



Learning+Skills Council

# Key findings from learndirect hubs inspected between September 2002 and March 2003

Quality & Standards  
Evaluation & Good Practice Team  
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## INTRODUCTION

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1. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provision 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.
2. The Secretary of State specified that the functions of the ALI in 2001-02 should include the inspection of learndirect provision in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework*.
3. This report summarises the key findings of the 13 inspections of learndirect provision carried out in the Autumn term of 2002 and Spring term of 2003 terms, and published before the end of May 2003.

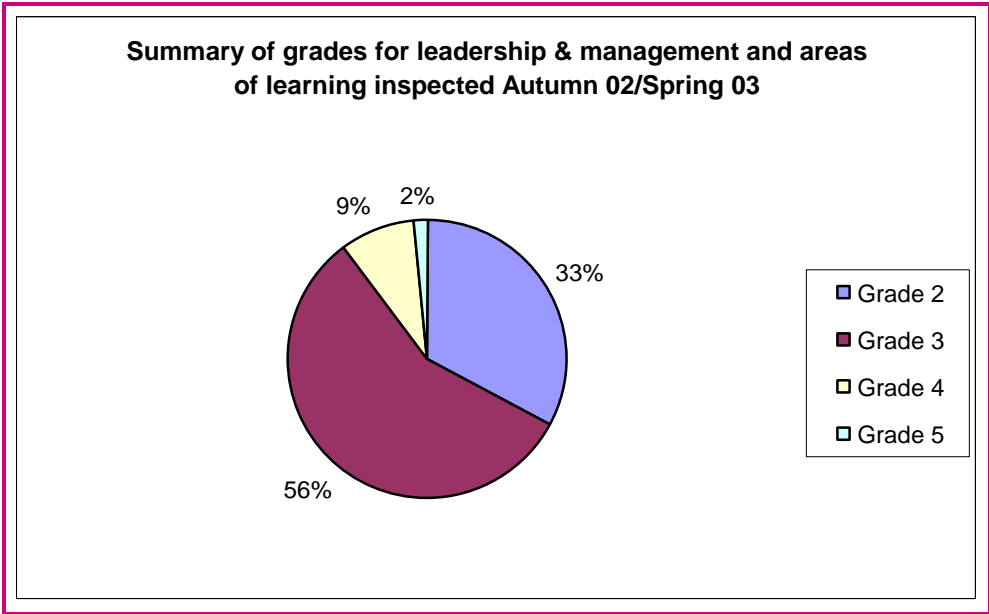
## SUMMARY GRADES

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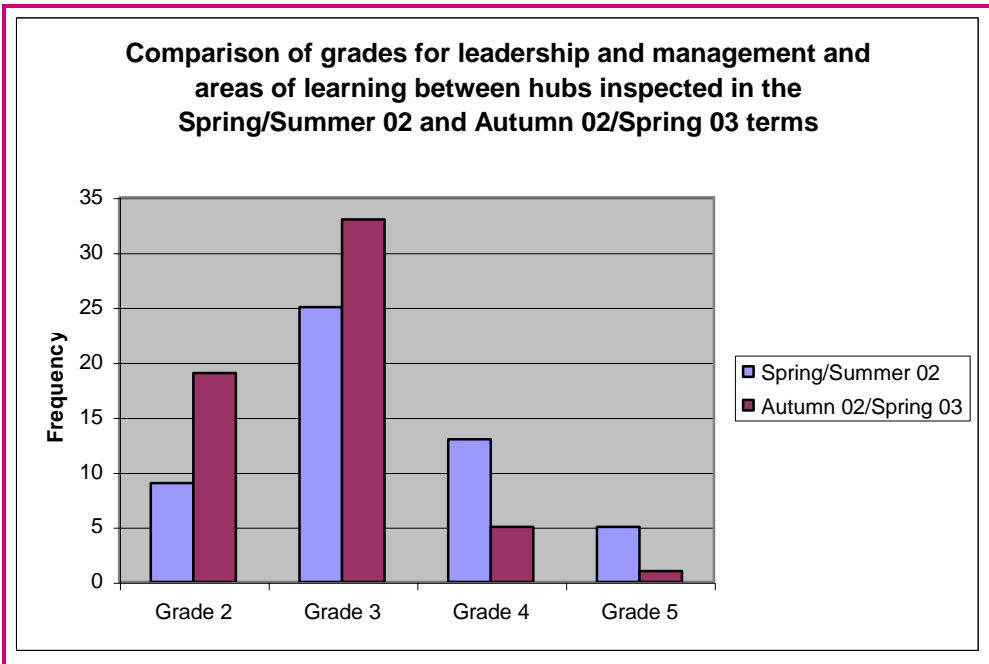
4. The table below shows the number of providers awarded each grade for areas of learning, and leadership and management.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
All learndirect provision		4	4	1	
Foundation programmes		2	4		
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)		1	3		
Leadership and management		8	4		1
Equal opportunities (contributory grade)		3	8	2	
Quality assurance (contributory grade)		1	10	2	

5. The pie chart below shows the percentage of grades awarded for areas of learning, and leadership and management, following the inspections carried out in the Autumn term of 2002 and Spring term of 2003.



6. There was an improvement in the quality of provision inspected Autumn 02/ Spring 03 compared with Spring/ Summer 02. Inspectors awarded a higher percentage of grades 2 and 3 and a correspondingly lower percentage of grades 4 and 5:
- grade 2 awards increased by 16%
  - grade 3 awards increased by 8%
  - grade 4 awards decreased by 16%
  - grade 5 awards decreased by 8%



7. None of the hubs, however, were awarded a grade 1 (outstanding) for leadership and management or areas of learning during the Autumn 02/Spring 03 inspections.
8. The overall quality of provision in learndirect hubs inspected in the Autumn 02/Spring 03 terms was adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it in 12 hubs, and inadequate to meet the needs of those receiving it in one hub.

Internal report

## SUMMARY OF REPORTS

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9. Leadership and management are satisfactory or better in 12 hubs, and very weak in one hub.
10. Grades were awarded for the quality of all learndirect provision in 9 of the 13 hubs, and the provision was satisfactory or better in 8 of the 9 hubs. In the six hubs which provide the foundation programme, provision was satisfactory or better, and provision in two hubs is good. The ICT programme was inspected in four hubs, and was satisfactory or better in all of them.
11. In general, hubs have a clear strategic direction and effective strategic partnerships. Strategic objectives are developed effectively and vigorously pursued.
12. Quality Assurance arrangements are of variable quality. Six hubs have weaknesses in quality assurance, which include having no overall quality assurance policy and procedures in place, having inadequate quality assurance arrangements and lack of effective target setting. Four hubs have effective QA arrangements.
13. Support for students was the most commonly identified strength. There is good, sometimes excellent, coaching and individual support in learning centres. There is also good online support. Two hubs have inadequate support for virtual or remote learners. Another has inadequate support for speakers of other languages.
14. In 10 hubs, learners' progress is not monitored or reviewed effectively. Although progress reviews take place, there is not enough formal recording of them. Some hubs make inadequate or insufficient use of individual learning plans. In some cases, these plans are not sufficiently detailed, there are no short-term or long-term targets, or learners' targets and goals are not specific enough or measurable. Learners' progress towards the completion of individual learning plans is not always reviewed effectively.
15. Initial assessment was found to be inadequate or poorly managed and implemented in six hubs. A further two hubs have poor arrangements for the induction and guidance of new learners. In some cases, insufficient attention is given to learners' aims, aptitudes, previous experience, and learning limitations. Some hubs have no formal initial assessment tools to give an objective assessment. In some cases, no assessment is made of basic skills or of learners' suitability for the special demands of online learning, and this sometimes leads to learners being placed on inappropriate courses.
16. Strategies to widen participation are implemented effectively in five hubs. There is a wide range of locally developed strategies and initiatives and hubs are working effectively in partnership with other organisations to target specific areas and groups of under-represented learners. Many learning centres have been sited strategically to attract a wider range of learners. One hub has been successful in attracting a range of non-traditional learners from

areas of high deprivation. It has twice the national average of unemployed learners enrolled on learndirect programmes.

17. Internal and external communications are good in five hubs. Management meetings are held regularly and are well attended by learning centre managers and staff. The meetings are sometimes also used to provide training or updating. In many cases, regular newsletters are sent to all learning venues, providing information and guidance and drawing attention to important Ufl initiatives and reports on hub matters. In some cases, websites and online discussion boards are used effectively for communication.
18. Provision in basic skills provision is of variable quality. In four hubs it is a strength. Learners are well supported and teaching is good. Three hubs have weaknesses in basic skills provision. Two hubs have an insufficient number of staff with a basic skills qualification. One hub has a poor basic skills strategy.

Internal report

## KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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This report summarises the 13 inspection reports of learndirect hubs published between December 2002 and May 2003. This is the second set of Ufl hub inspections to be summarised. Strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement are listed below.

### Key Strengths

- Support for students is good or better in 12 hubs
- Strategic and operational management is good in seven hubs
- Six hubs have well resourced learning centres
- Five hubs implement effective strategies to widen participation.
- Internal communications are a strength in five hubs. One of these hubs also has very effective external communications.
- There is effective support and good teaching in basic skills in four hubs.
- Four hubs have good self-assessment arrangements. In one the self-assessment process is exceptionally thorough.
- Four hubs have effective and productive partnerships to promote participation.

### Weaknesses

- Ten hubs have inadequate arrangements for monitoring and reviewing learners' progress.
- Eight hubs have weaknesses in initial assessment.
- Six hubs have weaknesses in quality assurance.
- Four hubs do not monitor equal opportunities effectively. The promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate in two hubs.
- Three hubs were identified as having weaknesses in basic skills provision.

### Other improvements needed

- Further staff training in equal opportunities is needed at three hubs. Another hub needs to make better use of equal opportunities data.
- Additional learning materials are needed in some hubs, and existing resources need to be more widely used. One hub should improve the speed

and reliability of internet access. Another needs to improve learners' access to specialist resources and equipment.

- Better sharing of good practice is required in three hubs.
- Two hubs need better support for learners. One hub needs to strengthen its support for remote learners and skills for life learners. Another needs to further develop level 3 support.

Internal report



## INSPECTION REPORTS

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This summary has been compiled from the findings of the following reports. Copies of the full reports can be found at <http://www.ali.gov.uk/> .

- Army Hub (Torch)
- Cheshire and Warrington Hub
- Coventry and Warwickshire Hub
- Cross River Partnership Hub
- Environment and Land Based Sector Hub
- Hampshire and Solent Hub
- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Hub
- Leicestershire Hub
- Northumberland Hub
- Open Learning Partnership Hub
- West of England Learndirect Hub
- Wigan Hub
- York and North Yorkshire Hub

This report will be updated when the findings of further inspections of learndirect provision have been published.