

Quality and Standards in Education and Training in Wales

A Report on the Quality of Work-Based Learning and Jobcentre Plus Programmes

in

ICON Vocational Training

May 2007

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**



The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LEAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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Introduction

ICON Vocational Training was inspected as part of a six-year (2004-2010) national programme of inspections. The purpose of the programme is to identify good features and shortcomings in order that the provider may improve the quality of education and training offered and raise the standards achieved by learners. Inspection is also designed to give learners more information about the quality of providers of work-based learning and Jobcentre Plus programmes, and the learning options available.

All inspections conducted under the arrangements apply the following principles:

- the use of a common inspection framework which is common to all sectors of education and training in Wales;
- an emphasis on the provider's evaluation of its work;
- the involvement of a provider nominee who works with the inspection team; and
- the inspection of a sample of provision.

The inspection took place from 14 May to 18 May 2007. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, undertook the inspection. The team included part-time additional inspectors and peer assessors released from other work-based learning providers in Wales.

The team was required to report on standards achieved by learners, the quality of education and training provided, the quality of leadership and management and to judge if the company provides value for money.

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act, 2000.

Grade descriptors

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

The Learning and Skills Act 2000, requires the company to prepare a written statement of the action that they propose to take to address the recommendations in the inspection report and the timescales for completing the proposed actions.

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Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 ICON Vocational Training (IVT) established in 1995, is a privately-owned training provider based in South Wales. The provider has contracts to deliver training in Wales funded by the Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) and in England funded through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).
- 2 IVT provides work-based learning in the following areas:
 - Sports, Recreation and Leisure;
 - Retail and Customer Service;
 - Business, Administration and law; and
 - Management.

	Sports, Recreation and Leisure	Retail and Customer Service
Number of current learners	145	32

Types of inspection

- 3 Under the current inspection arrangements, there are three types of inspection available to Estyn for the inspection of providers of work-based learning. These are full, standard and short inspections.
- 4 The designation of a particular type of inspection is based on clear criteria that determine the level of risk presented by the provider. The criteria are set out in the Work-Based Learning Guidance Handbook on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). As a result of the application of these criteria, Estyn identified that ICON Vocational Training required a standard inspection.
- 5 During a standard inspection, inspectors evaluate and report on:
 - all seven key questions across the provider; and
 - a half of the learning areas which have significant learner numbers.
- 6 The learning areas for the inspection of ICON Vocational Training are:
 - Sports, Recreation and Leisure; and
 - Retail and Customer Service.

The provider's priorities and targets

- 7 ICON Vocational Training has a mission statement to 'be an employer focussed organisation for people in the sport and recreation sector to develop work-based competencies through NVQ and National frameworks with the aim of unlocking potential for both employee and employer'. Its key priorities are to:
- make a difference, not by ticking boxes but by unlocking them to release the potential of individuals, teams and organisations;
 - believe passionately about learning, development, the enrichment of knowledge and skills as a vehicle to build confidence;
 - care about its reputation as being one of its most precious assets;
 - create learning cultures through an infrastructure of assessment, support and positive feedback;
 - care about its staff and to wish to show this by enriching their work environment and how they feel about the provider;
 - believe in diversity, not in measuring bland statistics but realistically, practically, equally and fairly through treating people with respect and dignity;
 - provide added value to its learners, clients and funding partners;
 - act with integrity to raise standards, to lead and to offer inspiration whilst learning from others; and
 - give people credit and respect for trying.

Summary

Table of grades awarded

8 The inspection team judged the provider's work as follows:

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

9 The standards achieved in each of the learning areas inspected are as follows:

Learning area	Inspection grade
Sports, Recreation and Leisure	2
Retail and Customer Service	2

Standards

10 Overall, standards achieved by learners are good in Sports, Recreation and Leisure and in Retail and Customer Service. In both learning areas, current learners make good progress in developing their occupational skills and theory knowledge. All learners attend off-the-job training sessions at their workplaces. As a result of good quality workplaces most learners develop a wide range of occupational skills. In both learning areas, learners gain a good range of additional qualifications. In both learning areas, the rates at which learners achieve their full qualification framework have improved over the last three years.

The quality of education and training

11 Overall, the quality of teaching, training and assessment in both learning areas inspected is good. Scheme managers¹ structure training sessions well. They plan and complete assessment sessions and reviews well. These regular assessments and reviews make sure that learners progress at a good pace. All scheme managers set and agree clear targets with learners for the achievement of projects and practical

¹ Scheme manager is the name given by the provider to its training staff

tasks. In most cases, scheme managers integrate key skills into the main qualification well. The provider makes good use of competent workplace assessors within sports centres, to assess learners' competences for their portfolio evidence. However, in a few cases, there is not enough use of direct observations of learners in the workplace by scheme managers for assessment and portfolio evidence collection purposes.

- 12 ICON Vocational Training (IVT) provides a very good range of opportunities for learners to gain qualifications and skills in the recreation and leisure industries. The training programmes meet the specific needs of employers and learners very well. The provider is very responsive to the training needs of employers. It has an outstanding range of strategic partnerships with major employers in the industry. These partnerships help employers to plan their overall training and development strategies well. IVT also provide a very good range of work-based learning opportunities for school pupils in both South Wales and South East England.
- 13 Overall, the quality of care, support and guidance provided by IVT is good. All learners receive a high level of support that is appropriate to their level of need. Scheme managers, together with employers effectively support learners in their work places. Scheme managers know their learners very well and understand how they can best support them. Learners with additional needs receive appropriate support from scheme managers and employers. Scheme managers make good use of the wide range of services available in local authority employers to support learners with specific needs. All learners receive good advice and guidance on issues that are important to them in their workplaces, such as equality of opportunity, appeals and complaints procedures and health and safety at work. However, scheme managers do not always routinely reinforce or promote equality of opportunity, health and safety and the use of the Welsh language enough during learners' reviews.

The quality of leadership and management

- 14 Overall, leadership and management are good. The directors work effectively together to set the strategic goals of IVT. They share management responsibilities in a way which makes the best use of their experience and expertise. In the last year, senior managers have introduced strategies to improve learner retention and learners' outcomes. These strategies have led to an upward trend in learners' attainment across the organisation. However, this improvement is not yet equally strong across all learning areas and programme levels. Senior managers use annual appraisal to identify development needs for staff. This helps staff to review their personal effectiveness and identify their own targets for improvement. However, the progress of staff against their annual targets is not always formally measured by senior managers.
- 15 The directors have a good understanding of local and national priorities and take good account of the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities for work-based learning.
- 16 IVT's directors and staff are committed to providing high quality training. All managers evaluate and improve quality and standards well. Self-assessment is a central part of IVT's work to improve quality and standards. The process effectively involves all staff, learners and employers. The provider has introduced a clear quality

system through which they effectively monitors and reviews most aspects of the training programmes delivered by IVT. Managers use detailed monthly reports to closely monitor learners' performance. IVT has a quality development plan which clearly sets out the company's plans for improvement. However, in a small number of cases, it is difficult to match an action point with a weakness in the self-assessment report. Overall, the strengthening of the provider's quality systems has led to an improvement in learners' performance.

- 17 Overall, resources for training are good. All directors, managers and scheme managers are suitably occupationally qualified and experienced. IVT's senior managers have a strong commitment to the continual professional development of all its staff. IVT's senior managers and scheme managers are keen to improve their professional skills and ability to support learners. However, scheme managers have not yet undertaken the planned training in basic skills support. Most learners' workplaces are of very good quality. Most scheme managers design custom-made learning materials which effectively meet the needs of individuals and groups of learners. These good resources help learners to progress at a good pace towards attaining their qualifications.
- 18 The provider makes good use of its resources to deliver work-based learning. ICON Vocational Training gives good value for money.

Recommendations

- 19 In order to improve, ICON Vocational Training needs to:
- R1 maintain the focus and drive to increase attainment of all learners, especially those on Modern Apprenticeship programmes;
 - R2 continue to strengthen and embed quality improvement;
 - R3 strengthen the ongoing monitoring of staff performance to include the measurement of progress against their targets from annual appraisals;
 - R4 implement the planned professional development to improve staff's expertise in literacy and numeracy support;
 - R5 widen the scope of teaching and learning observations to improve the quality of training;
 - R6 continue to promote the use of the Welsh language for learners where relevant by scheme managers; and
 - R7 improve the reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and health and safety issues during reviews.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

20 Standards of achievement in the sessions observed are as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
10%	90%	0%	0%	0%

21 Overall, standards achieved in each of the areas inspected are as follows:

Learning areas	Grades
Sports, Recreation and Leisure	2
Retail and Customer Service	2

22 Overall, the standards achieved by learners in Sports, Recreation and Leisure and Retail and Customer Service are good. All learners achieve good occupational skills and theory knowledge. All learners attend regular off-the-job training sessions at their workplaces.

23 In Sport, Recreation and Leisure, learners achieve good levels of occupational skills and knowledge. They demonstrate these skills well in a wide range of sports and leisure activities. As a result of good quality workplaces most learners develop a wide range of occupational skills. Overall, the rates at which learners achieve their full Individual Learning Plan (ILPs) are good and have improved over the last two years. The majority of Modern Apprentices achieve their ILPs.

24 In Retail and Customer Service, learners achieve good levels of occupational skills and knowledge. Learners currently on the programme apply their skills well in the workplace. The rates at which learners achieve their full ILPs are good and have improved over the last two years. Overall, all current Foundation Modern Apprentices and Modern Apprentices are making very good progress towards achieving their learning ILPs.

25 Overall, most of the current learners in both learning areas are making good progress towards the aims set in their ILPs. Most learners are aware of what they still have to complete on their training programme. Most learners receive good support from their employers. This support enables them to undertake a wide range of learning and assessment activities in their workplaces. Many learners have clear plans for further progression.

26 Most learners are well motivated and enthusiastic. They are keen to succeed on their training programme. All learners gain in self-esteem and confidence as they develop new occupational skills and knowledge. All learners develop a good range of personal and social skills.

The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 2: Good feature and no important shortcomings

- 27 The quality of teaching, training and assessment in the sessions observed is as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
33%	67%	0%	0%	0%

Teaching and training

- 28 The quality of teaching and training is good. Scheme managers act as trainers and assessors which helps them to give learners effective support in off-the-job training workshops and in the workplace. The good working relationship between learners and scheme managers helps all learners to make good progress towards their learning goals.
- 29 All scheme managers structure training sessions well. Most sessions have a clear purpose and a wide range of activities which helps learners to collect portfolio evidence. Off-the-job training workshops develop learners' knowledge of sport and customer service theory well. During these sessions scheme managers effectively challenge learners' thinking. Scheme managers effectively deliver the sessions with a good pace using a wide range of teaching and assessment materials. As a result, the sessions motivate and maintain learners' interest.
- 30 All scheme managers work closely with workplace supervisors. This makes sure that learners get good opportunities to apply their off-the-job theory knowledge to their practice in the workplace. Learners carry out workplace activities which help them to develop an appropriate range of practical competences. For example, in a training session on leadership styles, a scheme manager encouraged learners to work together on case studies which analysed leadership styles. This helped learners to apply their understanding of leadership theory to their leisure management roles in their workplaces.

Assessment

- 31 The quality of assessment is good. Scheme managers plan assessment sessions and reviews well. The regular assessment and reviews make sure that learners progress at a good pace.
- 32 In progress reviews, staff give learners clear feedback on what they need to do for their portfolio evidence. Scheme managers make good use of oral questions to check learners' understanding of evidence.
- 33 Scheme managers set and agree clear targets with learners for the achievement of projects and practical tasks. They use clear and specific short-term and long-term

targets to effectively monitor learners' progress. This approach also helps learners to track and assess their own progress effectively.

- 34 In most cases, scheme managers integrate key skills into the main qualification well. For example, learners working in a leisure centre effectively analysed the gender mix and ages of children attending a play scheme for a key skills project. Following the project these learners developed a wide range of activities which were appropriate to the children's ages.
- 35 The provider makes good use of particularly competent workplace assessors within sports centres to assess learners' competences for their portfolio evidence. This means that learners are assessed regularly and make good progress towards the completion of their ILPs. However, in a few cases, there is not enough use of direct observations of learners in the workplace by scheme managers for practical assessment purposes. This means that these learners develop their NVQ portfolios using mainly witness testimony and photographic evidence.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 36 IVT provides a very good range of opportunities for learners to gain qualifications and skills in the recreation and leisure industries. The training programmes meet the specific needs of employers and learners very well. The provider has an excellent knowledge of the requirements of employers through its close links with the Sector Skills Council. The provider uses this knowledge well to plan new training routes. The provider also has effective links with Sport England and the Sports Council for Wales.

Excellent practice in meeting employers' training needs

IVT is very responsive to the training needs of employers. It has an outstanding range of strategic partnerships with major employers in the industry. It helps employers to plan their overall training and development strategies well. As well as apprenticeship frameworks, IVT also offers a good range of other training opportunities that meet the needs of employees. These learning opportunities include a very wide range of qualifications such as assessor and manager awards as well as bespoke training to meet the specific needs of individual employers. The provider trains many of the supervisors who work in leisure centres as assessors. As a result, these supervisors provide excellent support and mentoring for the learners on modern apprenticeship programmes.

- 37 The provider has also developed effective procedures for analysing the training needs of learners and organisations. It works well with the careers services to promote different kinds of work-based training opportunities. IVT has good procedures for promoting training opportunities to learners. These include a user-friendly, bilingual website, DVDs and clear learning packs.

- 38 Learners have excellent opportunities to gain a good range of qualifications that relate directly to their employment. Many learners progress from modern apprenticeship programmes to supervisory roles in their place of employment. They gain relevant qualifications in management as well as membership of professional institutes.
- 39 IVT has developed a very good model for the delivery of key skills. Learners work on assignments which help them to develop the keys skills in the context of their work.
- 40 The provider is very good at celebrating the success of learners. It holds award ceremonies where learners receive their certificates. Families, fellow workers, local and national representatives of employers, attend these events which also publicise the opportunities available to learners and employers through work based learning.

Close links with government priorities

There are close links between IVT's learning programmes and many of the policies of the Welsh Assembly Government such as sustainability, economic development, community regeneration and health and well-being. IVT also supports many initiatives, such as Better Health, Climbing Higher and Health Challenge Wales² and promotes these initiatives well to employers. The training opportunities offered by the provider match the skill shortages in the industry well. The provider has an appropriate Welsh Language policy. IVT ask all learners to indicate if they want to undertake training and/or assessment through Welsh during their induction to the training programme. Senior managers and scheme managers are proactive in increasing learners' awareness of the culture of Wales.

IVT is also very effective in meeting local and regional priorities in the regions where it works in South East England. It is actively involved in European Union funded schemes that promote sport in England. They also provide good pre-apprenticeship training for young, unemployed people. This training is effective and the learners are able to get jobs in the leisure industries.

- 41 IVT provide a good range of work-based learning opportunities in leisure and recreation, business administration and customer service for school pupils in both South East England and South Wales. These include the Young Apprenticeship and Increased Flexibility schemes in England and work-focussed Learning Pathways in Wales. Through these schemes, school pupils are able to gain relevant NVQs, key skills and self-confidence which improve their opportunities to progress to skilled employment. Many of the school pupils on these schemes progress to employment in the relevant industry.

² Education and health initiatives supported by the Welsh Assembly Government

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 42 Learners receive a high level of support that is appropriate for their level of need. All staff and managers have a strong focus on supporting learners with professional issues. They give learners the support that helps them to overcome personal barriers to learning. Scheme managers, together with employers, support learners in their work places well.
- 43 Scheme managers work flexibly to meet learners' individual needs. They plan their visits well to fit in with learners' work patterns and visit them regularly, at least every six weeks and often more frequently. They use electronic records very effectively to monitor learners' progress and to identify learners who may need extra support to successfully meet the targets identified in their individual learning plans. Scheme managers know their learners very well and understand how they can best support them.
- 44 Scheme managers and employers work together closely to support learners through their learning programme. All employers are fully involved in all aspects of the training and development of their employees. Many of the current learners are following training programmes delivered by the provider because of employers' previous experiences with IVT. This reflects the good relationships that the provider has with employers, and the high regard that they place on the support that the provider gives their employees.
- 45 Scheme managers are closely involved with learners from their initial point of contact with them. Learners benefit from a thorough and extended induction and initial assessment that lasts for several weeks. Their induction includes a very effective initial interview with their scheme manager. Scheme managers complete a comprehensive learner training needs analysis that assesses their vocational skills and knowledge. The well-planned induction arrangements help to make sure that learners undertake the type and level of programme that is appropriate to their work role and their learning needs.
- 46 All learners and employers have detailed training agreements. These clearly identify and explain the roles and responsibilities of all partners involved in the training process. These documents, and the learners' induction handbook, are not yet available bilingually for the small percentage of learners and employers whose first language is Welsh.
- 47 Learners receive detailed information about their programme that is also contained in a useful learner handbook. They have good advice and guidance on issues that are important to them in their workplaces, such as equality of opportunity, appeals and complaints procedures and health and safety at work. However, scheme managers do not always routinely reinforce or promote equality of opportunity or health and safety issues fully enough during learners' reviews.
- 48 The provider has a wide range of appropriate policies that support principles of equality of opportunity and highlight issues appropriate to the care and support of learners. These include information on bullying and harassment and a Welsh

language policy. The provider reviews its policies annually and amends them in line with changing needs and legislation. The provider has produced a very useful, 'user friendly' version of the equality and diversity policy for learners.

- 49 The provider has health and safety and child protection policies in place. All scheme managers have undergone enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks. They are familiar with the provider's procedures, and their responsibilities, with regard to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- 50 All learners undertake a basic skills initial assessment at the start of their programme to identify their skill level in literacy and numeracy. Scheme managers generally give learners good one-to-one support to help them improve their basic skills. However, they do not always make enough use of diagnostic assessment to help them identify the specific areas where learners need to improve.
- 51 Learners with additional needs receive appropriate support from scheme managers and employers, for example they are given extra time to complete work and are being assessed in different ways appropriate to their needs. Scheme managers make good use of the wide range of services available in local authority employers to support learners with specific needs. This includes arranging specialist diagnostic assessments for learners who may have dyslexia.
- 52 The provider is committed to equality of opportunity. It takes its responsibilities to recognise and respect diversity seriously and manages equal opportunity issues well. The provider has a clear equality and diversity action plan. The plan identifies key areas for development and strategies to achieve its objectives. Directors regularly collect learner information relating to gender, ethnicity, age, and disability. They monitor recruitment of these under-represented groups and set clear targets and measures for improvement. For example, they have target participation rates for learners in these groups. They also have improvement targets for these learners to complete their programmes and attain their qualifications.

Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 53 The provider has a clear mission to be 'an employer focussed organisation for people in the sport and recreation sector'. Staff are very aware of IVT's core aim 'to unlock potential for both the employee and employer'. They work effectively with employers and learners to achieve this.
- 54 The directors work effectively together to set the strategic goals of IVT. They share management responsibilities in a way which makes the best use of their experience and expertise.
- 55 Managers make good use of outside consultants to bring in specialist expertise. This approach has helped the provider to improve many aspects of its business such as the planning of training programmes. The directors use a specialist consultant to source new business opportunities to ensure the sustainability of the business.
- 56 The provider has recently carried out a staff restructure. This has resulted in the appointment of two quality managers which has strengthened the provider's focus on quality and consistency across all of its provision. It has also given the directors more time to concentrate on extending the already successful partnership work.
- 57 In the last year, managers have introduced strategies to improve retention and learners' outcomes. These strategies have led to an upward trend in learners' attainment across the organisation. However, this improvement is not yet equally strong across all learning areas and programme levels.
- 58 The directors have a good understanding of local and national priorities. Their work includes providing work-related education to learners within Key Stage 4. This work supports the government's aim to increase vocational opportunities for learners aged between 14 and 19 in Wales and England.
- 59 IVT's work also supports national priorities linked to health and exercise issues. These include 'Climbing Higher and Next Steps', in Wales and 'Active Design' in England. The directors use their knowledge of these initiatives well to make sure that other staff are clear about how IVT supports these priorities.
- 60 Directors also make good use of external funding to improve quality and widen opportunities for learners. For example, in England the provider has won a joint ESF bid for 'On Your Marks' funding. As a result of this funding, IVT is working with a local college to develop a learning programme for Coaching, Leadership and Management in the leisure industry. In Wales, it has gained the 'Approved Trainer' status for the 'Welsh Sports Council for Wales' funding to improve service standards in Welsh leisure centres.
- 61 IVT's work supports a number of local economic priorities in both Wales and England. For example, its work with Pembrokeshire County Borough Council and

Surrey County Council supports their regional priorities for the development of the leisure and tourism sector.

- 62 Communication across the provider is good. In the last year, managers have begun to formalise the recording of meetings to improve the tracking of progress against action points. All meetings now have a focus on quality and the progress of learners.
- 63 Managers hold effective development days to bring all staff together on a regular basis. At these meetings, they explain the challenges and goals for IVT and discuss ideas on how to achieve the goals. This approach gives staff good opportunities to contribute to reviewing and making policy. For example, scheme managers initiated the revision of the induction procedure for learners so it better matched learners' needs.
- 64 The directors have worked effectively to improve the performance of staff and the achievements of learners. They have started to make good use of a new IT-based management tool to set monthly targets for scheme managers based on learner achievements.
- 65 Managers also link the system to an incentive scheme which rewards staff who meet or exceed targets. When learners fall behind target, managers agree corrective actions with delivery staff to improve the learners' progress. Although the system is relatively new, it is already having a marked impact on the achievement of learners.
- 66 In addition, managers use annual appraisal to identify development needs for staff. This helps staff to review their personal effectiveness and identify their own targets for improvement. However, the progress of staff against their annual targets is not always formally measured by senior managers.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 67 The directors are committed to providing high quality training. They have a clear understanding of where IVT needs to improve. All staff are aware of their responsibility to work within quality procedures.
- 68 Managers use regular staff meetings to discuss improvements in the quality of training and support for learners. Staff play a full role in identifying areas in need of improvement such as learning materials. IVT makes good use of standardisation meetings to discuss feedback from external verifiers and to set targets for any necessary actions.
- 69 Self-assessment is a central part of IVT's work to improve quality and standards. The process effectively involves all staff, learners and employers. The provider has also introduced a clear system of quality procedures which addresses most aspects of the training programme.
- 70 The provider has a good range of effective quality checks. Staff routinely gather feedback from employers and learners. Managers use this feedback and the results of other audits to bring about improvement in the training programmes. IVT also

routinely benchmarks its learners' outcomes against other providers to evaluate the success of its own performance.

- 71 Managers use detailed monthly reports to closely monitor learners' performance. They discuss the reports in one-to-one meetings with scheme managers. This helps managers to identify and address areas of concern. Newly-appointed quality managers are already having a positive impact on the consistency and quality of assessment.
- 72 The internal verification process meets awarding body requirements. Internal verifiers observe staff carrying out training and assessments. They give staff feedback, which helps them to improve their performance.
- 73 The provider has started to use observations of teaching and learning to evaluate the quality of delivery. However, the process is very new and it is not yet a part of formal self-assessment. The evaluations focus more on the delivery of training and do not concentrate enough on learners' achievements.
- 74 The provider has a quality development plan which clearly sets out its actions for improvement. In a small number of cases, it is difficult to match an action point with a weakness in the self-assessment report.
- 75 Managers update the plan on a regular basis to reflect the progress made. However, in a few cases, the objectives in the plan are not precise enough. In these cases, it is difficult for the directors to measure how much progress IVT has made on a particular issue.
- 76 The strengthening of the provider's quality systems has led to an improvement in learners' performance. For example, the closer monitoring through improved target setting has led to a considerable increase in the number of learners who achieve their learning goals.
- 77 Overall, IVT has made good progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous Estyn inspection report. The self-assessment report identifies strengths and shortcomings which are a good match with the findings of the current inspection team.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 78 Overall, IVT employs enough staff to deliver training to a good standard. The current staffing levels ensure that all learners benefit from effective personal support from their scheme managers. Training staff are enthusiastic about their work and take a personal interest in the welfare of learners.
- 79 Scheme managers and senior managers have a wide range of vocational skills and expertise. They use this knowledge well to help learners make good progress in their training. For example, the majority of staff have a background in the sport or customer service sectors. A few of the provider's training advisors can work bilingually. They use this skill well to support a few learners bilingually.

- 80 There are effective procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. As a result, IVT has a core base of experienced and well-qualified staff. IVT also makes good use of consultants to bring additional expertise to the organisation, such as Health and Safety management.
- 81 All staff have clear job descriptions which set out their responsibilities in supporting learners to make good progress. Most staff understand their roles well. They understand how they contribute to the overall organizational goals of IVT.
- 82 The provider's senior managers regularly review staff workloads. This makes sure that scheme managers can visit learners often in their workplace. Managers deploy staff in a way which gives a strong focus to the effective development of learners' knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, training staff deliver regular theory-based training sessions to all learners. However, in South East England where scheme managers cover a large geographical area the amount of time staff can spend with learners is occasionally limited.
- 83 The induction programme for new staff is good. All new staff take part in a comprehensive programme which matches their existing skills and development needs well. The programme effectively introduces new staff to IVT's visions and values, as well as to the working procedures of the company.
- 84 Senior managers give all staff good support to improve their professional knowledge. Managers maintain detailed up-to-date continuous professional development logs for staff. These logs clearly record the wide range of training activities undertaken by the providers' staff.
- 85 The provider's staff value these development opportunities. They are keen to improve their professional skills and their ability to support learners. For example, a few staff have taken part in specialist training for supporting learners with dyslexia. However, staff have not yet undertaken the planned training in basic skills support.
- 86 All learners' work in good quality environments. Workplaces across both learning areas are modern and well equipped. They give learners a wide range of opportunities to develop practical competences and theory knowledge.
- 87 There are many good examples of scheme managers designing custom-made learning materials to meet the needs of individuals and groups of learners. These good resources help learners to progress at a good pace towards attaining their qualifications.
- 88 A specialist health and safety officer is responsible for monitoring and vetting health and safety at all the premises where learners work. The officer carries out effective risk assessments of employers' premises. This helps to make sure that learners work in safe environments.
- 89 Overall, the rates of attainment for learners in Retail and Customer Service and Sports, Recreation and Leisure are good. Senior managers regularly review the use of resources in order to ensure sufficient support for its priorities. ICON Vocational Training gives good value for money.

Standards achieved by learners in learning areas inspected

Sports, Recreation and Leisure

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Summary of provision in Sports, Recreation and Leisure

- 90 All learners work in good quality workplaces which have a focus on the leisure industry. Most learners work as recreation and leisure assistants or duty managers in Wales and England in local authority leisure centres. Most learners benefit from training which takes place in good quality workplace training facilities provided by employers. Many achieve additional job related qualifications through their employer. For example, health and safety and swimming pool lifesaving awards.
- 91 At the time of the inspection, there were 145 learners following Sports, Recreation and Leisure training routes. All the learners work towards their ILPs in their workplaces. They develop their detailed NVQ portfolios on the job. All learners benefit from attending the off-the-job training sessions where they receive training in key skills and additional training linked to the technical certificate.

	Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	Modern Apprenticeship	Modern Skills Diploma
Number of learners in training	58	70	17

- 92 The training frameworks for learners on the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and the Modern Apprenticeship programmes include key skills at the levels indicated in the table below. Learners also have to complete a NVQ at level 2 for Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and a NVQ at level 3 for Modern Apprenticeships, together with the specified technical certificates, in order to achieve the qualification framework. Learners on the Modern Skills Diploma are required to complete a NVQ at level 4.

Framework	Application of Number	Communication
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship in Sports, Recreation and Leisure	1	2
Modern Apprenticeship in Sports, Recreation and Leisure	2	2

Success in attaining agreed learning goals

- 93 Most learners achieve good standards of practical skills and theory knowledge. Most demonstrate a good understanding of the theoretical skills which supports their practical skills. They apply this knowledge to their work roles well. For example, many learners demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of human anatomy and physiology. Many learners were able to describe in detail muscle groups and their functions. Most learners make very good progress in collecting portfolio evidence to demonstrate their competence from naturally occurring workplace evidence.

- 94 Most learners organise their portfolios well. They use a good range of written and photographic evidence to prove and record competence. Most learners competently record and cross reference their evidence against the assessment performance criteria. Many learners demonstrate good research skills in portfolio assignments. For example, many learners carry out research to develop and improve working methods in their employment. All learners demonstrate a good understanding of their qualification framework.
- 95 Overall, learners' attainment of the qualification framework is good. In the period August 2006 to May 2007, 65% of all leavers successfully completed their full qualification framework. In the same period 46% of Modern Apprenticeship and 72% of Foundation Modern Apprenticeship leavers achieved their full qualification frameworks. This is a good improvement on the period August 2005 and July 2006 when 40% of Modern Apprenticeship leavers and 58% of Foundation Modern Apprenticeship leavers achieved their full qualification frameworks.
- 96 Attainment for learners on the Modern Skills Diploma programmes is also good. For the period August 2006 to May 2007, 85% of leavers achieved their qualifications. This is a significant improvement on the period August 2005 to July 2006, when 67% of leavers gained their qualifications.

Leavers/Completers 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006								
	New starters during this period	Total leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ	Leavers gaining full ILP	Leavers gaining part NVQ &/or key skills	Destination of leavers who did not gain a NVQ, part NVQ or any key skills		
						Related employment	Other employment	Unemployed or other
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	68	69	14	40	0	14	0	1
Modern Apprenticeship	59	45	10	18	0	9	7	1
Modern Skills Diploma	16	6	0	4	0	2	0	0

Progress in learning

- 97 Most learners are well motivated and make very good progress towards achieving the goals in their individual learning plans. Many learners develop and demonstrate high levels of practical skills and theoretical knowledge. They achieve very good technical skills and knowledge in sport, fitness and operational management. All learners have a good understanding of the work environment within the sport, leisure and fitness industry.
- 98 Most learners have a good understanding of the progress they are making and what they need to do to complete their ILPs. All learners benefit from regular checks on their progress by scheme managers during their regular progress reviews. Learners whose progress has slowed down catch up quickly as a result of effective individual coaching.
- 99 Many learners have made very good progress compared with their previous achievement. For example, many learners begin their training with no prior qualifications. Several of these learners have now completed the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and been promoted at work to duty manager. They are now following Modern Apprenticeship programmes.

- 100 Learners develop good key skills. They develop these key skills in the context of their job roles in leisure centres. This helps them to increase their understanding of the essential key skills of Communication and Application of Number and the relevance to their job role.
- 101 Learners regularly work independently to research and collect good quality workplace portfolio evidence. They take responsibility for their own learning and building their portfolios. All learners independently track their own progress using the short-term and long-term targets they agree with scheme managers.

Development of personal, social and learning skills

- 102 All learners develop excellent working relationships with their employers, managers, scheme managers and clients. This contributes to the good progress of most learners in their workplaces. Most learners have good attendance and timekeeping records at their workplaces. Many learners are able to identify significant improvements in their own personal and social skills as a result of their training. This helps to motivate learners to achieve and complete their work in good time. This growing confidence impacts positively on their performance in the workplace. Many learners make a valuable contribution to the work of their employers.

Retail and Customer Service

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Summary of provision in Retail and Customer Service

- 103 At the time of the inspection there were 32 learners following Retail and Customer Service learning routes. The provider delivers Customer Service training to learners who work in a wide range of leisure, sport and recreation facilities in Wales and England. Twenty-five learners are following Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and seven learners are following Modern Apprenticeship programmes.
- 104 All learners work towards their ILPs in their workplace. Most training takes place in very good workplace training facilities. All learners attend off-the-job training in key skills and customer service theory at their place of work.

	Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	Modern Apprenticeship
Number of learners in training	25	7

- 105 The training frameworks for learners on the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and the Modern Apprenticeship programmes include key skills at the levels indicated in the table below. Learners also have to complete a NVQ at level 2 for Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and a NVQ at level 3 for Modern Apprenticeships, together with the specified technical certificates, in order to achieve the qualification framework.

Framework	Application of Number	Communication
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship in Retail and Customer Service	1	1
Modern Apprenticeship in Retail and Customer Service	1	2

Success in attaining agreed learning goals

- 106 Most learners achieve good standards of work. They develop and demonstrate a good understanding of both practical and theory aspects of Customer Service. All learners are able to apply their theory knowledge well to their work roles. For example, many learners are able to plan and implement improvements in Customer Service based on the results of customer feedback.
- 107 Overall, learners' attainment of the qualification framework is good. In the period August 2006 to May 2007, 76% of all leavers successfully completed their full qualification framework. In the same period 86% of Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and 33% of Modern Apprenticeship leavers achieved their full qualification frameworks. This is an improvement on the period August 2005 and July 2006 when 70% of Foundation Modern Apprenticeship leavers and 25% of Modern Apprenticeship leavers achieved their full qualification frameworks. In both years the number of Modern Apprenticeship leavers was very small.

Leavers/Completers 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006								
	New starters during this period	Total leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ	Leavers gaining full ILP	Leavers gaining part NVQ &/or key skills	Destination of leavers who did not gain a NVQ, part NVQ or any key skills		
						Related employment	Other employment	Unemployed or other
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	26	43	3	30	0	8	0	2
Modern Apprenticeship	6	4	1	1	0	1	0	1

Progress in learning

- 108 Overall, all current Foundation Modern Apprentices and Modern Apprentices are making very good progress towards achieving their ILPs.
- 109 All learners produce a good standard of practical and theory work. Learners organise their portfolios well. They use them effectively to demonstrate and record the wide range of skills they use in their day-to-day jobs. Most learners write reports with appropriate business structures, grammar and spelling. Many learners' written evidence often demonstrates good development of higher level critical thinking. For example, learners undertook detailed research on service levels offered to customers. They comprehensively analysed both their own behaviour and the limitations of the service they provided to customers.
- 110 Learners develop good key skills which they apply well in the workplace. One learner's application of number research analysed how managers at the swimming pool could increase usage figures. The learner identified a demand for over-50s' and over-60s' swimming sessions which managers successfully introduced to the leisure centre.

- 111 A few learners have difficulty in attending off-the-job training sessions because of their work shift patterns. However, these learners continue to make good progress due to the high level of additional support given to them by scheme managers and their employers.
- 112 Most learners demonstrate a good understanding of their qualification frameworks and a good understanding of their own progress towards achieving it. They can explain what they have already achieved and what they need to complete. Due to the good level of monitoring and support from scheme managers, nearly all learners have a very clear picture of the skills and knowledge that they need to improve.
- 113 Many learners take responsibility for their own learning. They independently research and collect good quality workplace portfolio evidence and reference it to their NVQ portfolios. All learners effectively track and assess their own progress using effective short and long term targets they agree with scheme managers.

Development of personal, social and learning skills

- 114 Most learners quickly develop the personal and communication skills that they need to work effectively. All learners are well motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their training. All learners develop effective professional relationships with scheme managers, employers and peers. As a result, learners have a purposeful attitude towards using their time productively to meet agreed monthly targets.
- 115 All learners develop a wide range of work and life skills. These skills increase learners' confidence and self-esteem and bring benefits to their employers. Most learners are punctual and have good attendance records in the workplace.

Provider's response to the report findings

I can confirm the accuracy of the report and welcome its findings and conclusions

The highly positive findings of the inspection have reflected our hard work to match employer needs in context to local, regional and national priorities. We feel that our attainment also reflected a comprehensive improvement in our quality performance.

The recommendations provided by Estyn have already been absorbed into the Icon Vocational Training Ltd development plans and will result in the company maintaining an even higher attainment rate once again above the quality threshold and national standards of achievement for 2007 and beyond.

The ICON team felt challenged by the inspection but at no time did any of us feel threatened – in short we regarded the experience as being a positive and stimulating team-building exercise that helped to confirm our focus and commitment for the benefit of individual learners and employers in meeting their business and learning objectives. Our planned growth and expansion will continue with the added knowledge that our delivery systems, processes and high attainment will provide sustainable and added-value impact on our sector in Active Leisure and Learning and Customer Service in the UK.

Appendix 1

The evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors visited:

- learners in the workplace and during off-the-job training; and
- a variety of other activities delivered by the provider including progress reviews, assessments and key skills sessions.

Members of the inspection team held meetings with:

- managers and staff of ICON Vocational Training;
- employers; and
- learners at their workplaces and in off-the-job locations.

The inspection team also considered:

- a selection of learners' work and photographic records of achievement; and
- comprehensive documentation provided both before and during the inspection.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mark Evans HMI	Reporting Inspector
Elizabeth Arthur HMI	Team Inspector
Christine Hooper HMI	Team Inspector
Eleanor Davies HMI	Team Inspector
Martin Hughes HMI	Team Inspector
Stephen Nelson	Additional Inspector
Lesley Rasmussen	Peer Assessor
Julian Leybourne	Provider nominee