the ESF funding ends. NYBEP subcontracts the training of key school staff to two other providers, Craven College, and YH training. A third provider, Skillforce, is contracted to deliver some elements of the training for young people, in particular team-building and outdoor activities in addition to a dedicated life skills adviser. There are currently 372 learners on the programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

33. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

34. Learners gain particularly good skills and knowledge while taking part in the programme. They demonstrate good improvements in their self-esteem, confidence and levels of motivation within a short time of starting the programme. Young learners develop very good interpersonal skills and are better able to communicate with their teachers and peers.

35. Achievements are excellent and NYBEP has achieved significantly over its contractual targets. Learners gain generic qualifications such as level 1 preparation for employment and wider key skills at levels 1 and 2. They also work towards wider key skills certificate at levels 1 and 2. Learners attending the programme are better focused on their plans after leaving school.

36. All learners demonstrate a clear understanding of the progression opportunities and work-based learning programmes available to them on leaving school. Attendance is generally excellent. For example, on the teacher training programme, attendance is at 100 per cent despite many learners having to travel long distances to attend after work.

The quality of provision

37. Teaching and learning is very good with some outstanding lessons. Lessons are particularly well planned to meet individual learners' needs. Learners take part in a wide range of highly effective practical activities to develop skills such as problem solving, communication, and teamworking. Interview skills are taught well by the NYBEP adviser linked to the programme, and learners are fully involved in role play and discussion. Learners clearly enjoy and learn a great deal from these sessions. The programme for key school staff is well presented and stimulating, giving them the skills and knowledge to better support and advise young people on vocational courses and employment opportunities.

38. Outstanding initial advice and guidance is given to learners about the course and its benefits. Learners and their parents receive detailed and well-laid-out course information. The decision whether the young people should join the programme is made between the parent, the young person and the school. The advice that teachers receive is also very helpful. Where a course is not the most appropriate for the learner, NYBEP clearly guides them to a programme that better meets their needs. However, some individual learning plans are not completed in detail and some learners are not sufficiently involved in the development of them. NYBEP is currently working with schools to improve the quality of learning plans.

39. Support for learners is good with particularly good care taken to ensure those with additional learning needs are well catered for. Personal support for learners is also good.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management of the CIP is outstanding. There is thorough monitoring of subcontractors. Service level agreements are clear and detailed. There are regular, informative meetings with all stakeholders and all partners. Particularly good use is made of data with an excellent system to monitor the progress of beneficiaries. Quality improvement is good. Observations of teaching and learning are particularly effective and improvements have been made where needed. Subcontractors are thoroughly monitored and evaluated by NYBEP's staff. All communications with subcontractors is clearly recorded. There is effective monitoring of learners' progress with each subcontractor. The self-assessment report is generally accurate, critical and evaluative. Strengths and weaknesses identified by NYBEP have also been identified through inspection. Appropriate steps are being taken to rectify the weaknesses, although it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these measures.

41. Equality of opportunity is good and the health and safety of individual learners is checked and monitored thoroughly. Tutors receive a comprehensive information pack for every group of young people outlining the individual needs of each learner as well as any relevant medical or personal information that might affect their behaviour, or actions to be taken in an emergency. Equality and diversity are reinforced well throughout the programme.

ANNEX 3

South Yorkshire Women’s Development Trust – January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

42. South Yorkshire Women’s Development Trust (SYWDT) was founded in February 2002 and was granted charitable status in March 2004. Its work includes benefiting women in the South Yorkshire area through the development of their capacity and skills, and the advancement of education, training or retraining. SYWDT employs two full-time and six part-time staff. Staff work mainly in Sheffield and Rotherham. The head office is in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. There is a board of four directors and a financial adviser, and a senior management team comprising three project co-ordinators, each having their own specific functions and responsibilities. One of the projects training co-ordinators has responsibility for the ESF project, reporting directly to the board of trustees.

43. SYWDT offers a range of programmes to promote non-traditional trades to women, including tiling, plastering, joinery and computer-aided design, as well as the City and Guilds teacher trainer award in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University.

44. Women’s Education and Learning Partnership is an ESF project co-financed by the South Yorkshire LSC under objective 1. Training is delivered by SYWDT and two subcontracted training providers in South Yorkshire. The project focuses on providing training to women who wish to learn non-traditional skills. SYWDT provides free childcare. The project is known as Gender Equality project – Women into non-traditional trades and is offered under policy field 3, measure 15. It started in June 2005 and is due to end in December 2007. The contract sets out a number of specific measures. These include the provision of training and support to help female beneficiaries gain jobs or progress onto higher education in areas where women are under-represented, followed by a start on a trainer course. To date, the project has engaged 329 learners.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

45. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

46. Learners acquire good skills. They gain a good range of useful practical skills in tiling, plastering, painting and decorating, and bricklaying. Most learners also gain self-confidence and are better equipped to gain employment in non-traditional areas. However, the number of learners progressing into employment or further education is low. Recruitment onto the programme is satisfactory and meets or just exceeds contractual targets.

The quality of provision

47. Teaching and learning is generally good. Lessons are usually well planned and include sufficient range and diversity of activities and tasks. Learners have good access to adequate tools and equipment. Tutors ensure learners are fully aware of health and safety risks and understand safety measures. Learners are motivated and enthusiastic about their studies, and develop good questioning skills to gain more experience and understanding of the work

they are doing. They have good opportunities to gain confidence and skills in using tools. Topics covered in lessons are appropriately focused to activities that learners can then usefully apply within their own homes. Lessons are scheduled at times to suit learners including weekends and evenings, and childcare is made available to allow learners to attend sessions.

48. Adequate support is given to learners. SYWDT uses its network of partners well to ensure that learners have access to good advice and guidance on related learning and employment opportunities through, for example, home visitors. Continued support is often given to learners after they have completed their courses. Travel is often paid for where needed. Learners are provided with a useful and informative directory of full- and part-time courses in construction and engineering in South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. However, there is insufficient specialised support for learners with specific needs and there is insufficient access to specialised literacy or numeracy support. In the case of one learner with a hearing impairment, the provider was unable to offer specialist support to help them participate fully in learning sessions.

49. SYWDT does not monitor sufficiently the progression of learners upon completion of their courses. Learner evaluation sheets are collected at the end of each course. These often provide information about identified learning needs. However, the provider has no formal systems to ensure that learners have sufficient information to access support, which would help with progression onto relevant courses or employment.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are generally satisfactory. SYWDT has particularly effective methods of networking and sharing information. An informative website has been developed to provide information and reference sources to women and employers. However, the skills and strengths of staff are not fully utilised and weaknesses identified in staff performance have not yet been fully rectified. Equality and diversity is satisfactory although this is not adequately reinforced with learners throughout the programme.

51. Arrangements for quality improvement are poor. SYWDT does not sufficiently analyse feedback from learners on the quality of the provision. There are very few observations of teaching and learning. Those that have taken place have not led to action plans for improvement. There are no systems or procedures for internal verification. Management responsibilities are unclear and good practices are not always shared across the organisation.

52. Inspectors found the self-assessment report to be too descriptive and insufficiently critical. There was insufficient consultation with staff, learners and partners. Inspectors found some of the strengths to be no more than normal practice and identified a number of additional weaknesses.

ANNEX 4

Local Labour Initiative Training Enterprise – January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

53. Local Labour Initiative Training Enterprise (Llite) was formed in 2001 to focus exclusively on skills shortages. It provides training in construction and associated trades in Hull, East Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Humber and South Yorkshire. The head office is in Hull and additional training facilities are in Sheffield. The organisation receives funding for a range of programmes. Most of these are subcontracted from other training providers and local colleges of further education.

54. Llite also holds two ESF contracts under objective 3, both co-financed through Jobcentre Plus. The Bridge programme lasts six weeks and is for unemployed people who wish to join the construction industry. It is intended to give them the necessary skills and qualifications to achieve a first job in construction. These learners have the choice of three pathways, one leading to a construction industry safety certificate, one leading to an entry level national vocational qualification (NVQ) construction qualification, and one which is a bespoke course to meet the needs of an individual employer. Learners can learn a range of skills such as bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, and plumbing and plastering. The Ace programme is a specific one-year intermediate labour market programme for unemployed people who have had some experience in the construction industry, who have a relevant level 2 qualification, and who wish to improve their skills up to level 3. Learners on this programme can choose either carpentry and joinery or bricklaying. Both programmes are delivered on a roll-on roll-off basis.

55. Llite subcontracts a small amount of its provision to other providers based in Scarborough and Grimsby. At the time of the inspection there were 38 learners on the Bridge programme and 37 on the Ace programme. Twenty per cent of these learners were on courses which were delivered by subcontractors.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

56. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

57. Retention rates are particularly good across both programmes. Eighty per cent of Bridge learners and 91 per cent of Ace learners have remained on their programme since the Ace contract started in November 2005 and the Bridge contract in May 2006. The number of learners gaining jobs on the Bridge programme is good and is 4 per cent above the contractual target of 52 per cent. Learners on the Ace programme are all within the first half of their course and it is too early for them to have gained jobs.

58. Learners develop good self-confidence and self-esteem, and the career aims become more focused and achievable. Learners develop good construction skills that meet their own and employers' needs.

The quality of provision

59. The literacy and numeracy provision is outstanding. This provision is offered to learners through one of Llite's subcontractors. The tutor quickly and successfully removes any negative views associated with poor numeracy and literacy skills. It is made clear to learners that this support is optional but most learners choose to take up this provision and are successful in improving their skills. Around 87 per cent of learners are successful in achieving a qualification in basic literacy or numeracy. Very good pastoral support is also provided.

60. Learning materials are good and well used and some materials are outstanding. Handouts and other materials are particularly well designed and presented to meet learners' needs. They are linked clearly to the NVQ units and other qualifications.

61. Learners' files are structured and detailed well. They include a clearly written individual learning plan, placement information, detailed induction materials and review forms. Individual learning plans are developed with the full involvement of the learner.

62. Resources are satisfactory and equipment meets industry standards. Accommodation is appropriate although some areas are not of a satisfactory standard. Llite is fully aware of this and is currently searching for better premises. Learners have appropriate access to computers and are able to access the internet as part of jobsearch activities, for online testing for the safety certificate and for word-processing.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are particularly good. Llite has very good working relationships with employers to provide a wide range of good work placements matched well to learners' needs. Learners are able to move between employers on a short-term basis to help them to gain specific skills to complete their course. Frequent, well-structured progress reviews ensure that any issues are quickly dealt with.

64. There is good and highly effective teamworking. Communications are good with regular formal and informal meetings. Staff share good practice and the work-placement officers' team meet regularly to share information about employers' and learners' needs.

65. Quality improvement is good. Staff are encouraged to suggest different ways of working and ensure continuous improvement. There is good use of feedback from learners and learning sessions are observed and recorded well. However, self-assessment is insufficiently thorough and does not involve all staff and stakeholders. The self-assessment report identified several strengths that are no more than normal practice.

66. Equality and diversity are generally satisfactory. At induction, learners are well informed about Llite's equal opportunities policies, but there is no further training to improve their awareness and understanding of relevant issues.

ANNEX 5

VC Train – January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

67. VC Train was formed in September 2001 to co-ordinate a group of voluntary and community sector organisations in South Yorkshire. VC Train is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is governed by a board of trustees and managed by an executive director. The consortium consists of 120 learning providers many of whom hold direct learning contracts in their own right. Providers have to apply for membership of the consortium and membership provides them with staff training and other resources to be able to deliver learning opportunities within their communities. As well as managing the delivery of ESF projects, VC Train is also responsible for the leadership and management of other funded training through its members. The organisation is based in Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

68. VC Train holds two large ESF contracts under objective 1. One project is to develop and deliver a programme of adult and community learning to almost 9,000 non-traditional learners under policy field 3, measures 11 and 13. The other project provides advice and guidance, and training and skills development to disadvantaged groups of approximately 4,000 learners under policy field 3, measure 17. These projects have been funded since October 2004 and are due to end in December 2007. In addition to these projects the organisation holds a contract under objective 3 that enables it to provide development and staff training for voluntary and community sector providers in West Yorkshire to ensure efficient access to and use of management data and information. Training is subcontracted out to 56 learning providers within the consortium. Providers are managed in smaller groups which are centred around individual expertise such as those providers of learning for those with disabilities. These providers are given management support where needed and are quality monitored by a support team from VC Train. The ESF contracts are co-financed by South Yorkshire LSC. There are 1,244 learners currently on learning programmes with providers within the consortium.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

69. The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

70. There are particularly high retention and achievement rates on many programmes and recruitment onto programmes is outstanding. VC Train has exceeded agreed targets on recruitment and achievement across all contracts. For example, on the adult and community learning project the consortium has recruited 1,097 men and 2,379 women, which is considerably higher than for which it is contracted. There is similarly high recruitment on the project dealing with disadvantaged groups, which have also exceeded contractual requirements. In most providers there is very good retention and achievement. In some providers this is outstanding and almost all learners are retained and gain a qualification, job or progress onto additional learning programmes. Some learners achieve additional qualifications to those funded. Punctuality and attendance are generally good.

71. Most learners acquire particularly good personal and social skills and develop good self-confidence and self-esteem. Many achieve demanding personal goals and good employability and English language skills. Their communication and social skills also improve. Learners develop very good practical skills on some programmes in, for example, ICT, music technology, and animation.

72. The number of providers benefiting from capacity building projects is good. In addition, the assistance given to providers by the organisation responsible for disabled learners is also good although these are slightly under the contracted targets.

The quality of provision

73. Teaching and learning are generally very good. Teaching is sometimes outstanding. Learning sessions are well prepared and in most cases very good use is made of learning resources. In two providers, highly effective use was made of interactive whiteboards in group sessions. Most tutors, instructors and counsellors have relevant experience and knowledge and are generally well qualified. Where individual counselling and tuition are given, this is carried out with careful consideration to individual learners' needs. Initial advice and guidance is good. One provider has a particularly outstanding and innovative approach to this through the highly effective use of dance and drama.

74. Outstanding support is given to learners by many providers. Learners who have mental health and/or learning difficulties receive particularly good pastoral support. Provider staff take a considerate and caring approach to ensure learners are able to progress. Many learners are able to access additional learning support if they require it once their programme has finished.

75. The range of courses and programmes is satisfactory. This includes courses in drug and alcohol awareness, introduction to disc-jockey skills, legal requirements for volunteer workers, and leadership. Most providers respond effectively to providing programmes requested by learners.

76. Initial assessment is good in many providers although some providers have identified the need to improve their procedures. Learning plans are in place but are not always used effectively. In some providers learning plans do not record all learners' skills development aims. Progress reviews are adequate, but are sometimes poorly recorded. Targets are not always sufficiently detailed and do not have achieved dates.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are particularly good. There is strong operational management and very good use is made of management information and data. Data is produced in a range of formats that are easy to understand and share. Management of the large number of providers in the consortium is outstanding. Staff training is highly effective at helping to improve the provision. Several members of VC Train's support unit staff have benefited from completing the ALI's quality champions award. The director of development has also gained an award for recognising and recording progress and achievement. Staff in the support unit are highly experienced and well qualified and many are active in continuing professional development. Most hold appropriate teaching, assessment or verification qualifications. There is strong management of providers within the consortium. The VC Train support unit organises a wide range of well-focused staff development events for consortium provider staff. Recent events have included training on initial assessment, leadership and management, and self-assessment. Good quality management tools and guidance have been developed to improve provision within providers.

78. VC Train, along with providers, has a clear strategic focus for sustainability. Senior managers at VC Train have a clear vision for future developments and many individual providers have good business plans.

79. Partnership working is outstanding. Providers work well to share best practice within the consortium with some good examples of provider staff working with other providers or going out on visits. Many providers work highly effectively with local partners, employers and agencies to benefit learners, and to help remove barriers to learning and employment.

80. Quality improvement arrangements are generally good. There is a strong emphasis and focus on improving the provision. There are good procedures for collecting and analysing data and other information provided by providers. Clearly written contracts are in place with subcontractors and these are monitored thoroughly. Annual observations of teaching and learning are carried out although information recorded is often insufficiently detailed, and action plans are not always used effectively to lead to improvement. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive with each provider producing their own self-assessment report. Providers' reports are satisfactory. Many have found the process of self-assessment useful and most providers have an accurate view of their provision. The overall self-assessment report provides an accurate picture of the organisation. Strengths and weaknesses identified closely match those identified through inspection. Useful learner feedback is collected by most providers and by VC Train although this is not always analysed or used well.

81. Equality and diversity are good and are reinforced well with most learners. Provider accommodation varies between outstanding and poor, and some providers have poor access for people with restricted mobility. However, providers make good use of their accommodation and those with poor access have contingency plans in place to ensure learners are not disadvantaged. Most VC Train support unit staff have attended equality and diversity training and all have a clear understanding of equal opportunities.

ANNEX 6

Bradford Youthbuild Trust Limited - January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

82. Bradford Youthbuild Trust Ltd (Youthbuild) is an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee. It provides construction training for unemployed adults in Bradford, Yorkshire, and the surrounding areas. Youthbuild is the lead partner for an ESF contract under objective 3, measure 1.2. The co-financing organisation for this is Jobcentre Plus. The contract provides construction training to unemployed adult learners over a 26-week period. The contract's primary target is progression into employment for 45 per cent of the learners, with the opportunity to achieve either a full level 1 NVQ or units towards an NVQ level 2 in construction. The qualification aim has recently been changed to an introductory certificate in construction. The training and assessment of the introductory certificate is subcontracted to Bradford City College. Another local provider, Accent Community Partnership, is responsible for initial assessment, literacy and numeracy support, progress reviews, and the provision of mentor support. There are currently 48 learners on the programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

83. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

84. Achievement rates and progression into employment are poor. Of the 52 learners who have left the programme since the contract started in November 2005, 21 per cent have progressed into employment and 21 per cent have achieved the introductory certificate in construction. Retention is poor and declining. The average length of stay for the first three learner groups has been approximately 16 weeks. The average length of stay for the fourth group was eight weeks. Attendance rates for the current group who have been on programme for eight weeks are poor at around 50 per cent. However, those learners who stay on the programme achieve good skills in construction and employability skills. For example, a female learner, whose main career focus when joining the programme was painting and decorating, is also developing particularly good bricklaying skills.

The quality of provision

85. There is a good range of basic construction training. The training programme provides learners with a good range of relevant construction skills in painting and decorating, bricklaying, and joinery. Effective timetabling enables learners to develop all skills simultaneously as part of their planned training.

86. Tutors have good occupational skills and experience and learners are given good pastoral support. However, individual learning support is poorly planned. Insufficient attention is given to learners' previous experience and qualifications and not all learners are initially or diagnostically assessed for literacy and numeracy support needs. Individual learning targets are not sufficiently clear and are often poorly detailed. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, the planning of sessions does not take account of individual learners'

needs. The programme is not modified to engage and motivate learners who come with higher level construction skills and knowledge.

87. Work placements are poorly planned and managed. None of the current learners have had a work placement with an external employer. Insufficient action is taken to engage suitable employers which are willing to provide work experience. Although good efforts have been made to develop employer links, this has not led to offers of work placements. The work-placement officer has recently left the provider. Youthbuild's house refurbishment project allows good opportunities for learner involvement, although there is no systematic approach for allocating learners to work on this venture.

88. Advice and guidance to learners is insufficient. Learners are not fully informed about the programme and its content. They do not receive accurate information and often do not understand the qualification for which they are being prepared. Learners are not told they need to put some money towards buying, for example, a bricklaying book and DVD. Written information given during induction is too complicated for some learners and does not adequately cover the programme content and qualification. Tutors are aware of learners' skills development, although there is insufficient recording of progress.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership and management are generally inadequate although good emphasis is placed on developing the skills of tutors. All tutors are currently working towards teaching qualifications. There are good links with other organisations in the centre and this provides learners with good facilities including a well-laid-out refectory and rest area. Through its project work, Youthbuild develops and extends its housing stock as part of a planned strategy to generate rental income. It also makes arrangements to supplement its income by leasing part of the training centre to another provider. This is part of a clear strategy for sustainability.

90. Some health and safety practices are poor. The training provision is not systematically checked or audited for safe working practices. Health and safety procedures are not fully developed or shared with staff and learners. Youthbuild does not routinely ensure that learners are working safely and wearing appropriate protective clothing when working on the housing project construction site. The house refurbishing project has not been suitably risk assessed and there are no washing or toilet facilities for learners. Some machinery does not have safety guards, and in some instances, incorrect voltage is used for electrical construction equipment.

91. Inadequate action is taken to quality improve the provision. Data is not analysed well or used to evaluate trends and improve learning. Few targets are set to be able to evaluate the provision effectively. Learners' views are not routinely sought, although there are plans to introduce a learner forum as part of an improved communication strategy. A service level agreement with a major subcontractor is insufficiently monitored to check contractual compliance. Teaching, learning and other key processes in the learners' journey are not quality assured. The self-assessment report recognises many of the issues identified by inspectors. Managers are in the process of developing appropriate actions to improve the quality of the provision.

ANNEX 7

Latitude – January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

92. Latitude (also known as Hull Job Link) was founded in 1996 and is based in Kingston-upon-Hull. It has two training centres in the city centre. Latitude's employment training division specialises in training with an emphasis on meeting the needs of unemployed people.

93. Latitude has contracts to deliver two ESF-funded programmes. Both contracts are co-financed by Jobcentre Plus under objective 3. The contracts started in November 2005 and are due to complete in September 2007. One project is called Inspiring a Future (IAF) and the other is called First Step (FS). IAF is a five-week programme for unemployed young people between the ages of 18 and 24. Learners take part in a range of indoor and outdoor activities designed to improve their self-confidence and motivation and gain employment. Approximately two-thirds of the provision is subcontracted to Fern Training, in Grimsby and Scunthorpe. Learners attend the FS programme for one and a half days each week. The number of weeks they attend depends on their individual needs. It is aimed at unemployed lone parents wishing to rejoin the labour market. The programme focuses on providing key employability skills, job search skills, short training courses and work experience for lone parents to help build confidence. Childcare facilities are provided by Latitude.

94. Since the start of the contracts, 121 people have completed the IAF programme with six on the programme at the time of the inspection. During the same period, there have been 105 people completing the FS programme with 12 currently on the programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

95. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

96. Learners develop good self-confidence and self-esteem as well as improved career aims. Personal and vocational goals are appropriately set to motivate learners. Learners gain good jobsearch skills such as letter writing and interview skills. They also demonstrate good presentation skills and improved teamworking and interpersonal skills.

97. The number of learners gaining jobs is high on the IAF programme at 42 per cent. This is considerably higher than contracted targets. However, the proportion of learners gaining jobs on the FS programme is low at 26 per cent, compared with a contractual target of 40 per cent. Retention is generally good with approximately 70 per cent of learners completing their programme.

The quality of provision

98. Teaching and learning are generally good. Tutors develop good working relationships with learners. Learners work well with each other and provide good peer support. Learning materials are mostly good although some have not been updated for the current courses.

Some learning sessions are very good with particularly good use made of innovative teaching methods to improve teamwork skills and learners' understanding of the working environment. Tutors who are qualified life coaches work very effectively with learners to help them set goals, identify their own skills, and to introduce them to a wider range of jobs. Learners have good access to a range of additional qualifications, such as problem-solving, first aid, health and safety, and manual handling. Accommodation within the training centre is good and teaching rooms are of an appropriate size. Computers are not to current industry standards although managers are clearly aware of this and have firm plans to replace them.

99. Good support is provided for learners, including those who have significant barriers to employment. Learners, and those who have finished their programme but have not yet gained jobs, are contacted about new job opportunities as they arise. Useful childcare support is provided where necessary. Learners can also be provided with an allowance for travel and clothing for interviews.

100. Literacy and numeracy needs are generally well met by directing learners to another provider in the city, although this service is not promoted well. Latitude does not record the effectiveness of this provision.

Leadership and management

101. Leadership and management are generally good. Managers and staff have developed particularly productive partnerships with other providers and employers. Managers meet regularly and action plan effectively. However, management of the subcontractor is weak. The subcontractor is not meeting some aspects of its contractual obligations and no effective action has been taken to rectify these issues.

102. Quality improvement processes are good. There is a good range of quality assurance systems that are also used well to monitor the quality of the subcontracted provision. The observations of teaching and learning are planned well and recorded with a clear schedule to ensure all tutors are observed twice a year. Self-assessment is inclusive and inspectors agreed with many of the key strengths and issues identified in the self-assessment report.

103. Latitude has appropriate equality of opportunity policies that are discussed during the induction process. Some learning sessions are used well to raise learners' understanding of diversity issues. There is a good culture of mutual respect within the organisation and all staff have received appropriate equality and diversity training.

ANNEX 8

West Yorkshire Learning Consortium – January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

104. The West Yorkshire Learning Consortium (WYLC) is a charity based in the centre of Leeds. It was founded as an independent consortium in December 2002 when it became a company limited by guarantee. Its aim is to ensure that members of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in West Yorkshire have the necessary skills to enable them to develop and provide services, including training, to their clients and customers.

105. WYLC receives ESF funding under objective 3, co-financed through West Yorkshire LSC, to deliver a project known as E-Vision. This project started in April 2006 and has three aims. One is to develop an electronic library for e-learning and other training resources for the VCS. The second is to develop a virtual learning environment for VCS organisations, and the third is to provide training in the use of an authoring tool to create computer-based learning packages. In addition, WYLC trains relevant people to become e-learning champions within VCS organisations on how to use the systems to be able to encourage others within the sector to become more involved with e-learning. This ESF project is part of the other work that WYLC carries out as a part of the LSC-funded Working Together programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

106. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

107. WYLC has made steady progress in achieving its contracted targets. Seventeen individual e-learning champions have been recruited against a planned target of 25, and although behind schedule, the project is only midway through its agreed time span. WYLC is now in the process of recruiting staff to work with the sector to improve their knowledge of the project and to help users develop content and load it onto the electronic library.

108. The e-learning champions are well motivated and enthusiastic and have gained useful computing skills. WYLC has arranged several well-organised events to engage other VCS providers in the project. Within WYLC itself, a wide range of e-learning activities have taken place such as adapting a health and safety at work quiz to be completed on computer. The project has helped organisations to focus more clearly on how they can use e-learning in their work with clients.

The quality of provision

109. Teaching and learning on how to use the systems developed by WYLC are generally good. Teaching is well planned and structured. Training is delivered in small groups. The learning sessions are adapted well to meet their individual learners' needs.

Leadership and management

110. Leadership and management are satisfactory. WYLC has established particularly effective partnerships with a wide range of VCS providers across West Yorkshire. It is widely recognised by partner providers that the E-Vision project has enabled and encouraged these organisations to work more closely together. WYLC has identified that there was an under representation of minority ethnic organisations. In order to tackle this, WYLC has specifically promoted its work within these organisations and has well-developed plans to run a special training event for these groups.

111. WYLC does not sufficiently monitor or evaluate the effectiveness of the project on the VCS. For example, the e-learning champions do not know how many of their organisations are making use of e-learning or the effectiveness of their work. WYLC does not ask for reports from the champions on their activities. The board and the steering group receive regular reports about the project but currently have no clear approach to evaluating its progress.

112. Quality improvement is generally satisfactory. The self-assessment report is detailed and appropriately evaluative, although some aspects have been graded too high. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified. Appropriate measures are being developed to ensure a useful e-learning environment is fully in place, although WYLC does not sufficiently monitor the e-learning champions' activities.

ANNEX 9

Mechanical and Electrical Training UK – January 2007**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

113. Mechanical and Electrical Training UK (MET-UK) is a private training provider based in a purpose-built training centre in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. MET-UK was established in May 2003 and specialises in training for gas and plumbing. It has recently begun to provide training in electrical installation. Most of the training is privately funded, or funded through the Ministry of Defence. MET-UK also delivers specialist training as a subcontractor for JTL. In addition, the company holds an ESF contract which is co-financed by South Yorkshire LSC. The project, which was started in October 2004, is known as Re-engaging Men and Labour Market Segregation. It is delivered under objective 1, policy field 3 and measure 15 and is due to be completed by December 2007. The project is designed to help people into self-employment, retrain for jobs, or progress into further or higher education. MET-UK and four subcontracted providers are responsible for the delivery of training. This includes a project to engage men into childcare and provision for initial advice and guidance. There are currently 138 learners participating in the project.

114. As part of the project, MET-UK offers taster programmes to promote non-traditional trades to women. It also provides basic construction skills training to unemployed men to support them into the construction industry. Learners can engage in a range of skills training including plumbing, tiling, bricklaying, plastering, carpentry and joinery, and painting and decorating. Since the start of the project 1,532 learners have been engaged. The overall project target is to engage 1,800 learners.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

115. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievements and standards**

116. Recruitment onto the programmes is good and the recruitment target for women is well exceeded. Learners gain good basic qualifications and improve their self-esteem, employability and social skills. Learners on the construction programmes acquire good basic vocational skills across a wide range of construction crafts. They develop in self-confidence and are able to easily carry out simple maintenance tasks.

117. The number of learners gaining jobs is low and does not meet contracted targets. Progression of women into non-traditional trades and men into childcare is generally low. The number of jobs available locally is low and the provider is working well with the LSC and local employers to try and rectify this. Some employers have started to employ good numbers of learners and one has recently engaged 19 childcare employees.

The quality of provision

118. Good use is made of excellent resources on the construction skills programmes. Learning sessions are well planned and handouts are of a high standard. Learners' files are well structured and contain comprehensive notes with colour illustrations and useful

assessment exercises. Learners have good access to modern tools and equipment, and work on industry-standard boilers, gas fires and kitchen appliances. A useful and well-equipped toolbox is supplied for learners. Teaching and learning on all programmes is good with well-planned demonstrations and close individual support.

119. One of the subcontractors delivers useful advice and guidance, provided by well-qualified and experienced staff. Learners have good access to a wide range of resources and support to help them apply for further training courses or employment. One learner was given particularly good advice on opening a barbershop and attended a useful course for new entrepreneurs.

120. Arrangements for specialist support are satisfactory. Learners have good access to suitably qualified staff who support them during their training and direct them appropriately if they need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Results of initial assessments are clearly recorded.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management are generally good and the management of subcontractors is satisfactory. Staff development is particularly well focused towards teaching, learning and professional advancement. Staff are appropriately experienced and well qualified and most are active in continuing their professional development. For example, the key skills tutor is currently working towards a plumbing qualification. The quality manager is working towards a gas-fitting qualification. These qualifications will help them better understand learners' needs. Staff development is well recorded and monitored. Most staff hold appropriate teaching and assessor awards.

122. MET-UK has developed strong partnerships with other providers and agencies. The managing director and other staff are members of national consultancy groups in construction to promote women into construction. One of the subcontractors has good referral arrangements to local groups who provide ESOL training to the Yemeni and Somali community. Another has good links with public and private sector childcare providers. One of the subcontractors uses particularly creative ways to recruit men into childcare training and employment.

123. Quality assurance is generally good although there is insufficient quality assurance of the subcontractors. There are clear systems and procedures for collecting and analysing learner feedback and these lead to specific actions for improvement. For example, scheduled class times have been adjusted to meet learners' needs. Lesson observations are carried out frequently within the organisation although these are not routinely carried out with subcontractors. Learner feedback is not collected from subcontractors.

124. There has been slow introduction of strategies to overcome underperformance against the contract. Managers have acknowledged these issues during self-assessment. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. The report provides an accurate picture of the organisation. Strengths and weaknesses identified broadly matched those identified by inspectors.