

# Nova Training Reinspection

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Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 9 June 2006

Reinspection date

7 December 2007

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Inspection number

316732

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### 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 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 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 is judged to be inadequate.

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

## Description of the provider

1. Nova Training is part of Staff Select Limited and is based in the Black Country. It was founded by its present managing director in 1992. The company holds contracts with the Black Country Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Entry to Employment (E2E) and motor vehicle apprenticeship training. The LSC contract accounts for one third of the business' turnover. In November 2007, 108 learners were participating in E2E and 24 in apprenticeships. Nova provides services to another contractor for Train to Gain. Nova works with over 100 schools in the West Midlands providing vocational training for 14-16 year olds. Nova was previously inspected in June 2006.
2. The managing director is supported by a senior management team of three including the operations director, staff development manager and quality manager. Training is provided at five centres in the West Midlands with the head office at the Willenhall centre. The four other centres have a centre supervisor, one of whom heads up the schools programme. Across the five sites, 48 staff are employed by Nova.
3. The Black Country in the Midlands region has an unemployment rate of 4% although within the area some boroughs have a higher rate, for example unemployment in Sandwell is 10.4%. The proportion of minority ethnic people within the region is 20% of the population.

Overall effectiveness

Reinspection Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of Nova Training in respect of the LSC funded provision is good. Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement are all good.
5. At the time of the previous inspection the self-assessment process was judged to be insufficiently coherent. Since then the self-assessment process has improved and is now good. The process is highly inclusive, well managed and staff and learners at all centres contribute. The use of learners' feedback is particularly effective. Feedback from other stakeholders is used appropriately although the extent of employer feedback is low. The quality assurance arrangements lead to outcomes which inform self-assessment and support improvement strategies. The report for leadership and management was generally accurate and inspectors agreed with the main judgements and grades.
6. Nova has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. All the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection have been dealt with and are now satisfactory or good. Significant improvements have been made in key areas such as skills for life. Progression rates in E2E have improved and are good. Qualification success rates in E2E are good. Key skills success rates have improved significantly. Framework success rates in motor vehicle programmes for 2006/07 are very good. In-year figures for technical certificate pass rates in motor vehicle are good. Quality assurance arrangements are good although areas

for improvement from observations are insufficiently focused. Evaluation of programmes is effective and leads to curriculum development and improvement. Post inspection action planning is thorough and used effectively by staff and managers.

## Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

### Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Motor vehicle</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3	

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Employability training</i>		2	
Entry to Employment	88	2	

Business administration and law			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Administration</i>		4	
Apprenticeships for young people	14	4	

### Grades awarded at reinspection

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

## About the reinspection

7. Inspectors reviewed leadership and management at Nova Training. Nova Training does not hold an LSC contract for business administration in 2007/08. Inspectors visited Nova on three occasions between April and September 2007. These monitoring visits provided feedback on progress made towards addressing identified weaknesses. At the fourth and final visit in December two inspectors carried out the reinspection of leadership and management over four days.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	15
Number of staff interviewed	30
Number of employers interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of visits to the provider	4

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

### Strengths

- Good strategic planning and clear direction for improvement
- Broad range of very effective staff development
- Very good strategies to engage and progress learners
- Good range of successful quality improvement initiatives
- Particularly effective strategy to embed skills for life

### Weakness

- Insufficient follow-up of specific teaching areas for improvement noted in observations
8. Good strategic planning is provided by the new senior management team who give a clear direction for the organisation to improve. An appropriate set of values underpins the strategic objectives which clearly focus on learners and their progress. This strategy is successfully implemented and staff in the organisation are very involved in carrying it through to success. They are clear about what has to be done, what their role is and how they can affect improvements. Staff development is a strategic priority and significant investment has been made to support this. Strategic planning is very responsive to local and regional priorities. Business planning and review using accurate management information is good. Operational management across the training centres works well and internal communications are good. Nova's improvement strategy and overall mission puts a strong emphasis on improving positive outcomes for learners and this is working. Progression rates in E2E are good. Learners are gaining good skills and achieving at a good rate.
  9. Nova provides a broad range of very effective staff development which includes comprehensive training on topics that directly affect the learners. Staff training time is programmed weekly for all staff. This enhances the staff knowledge and skills to teach and support learners very effectively. Nova has made extensive investment of time and resources to support a relatively new team on issues such as drugs awareness, dyslexia awareness, equality of opportunity, child protection, the every child matters framework, initial assessment, progress reviews, active learning and key skills. A well qualified and experienced manager delivers a host of training events in-house with valuable input from external consultants on a regular basis. Staff development is well planned and aligns well with business and individual development needs, including the requirement to achieve qualifications to teach skills for life. Inspectors agreed with this strength, identified in the self-assessment report.
  10. Nova implements a particularly effective strategy to embed skills for life. The policy is detailed and covers all curriculum areas and other aspects of Nova's

operations. This has been backed up by a substantial level of staff development. Staff have been given clear guidelines about their roles in providing skills for life. Staff are well on their way to complete appropriate level 3 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Learners' work is of a high standard. For example, learners designed a poster and newsletter to raise questions about the educational maintenance allowance as part of their citizenship programme. They sent a letter to the local MP to campaign for higher levels of education maintenance allowance and equal treatment for all learners as part of their citizenship programme. Tutors make clear references to how they would develop the learners' skills in communications and number in the lesson plans and schemes of work. Managers make thoughtful comments in teaching observations, in terms of the way tutors have reinforced literacy and numeracy.

11. Learners benefit from thorough initial and ongoing assessment as well as personal and study support. Some of the examples of support are free transport, good literacy and numeracy help, on-demand assessment, regular fortnightly progress reviews and financial help with examination costs and to buy clothes for interviews. In addition, to motivate learners, Nova pays bonuses to those learners who do not qualify for education maintenance allowances through its own resources at an increasing cost to the company. It rewards learners' achievement with electronic gadgets or vouchers.
12. All the centres have excellent displays to celebrate learners' achievements including learners' work, challenging stereotypes posters, achievement and inclusion. Learners are very proud of their achievements. They demonstrate enthusiasm and a high degree of confidence. Their communication skills are well developed and they can articulate how Nova has given direction to their lives.
13. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Supportive and competent staff use a broad range of information sources and refer learners appropriately to other suitable providers or agencies when required. However, staff do not have appropriate guidance qualifications which is recognised by managers and is planned as the next stage of the staff development strategy. Connexions personal advisers conduct useful checks to ensure that the learners continue to receive impartial advice and guidance. Referral arrangements for learners for whom English is not their primary language are appropriate. Learners are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities and are aware of complaints procedures, in the centres as well as at employers' premises.

## Equality of opportunity

## Contributory grade 2

14. At the previous inspection equality of opportunity was judged as satisfactory. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are now good. Nova has deployed very good strategies to engage and progress large numbers of learners who are at risk of exclusion or have had poor experiences of education. It has worked effectively at a strategic level to cultivate strong partnerships with schools, other providers, local education authorities and agencies that work to help and support disaffected

young people. Programmes include an eight week programme for learners who are undecided about vocational choices and a day release programme for 14-16 year old learners.

15. The work with schools is an important strand of Nova's strategy to counter disadvantage, improve achievement and promote inclusion. For example, Nova works with 64 schools from all the Black Country boroughs and Telford to provide training one day per week in practical subjects such as construction and motor vehicle. Nova has invested heavily in developing new centres and offered accreditation to the learners at level 1. Learners on these programmes learn new and useful practical skills in plumbing and car repair. Over 60% of learners achieve either full level 1 or entry level 3 qualifications in performing engineering operations and motor vehicles or multi trades. For many of them this is their first real achievement. Some 12% of the learners on schools programme are referred to by the pupil referral units. Other support agencies provide help and support to Nova and its learners. These strategies and others have helped Nova to engage higher number of learners who would otherwise be classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET) learners. The number of NEET learners is increasing in the area and Nova has made a substantial contribution to social inclusion by re-engaging such learners into learning. Nova provides women only introductory experiences to encourage higher participation in areas like construction and motor vehicle, which has led to some progressing into apprenticeships. Nova provides a very warm welcome and a high level of effective support to help learners re-engage into learning, utilising four training centres in the Black Country and one in Telford. Participation rates by learners from minority ethnic groups are satisfactory overall.
16. Staff training in equality issues is particularly comprehensive. It provides staff with knowledge and skills in respect of all aspects of equality and diversity. Staff have a good awareness of their role in promoting diversity in the organisation and to the learners. Staff challenge learners' attitudes in a respectful manner and encourage them to develop into good citizens. Health and safety, risk assessment and equality monitoring with employers are carried out appropriately. Learners are well protected and work in safe environments. Learner complaints are handled sensitively with strong focus on learning from mistakes and respect for others.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

17. Nova managers and staff have engaged in successful quality improvement initiatives since the previous inspection. The senior management team sets a clear direction for improvement and successfully involves managers and staff in planning, and actions to increase performance and raise the quality of the provision. Self-assessment and improvement action planning is well managed and thorough.

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18. Quality assurance arrangements are good and are managed effectively. Processes have been mapped and monitoring arrangements strengthened. The self-assessment process is built on contributions from across all centres and programmes. Feedback from learners and other stakeholders is used effectively to identify areas for improvement. The participation by learners and staff across all centres is a particularly positive feature of the way quality improvement proceeds at Nova.
19. Data is used effectively to measure performance, set standards, monitor progress and identify trends. The managers at Nova now have a much better understanding of performance in relation to their responsibilities and are able to use data effectively to manage and make improvements. The supervisors and staff at each centre are engaged effectively in performance management and data analysis. Good visual displays around the centres support this approach. Evaluation of programmes is effective. Teaching has improved on E2E and inspectors saw evidence of key skills and equality and diversity well integrated in the curriculum. The programme design has significantly improved and includes a very effective citizenship module.
20. A comprehensive and well managed programme of teaching and learning observations has been introduced. However, insufficient follow up of specific improvements from teaching observations is provided. Observation records are thorough and detailed, but specific points relating to teaching and learning are not sufficiently well identified and followed through to enable improvements in teaching to become established.