

INSPECTION REPORT

Construction Learning World

10 February 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Pre-inspection analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

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

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Construction Learning World (CLW) is a private training company, with its headquarters in Nottingham. The company was created in 2003 to meet the statutory and non-statutory training needs within the construction industry. CLW is a joint venture company established by Pre-eminent Solutions and Laing O'Rourke PLC. CLW aims to meet the demand for vocational and compliance training within the UK construction industry through the delivery of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) to satisfy a national construction industry body's construction skills certification scheme. CLW has a contract with Laing O'Rourke PLC to organise training and assessment for all its staff. Much of CLW's work is related to on-site assessment and training for experienced workers in the construction industry. CLW's programmes are funded from a variety of sources, including contracts with 11 local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). It currently has 1,238 learners undertaking mainly level 2 assessment and training. The LSC's National Employer Service acted as lead for this inspection.

2. CLW employs 65 staff who are structured within a senior management team, an assessment team, a business development team and an administrative support team. Fifty-three of these staff members are directly involved in the delivery and support of the on-site assessment and training programme. CLW is an accredited assessment centre with two joint awarding bodies. It currently delivers groundwork and earthwork qualifications including level 2 NVQs in construction and civil engineering services, formworking, trowel occupations, steelfixing, site logistics, tunnelling and specialised plant and machinery operations and second-fix qualifications including wood occupations.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** CLW's leadership and management are good, and its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. Provision in construction is good.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Self-assessment is satisfactory. For a relatively new organisation, CLW has produced a useful and mostly accurate report which provides clear judgements that feed into the quality improvement plan. This plan is well produced and closely monitored by the senior team, and CLW is demonstrating that the process of self-assessment and quality improvement planning is having an effect in bringing about improvements. The inspection team was broadly in agreement with most of the strengths and weaknesses. However, the self-assessment report does not include and fully reflect upon important issues raised by an awarding body, and the subsequent actions taken to resolve these. The organisation's positive response to these matters was also omitted from the quality improvement plan submitted to inspectors.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** CLW has no previous inspection history, but its retention and achievement rates are good and improving. Self-assessment and development planning have matured quickly given the

CONSTRUCTION LEARNING WORLD

short time that the company has been in operation, and are proving useful in driving forward quality improvement. However, some areas of quality assurance are still to be dealt with, particularly the rigour of assessment practice and evidence collection for NVQs across the organisation.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CONSTRUCTION LEARNING WORLD:

- improve the quality and consistency of assessment practices
- establish effective literacy, numeracy and language support arrangements
- fully establish and comply with all quality improvement/assurance arrangements
- continue to improve achievement rates
- continue to develop employer monitoring arrangements as the employer base grows

GRADES

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

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

Construction, planning and the built environment			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Construction crafts			2
Other workforce development	1,238		2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. CLW only offers one area of learning and this was inspected, reported upon and graded during the inspection.

Number of inspectors	9
Number of inspection days	42
Number of learners interviewed	53
Number of staff interviewed	53
Number of employers interviewed	19
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	34

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Achievement rates are good and show an improving trend**, rising from 70 per cent in 2003-04, CLW's first year of operating, to 74 per cent the following year. Few learners leave the programme and CLW ensures that those learners still in learning continue to progress towards qualification completion.

8. **Learners' participation in and achievement rates for additional qualifications and certificates are good**. CLW, through its work to gain a commitment to training from employers, ensures that all learners have access to a range of other skills development opportunities. This includes relevant training and qualifications in areas such as abrasive wheels, health and safety, working at heights, and the dangers of hand and arm vibration.

The quality of provision

9. **CLW meets learners' and employers' needs particularly well**. It meets the training needs of its partners well, arranging bespoke training on-site where legislation or company practice requires. Employers value the opportunities that these programmes give to increasing the qualification levels and the skills of the workforce. This partnership arrangement is particularly good at helping learners to progress toward completing their qualification.

10. **Assessors and employers provide highly effective support for learners to help them achieve their qualifications**. The assessors provide exceptionally good technical support for learners, which contributes to the good achievement rates. Learners have good access to assessors and can quickly contact them when they need their support, often doing so outside normal working hours. Employers play a full part in the process of on-site assessment and training. **The skills and experience of its assessors enables CLW to offer a broad range of provision in specialist craft areas**. Workers can gain qualifications that would not normally be available to them.

11. **All learners take part in a memorable and comprehensive induction**. Induction provides learners with clear information about the demands of the programme and the benefits for them as individuals should they complete their qualification. Learners understand information provided about the on-site assessment and training process and NVQ assessment requirements. They also understand key equal opportunities matters such as their roles and responsibilities as learners and employees and who their main point of contact is should they have any concerns.

12. Learners have a good understanding of the assessment process and the appeals procedure. The skills match process, completed by all learners during induction, successfully identifies the most appropriate NVQ units for learners to take. It should also provide CLW with valuable information about gaps in learners' skills, but in practice few learners have their additional NVQ skills training needs identified through this process.

13. The competence of most learners is fully confirmed through satisfactory assessment. Learners' records and portfolios contain evidence of observations by assessors, photographs and other evidence of skills being demonstrated and witness testimonies from

employers and supervisors.

14. Some assessment practices are weak. For example, some portfolios only show a narrow range of evidence to demonstrate competence. In some portfolios most of the evidence consists of the notes of assessors' direct observation of the learners' performance. Where this is the case, assessors often do not cross-reference their written records of observations clearly to the NVQ standards and performance criteria.

15. Insufficient development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills takes place. CLW provides learners with information about local literacy and numeracy support services and provides good coaching and support for learners who do not speak English to help them pass their touch-screen health and safety test. However, this intervention does not improve learners' literacy, numeracy or language skills.

Leadership and management

16. **CLW has developed effective partnerships with employers, training providers and other agencies to broaden and enhance the provision it offers.** CLW is successful in delivering a wide range of NVQs. The company also co-ordinates and arranges a wide number of additional training courses on topics such as abrasive wheels and manual handling, to support learners' and employers' needs.

17. **Business development planning and the strategic direction set by the management team are particularly good.** CLW has expanded rapidly and successfully in a short time, delivering construction NVQs for over 3,000 learners. The strategic plan clearly reflects the future vision for long-term development. Members of the board, which includes representatives from CLW's main employers, contribute towards strategic planning.

18. **CLW's development of its staff and the way in which it monitors and manages staff performance are good.** New staff undergo a comprehensive induction and are given lots of support as they settle into their job. New assessors are assigned a mentor and often work-shadow other more experienced assessors. CLW actively supports the continuous professional development of staff, and appraisals are effective in identifying and facilitating training and development needs.

19. The company's management and use of data is satisfactory. Assessors prepare weekly reports on the progress of each learner. These reports are reproduced to inform the verifier and business development teams and senior managers of overall performance against CLW's key performance indicators. CLW is keen to monitor the quality of its work and carefully reviews success rates as well as the questionnaire feedback it gains from learners and employers.

20. CLW's arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. **It has a good range of programmes to increase participation in construction training.** Programmes to gain qualifications and recognition of skills are provided effectively for experienced workers. Access to these programmes is actively promoted through CLW's contacts with a large number of construction companies.

21. CLW provides good support for learners who speak English as an additional language to complete their touch-screen health and safety test. It has well-developed plans to run a

pilot programme to support learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs while they are at work. However, at present, these needs are not being adequately met.

22. **CLW provides all parties with clear information and ongoing reinforcement of key equal opportunities issues.** It does this through its promotional materials, induction programmes for staff and learners, the company's website, its employers' handbook and the training programmes. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity and their rights and responsibilities at work.

23. CLW vets its employers' equal opportunities policies satisfactorily. Its new staff induction and staff development programmes include training and regular updating on equal opportunities issues. Equality of opportunity is covered at induction with adult learners on on-site assessment and training programmes, and is further promoted and reinforced during their assessment and reviews.

24. CLW has developed a satisfactory range of quality improvement procedures and systems. These are well documented, with useful flow diagrams illustrating all the key learning and business processes. Internal verifiers closely monitor the performance of assessors and regularly interview learners to gather their views.

25. CLW seeks and analyses feedback from employers and learners. Employers value the service provided by CLW, although the number of questionnaire returns from learners is low. The collection of feedback at learners' induction had been introduced recently and CLW has made some changes to induction after analysing the feedback.

26. Internal verification of the assessment process is satisfactory. Verifiers regularly observe all assessors. They observe on-the-job assessments and sample the assessed evidence in learners' portfolios. Assessors and internal verifiers meet monthly to standardise assessment practices and review previous action plans.

27. Self-assessment is satisfactory. For a relatively new organisation, CLW has produced a useful and mostly accurate report which provides clear judgements that feed into the quality improvement plan. However, the self-assessment report does not include and fully reflect upon significant issues raised by an awarding body, or the subsequent positive action taken to resolve these.

28. Some assessment practices within the organisation are weak. **Some of the arrangements for the quality assurance of assessments are not fully established.** For example, there are inconsistencies in the range and sufficiency of evidence contained in some portfolios. Not all assessors have the same views about the amount of evidence required in portfolios to demonstrate learners' competence and these issues are not currently being recognised by internal verifiers.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective partnerships to broaden and further develop provision
- good strategic planning and business development
- well-planned development and management of staff performance
- effective actions to widen participation
- good promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- some incomplete quality assurance arrangements

Construction, planning and the built environment

Construction crafts

Grade 2

Strengths

- good NVQ achievement rates
- good participation in and achievement rates for additional qualifications
- effective support for NVQ achievement from assessors and employers
- highly responsive programmes that meet learners' and employers' needs
- broad range of provision in specialist craft areas
- particularly effective induction

Weaknesses

- some weak assessment practices
- insufficient development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CONSTRUCTION LEARNING WORLD:

- 'I am very happy with the programme, it is much better than I expected'
- 'they have given me the chance to get a card to operate - keeps the cowboys out'
- not having to go off-site to gain a qualification
- 'the chance to have my experience formally recognised'
- assessment that is not intrusive
- 'the help with interpretation to complete my health and safety test'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CONSTRUCTION LEARNING WORLD COULD IMPROVE:

- 'I am doing an NVQ level 3 and would like more formal, structured training'