

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Health and Safety Advisory Service Ltd**

**09 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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## Health and Safety Advisory Service Ltd

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Health and Safety Advisory Service Ltd	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Health and Safety Advisory Service Ltd	8
What learners think Health and Safety Advisory Service Ltd could improve	8

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Health and Safety Advisory Service Ltd (HSAS) is based in Swindon and was established in 1993 as a private training and consultancy company. It specialises in providing training and consultancy in health and safety to businesses ranging in size from multinational corporations to companies with fewer than 10 employees.

2. HSAS contracts with the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) of Berkshire and of Swindon and Wiltshire, the latter being the lead body. The company derives some 60 per cent of its income from publicly funded health and safety training. All current publicly funded learners train towards level 2 of a nationally accredited environmental health and safety certificate. HSAS has been informed that it is unlikely that training towards this qualification will be publicly funded after the end of the employer training pilot (ETP) scheme under which it is funded. The company is urgently restructuring its activities. At the time of the inspection, HSAS employed nine staff, three as part-time employees. There are four directors, two of whom are also trainers. Three staff are employed in marketing, administrative and support roles.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

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

4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** HSAS's self-assessment report, published in October 2005, was the second prepared by the company. The report effectively identifies many of the strengths identified during the inspection, but few of the weaknesses. HSAS's staff were suitably involved in the report's preparation, and evidence was drawn from learners' and employers' feedback. HSAS monitors the retention and achievement data of its provision well, and has good arrangements for feedback from learners and employers. Feedback is appropriately used at the point of delivery by tutors.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Despite a particularly difficult period for the company since September 2005, HSAS has maintained its focus on learners and employers. The already high retention rate has been maintained and the achievement rate has continued to improve, with an increasing number of learners achieving credit passes in the externally set and marked examination. The company is well led by a managing director who is committed to good learning and achievement. His commitment is shared by a small but dedicated team of staff.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY SERVICE LTD:

- effectively manage the anticipated change in public funding policy
- improve the achievement rates on the level 3 course
- evaluate the provision more systematically
- give all aspects of equality of opportunity a higher profile within training

## GRADES

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

<b>Health, public services and care</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b><i>Health &amp; safety/ environmental health</i></b>		<b>2</b>	
Employer training pilot	33	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. At the time of the inspection, 33 employed learners were in training with HSAS, funded through the ETP scheme. Since the start of the ETP programme, HSAS has trained over 450 learners at level 2. The company has also previously trained 17 health and safety learners at level 3, as part of a programme jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the South West Regional Development Agency. Training at level 3 was, however, suspended in November 2005 and at the time of the inspection there were no learners at level 3.

7. HSAS has not previously been inspected. In planning the inspection, consideration was given to the company's self-assessment report, and to the retention and achievement data supplied by the company.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	33
Number of staff interviewed	7
Number of employers interviewed	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	10
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

8. **Retention and achievement rates on the level 2 course are good.** In 2003-04 the retention rate was 91 per cent and the achievement rate was 83 per cent. In 2004-05, the retention rate was 97 per cent and the achievement rate was 96 per cent. Of the 129 learners starting in 2005-06, 53 per cent have successfully completed the programme and a further 26 per cent are still in learning.

9. The proportion of learners passing the examination with a credit grade has increased significantly over the duration of the ETP programme. Twenty-three per cent of learners in 2004-05 and 36 per cent of learners so far in 2005-06 achieved a credit pass.

10. **Learners develop good skills and understanding.** They speak enthusiastically of their ability to use in their workplace the techniques and knowledge they have gained on the course. The qualification gained by learners is transferable to other sectors of employment. It is recognised as a technical certificate in the advanced apprenticeship frameworks of a number of awarding bodies.

11. The retention rate on the now suspended level 3 course was satisfactory, but **the achievement rate was low with 10 of the 17 learners successfully completing the**

programme.

### The quality of provision

12. **HSAS provides particularly well-structured courses to meet the needs and interests of learners and their employers.** It maintains regular and effective contact with its network of employers, both through its funded programmes and through its commercial consultancy work in health and safety.

13. The company's training responds well to employers' needs. Trainers adapt and extend learning materials from the awarding body particularly effectively. They take care to draw upon the working experience of learners to illustrate and reinforce learning points.

14. Learners are enthusiastic about the relevance of the course to their responsibilities and roles at work. Employers comment on how effective the programmes are and the benefits that they have gained from having their staff attend.

15. Teaching overall is satisfactory. In the observed lessons, the learners and the trainer had a good working relationship. Learners worked well together in syndicates and individually.

16. All training takes place either in rented classroom accommodation at modern conference and training venues or at employers' premises. The rented classrooms are of a good standard and are well equipped.

17. Staff have appropriate qualifications to teach the courses, and a broad range of experience in a variety of sectors to provide relevant occupational knowledge. Staff are supported to take relevant professional qualifications in learning and development, and to maintain their occupational knowledge.

18. The range of training and support materials in the classroom is well matched to the training being delivered, and to the needs of learners. Most of the training materials and learning resources are of a good standard, but some visual aids are inappropriately designed for projection.

19. Assessment practice in the classroom is appropriate to the level of the programmes being followed. The overall assessment of learners' achievement is by a two-hour end-of-course examination. The awarding body sets and marks the examination papers, and is responsible for moderating and verifying the qualification.

20. The assessment and review of learners' literacy levels is satisfactory. All learners take a basic literacy test at the beginning of the programme to assess their level of ability. HSAS does not have a formal support structure for those with dyslexia or significant literacy support needs, but provides suitable individual support for any learners who require it.

21. HSAS provides a suitable level of guidance to learners at all stages in the course. Learners are well briefed on the course content and structure at induction. HSAS continues to make this advice and guidance available beyond the end of the formal programme. Former learners commented on the value to them of these continuing links in their workplace.



## Leadership and management

22. Leadership and management are good. **HSAS has good leadership and strategic planning to support training.** The small team of staff is well led by a managing director who provides clear leadership. The company has invested significantly in building its capacity to deliver particularly focused training and accreditation in health and safety, which are well linked to the national skills strategy, and to local training priorities.

23. Managers of HSAS set demanding targets for retention and achievement rates, and monitor these frequently. Appropriate action is taken to support learners who experience difficulty in reaching the standard of the examination.

24. Since September 2005 the company's future has been in serious doubt. During this period of uncertainty, HSAS has maintained an unambiguous commitment to supporting learners and their employers. While seeking to maximise its income, HSAS has suspended further recruitment to the level 3 ESF-funded qualification pending a review of its relevance to local employers and learners.

25. **HSAS provides well-managed engagement to meet the business needs of employers.** It effectively promotes training to target employers. Most learners are recruited as a result of direct marketing by HSAS. The company works well with employers. Employers and learners confirm that they receive a good level of information about the courses, which helps them to see how courses are relevant to their business and personal development needs.

26. HSAS is appropriately flexible in its delivery of training to meet employers' needs. 'Open' courses, designed for learners from a group of employers, are delivered at suitably accessible locations in Berkshire and Wiltshire. Where a single employer wishes to enrol a sufficient number of learners, training is delivered at the employer's premises.

27. HSAS's management of learning resources is satisfactory. Trainers are appropriately qualified to deliver this level of qualification. Accommodation and presentation equipment are conducive to effective learning, and HSAS ensures that thorough attention is paid to the health and safety of its learners and staff.

28. **Arrangements for collecting feedback from employers and learners are good.** HSAS has a well-established system of gathering daily feedback from learners on its training courses. Trainers review the feedback on a daily basis, and, in some cases, improvements have been made to particular courses during their delivery.

29. HSAS also issues end-of-course questionnaires to employers to test the value of the training to the employer and the learner. Results are effectively collated, and reports are provided to HSAS's managers. The company's telephone helpline, free to past learners for 12 months after their course, provides a further source of feedback on the effectiveness of training.

30. The self-assessment report is adequate in providing guidance for improvement. The company's latest self-assessment report is the second it has produced. The report effectively identifies many of the strengths identified during the inspection, although some strengths claimed were no more than normal practice. Most of the weaknesses noted

during inspection were not identified in the self-assessment report.

31. **Insufficient systematic evaluation of the provision takes place.** While HSAS carries out adequate immediate reviews of its training, the managers do not evaluate provision rigorously enough to identify trends and appropriately guide improvement actions.

32. The company has chosen to adopt the ISO 9001 international quality assurance standard and has made some progress in establishing operational criteria and compliance monitoring arrangements. These are, however, insufficiently rigorous. Management meetings specifically to consider quality improvement are not held frequently enough to ensure systematic improvement.

33. HSAS makes satisfactory use of data to guide improvement. It collects and collates well a suitable range of information on learners, employers and achievement. However, it does not make full use of examination results to bring about improvement.

34. HSAS is rigorous in monitoring examination pass rates. However, it has not analysed achievement rates within the different aspects of health and safety that are examined as part of the programmes.

35. HSAS's recruitment and induction of learners is satisfactory. Good information is provided to employers as to the structure and benefits of the training, and employers select which learners will attend. The gender balance, ethnicity, and age profile of learners reflects the make-up of the companies which sponsor their attendance.

36. Induction is thorough and appropriate to a course of four days' duration. Trainers reinforce the HSAS's commitment to providing additional support where needed. Learners often gain the confidence to declare support needs that they have not mentioned before beginning the course.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good leadership and strategic management to support training
- well-managed engagement to meet the business needs of employers
- good arrangements for feedback from employers and learners

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient systematic evaluation of the training provision

## **Health, public services and care**

### ***Health & safety/ environmental health***

**Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates at level 2
- good development of skills and understanding
- particularly well-structured courses

#### *Weaknesses*

- low achievement rates at level 3

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY SERVICE LTD:**

- the teaching style of the courses
- the relevance and value of the courses to the workplace
- 'it's fun training, of a serious subject'
- 'I thought I might be bored, but so far the training has really held my attention'
- 'being contacted personally to be told my result'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY SERVICE LTD COULD IMPROVE:**

- 'more feedback on what happens to our daily feedback sheets'
- 'more feedback on the results of my final exam'