

INSPECTION REPORT

European Social Fund - South East Region

13 October 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 over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** 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.

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OVERVIEW

European Social Fund

Context and a brief overview

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the European Union's (EU) structural funds developed to help reduce the differences in living standards between the people and the regions of the EU. The EU Commission is responsible for distributing the money among the member states of the EU. Under current EU regulations, ESF support is available to the United Kingdom (UK) until 2008 and is used to support the annual UK national action plan for employment (NAP).

The financing of ESF projects

In the UK and Gibraltar, ESF is managed by the national ESF division, which reports directly to the national programme monitoring committee (PMC). The ESF unit within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administers the fund. The money is distributed according to identified needs through national government offices (NGOs) in each region of the country. ESF generally pays for approximately 45 per cent of a project's costs. The remaining amount is known as match funding. Although public and private match funding can be used, a public authority must provide at least 10 per cent of the fund. Most match funding is provided by Jobcentre Plus, local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and other organisations such as regional development agencies and local authorities. These organisations are known as co-financing organisations (CFOs). In general they will bid through the NGO for ESF money to help co-finance projects identified in their regional development plans.

Some projects can apply for direct funding through government offices. This is referred to as alternative bidding. In addition a small amount of ESF is allocated to national projects. Projects usually run for 24 months although some can be longer. ESF may occasionally support projects for up to 36 months.

The focus of ESF

The aim of the ESF is to meet three key objectives.

- Objective 1 To promote the development of regions where economic expansion and growth is required. These areas include Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Wales and the Valleys, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly.
- Objective 2 To support the economic and social needs of areas with specific difficulties.
- Objective 3 To provide funding in regions not identified under Objective 1 to help improve education, training and employment policies and systems.

The ESF can provide support to achieve a range of policy fields within each objective. Policy fields are designed to help member states of the EU develop their job markets and the skills of people who are either in, or looking for, work. Each member state decides on which policy fields they will focus on. ESF is derived from the European Employment Action Plan which lays down five key areas (pillars). These will be delivered through ESF which can be included under the various objective 1, 2 and 3 programmes. It is possible that objective 2 programmes may not include any ESF dependent on the region and that any programme may not include all five elements. The five key areas are:

1. developing and promoting active labour market policies;
2. promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion;
3. promoting and improving training, education and counselling as part of a lifelong learning policy;
4. promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce, innovation and adaptability in work organisations, and developing entrepreneurship, and
5. specific measures to improve women's access to and participation in the labour market.

These policy fields are further broken down into measures.

Terminology and acronyms

Below are some of the terms and acronyms used in ESF provision.

Beneficiaries

This refers to those who benefit from the ESF and is another name for learners, clients, customers, students and participants, for example.

CFO

Co-Financing Organisation. This will usually be Jobcentre Plus or a local LSC, but can also be, for example, local councils.

DEA

Disability Employment Advisers.

EQUAL

This is a transitional programme that tests new ways to reduce inequality in the labour market.

ERDF

European Regional Development Fund.

ILM

Intermediary Labour Market.

NAP

The national action plan for employment for England, Wales, Scotland and Gibraltar supported by the ESF.

NGO

National government offices. There are eight government offices responsible for education and training in specific regions of the UK.

PMC

Programme monitoring committees. There are regional committees linked with each national government office and a national committee that reports to the ESF Division.

RDA

Regional development agencies. These are non-departmental government bodies funded by central government responsible for promoting economic growth and competitiveness.

More detailed information about the ESF can be found at www.esf.gov.uk

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION

1. The ESF South East region comprises the eight counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey, Oxfordshire, East Sussex and West Sussex. There are 11 unitary authorities comprising Bracknell, Isle of Wight, Medway, Milton Keynes, Portsmouth, Slough, Southampton, West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Windsor and Maidenhead.
2. The regional economy is strong, aided by international and national transport links. Gatwick, the second largest airport in the United Kingdom (UK) is located in the region and Heathrow airport is immediately adjacent. The region has six major ports, access to the channel tunnel, and over one-fifth of the country's motorways. On many of the economic and labour market indicators, it outperforms most regions of England.
3. The regional development plan for 2007 identifies that the region is generally prosperous with a low rate of unemployment. Across the Southeast the average unemployment rate was 1.6 per cent in August 2006, compared with a national average of 2.6 per cent. The workforce is large and, in general, well educated, skilled and qualified. Only 10 per cent of the population have no qualifications, compared to the national average of 14.1 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of people with poor literacy and/or numeracy skills is 21 per cent compared with the national average of 24 per cent. In industries that are growing, the workforce is highly skilled and well paid. However, in traditional or declining industries the opposite is the case. In areas of deprivation along the south coast and in urban centres, there are often low levels of basic skills and higher levels of young people not in education, employment and training. These areas also have relatively high proportions of disadvantaged groups including minority ethnic groups, migrant workers, lone parents, and those not active in the labour market because of disability. The 2001 census shows the proportion of people in the Southeast from minority ethnic groups to be 4.9 per cent compared with a national average of 9.1 per cent. There is wide variation between areas. For example, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Slough is currently 36.3 per cent.
4. The regional development plan focuses ESF objective 3 funding on four key priorities. The first of these is to link areas of deprivation to local economic opportunity, promoting equality of opportunity, and helping those in target groups to participate fully in the success of the region. The second is to develop skills in the region in order to prevent future skill shortages, particularly in construction, care, retail and some parts of engineering. The third is to stimulate entrepreneurship, equality of opportunity, adaptability and business growth, to provide sustainable development in terms of prosperity, employment and the environment. The final area is to accelerate the application and use of technology through the promotion of the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) by all individuals and businesses, to support environmentally excellent development. Overall, the goal set out by the development plan is to have an innovative and vibrant business base with a highly skilled, socially inclusive workforce supported by the widespread use of e-business and e-learning.
5. There are three sets of co-financers in the region incorporating the six local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Jobcentre Plus and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA). The government office meets with each of these organisations on a quarterly basis and includes an annual strategic review. The co-financers work together to produce a coherent map of projects to support national and local strategic plans while meeting the needs of employers and individuals. Programme performance and local economic and

labour market information are used to develop current and future priorities for funded activities. The Government Office supports an LSC regional co-ordinator through a technical assistance programme that includes the evaluation of the effect of the provision in the region, specific regional programmes, and the co-ordination of briefing requests. Jobcentre Plus works with providers through its regional office based in Guildford. Along with SEEDA, all three co-financers are members of the executive support group, the key working group supporting the ESF objective 3 regional committee.

6. In the ESF South East region, there are 282 providers providing projects funded through ESF co-financing. Of these, 118 also receive funding for mainstream training provision and have been, or will be, inspected by the ALI, The Office for Standards in Education or the Quality Assurance Agency.

INSPECTION RATIONALE AND SCOPE

7. All ESF South East region providers were taken into account and inspectors reviewed 55 inspection reports from those providers already inspected. The sample of providers whose reports appear in the annex of this report are an agreed representative sample taken from the 164 providers not already inspected. Some providers hold ESF projects that are match funded by either the LSC or Jobcentre Plus and some have contracts with both. The sample was chosen after consultation with Jobcentre Plus and the local LSCs. Account was given to the different policy fields and measures as well as the size and variety of projects.

8. Inspectors spent up to two days on each inspection visit. They examined a sample of self-assessment reports for those providers not visited. They also reviewed additional paperwork such as the regional development plan and local ESF development plans, and carried out key interviews with those responsible for ESF provision in the region.

9. Individual reports on the following providers of ESF provision are written as annexes to this report:

Annex 1 - The Seeds Trust

Annex 2 - Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP)

Annex 3 - West Sussex County Council

Annex 4 - Sussex Probation Area

Annex 5 - IBP Training and Development

Annex 6 - Association of Learning Providers – Surrey (ALPS)

Annex 7 - AmicusHorizon Group

Annex 8 - Anjali Dance Company

Annex 9 - Blackthorn Trust

Annex 10 - Skillnet

Annex 11 - Impact Initiatives

Annex 12 - National Institute of African Studies (NIAS)

KEY THEMES

Key strengths

10. Rates of retention and achievement on most programmes are good. Retention rates on most programmes are in excess of 70 per cent and on some, exceed 90 per cent. Achievements of specified outcomes are also good, though these do not always meet the ambitious targets set. Many learners progress well onto further qualifications or into employment. Most learners produce good standards of work.

11. Learners develop a good range of social and employability skills including teamworking and presentation skills. The development of self-esteem, confidence and motivation is good. Learners use these skills effectively in work and social situations. Their improved independence helps them successfully overcome barriers to re-entering employment. They adopt a more positive view of their own circumstances and make many, often successful, attempts to change their personal situations. Many learners achieve a good range of accreditations and awards, often starting with few or no qualifications.

12. Learning and pastoral support is good. Staff provide a good range of additional support to learners for a range of circumstances. Staff visits to workplaces are purposeful and effective. Visits are made at times convenient to the learner and employer and include meaningful discussions with learners and workplace supervisors. Personal support, including information, advice and guidance, is good. Examples include information on housing benefits, addiction issues and help to complete letters and forms.

13. Programmes are well matched to learners' needs. They are well planned and take into account the problems learners are dealing with, such as the duration and spread of hours across a working week. Work placements are matched well to learners' needs, providing supportive but challenging environments. Although learners' difficulties and disabilities are taken into account, they are not used as an excuse for behavioural or performance issues.

14. Many providers have a clear strategic vision that includes contingency plans to cover the potential loss of ESF funding. A few providers, however, operate projects that are not sustainable if funding ceases, and are making plans for redundancies. There is often a strong commitment to the sharing of good practice. Senior managers and directors are carefully chosen for their knowledge of the difficulties facing their client group.

15. Strong partnership agreements are in place. Beginning at recruitment stages, a number of providers have devised innovative systems to improve recruitment to their programmes, for example, working closely with specialist agencies and doctors' surgeries. Involvement with local communities and local businesses is good, which are used well for work placements and industrial visits. Providers work well with local colleges and other educational establishments to provide a range of information about opportunities for progression and additional programme information. External agencies are used well to provide specialist advice and support outside the expertise of provider staff. Some providers, however, have insufficient strategies to engage a wide range of employers.

Key areas for improvement

16. Initial assessment is generally weak. It does not focus sufficiently on learners' additional literacy, language and numeracy needs. Information is not well recorded and is often not shared sufficiently with tutors and other relevant staff. Insufficient account is taken of learners' previous skills and knowledge. There is often no clear Skills for Life strategy. Skills

for Life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. There are a few exceptions where information is thorough and well used.

17. Target-setting and progress reviews are often weak. Individual learning plans contain little planning of learning, relying on a general statement of intent and containing little detail about how that intent will be met. Although visits to employers are meaningful, the recording of them is often inadequate. There is little monitoring of the overall progression of the learner or their overall development, including personal and vocational skills.

18. There is a wide range of approaches to quality improvement by providers. Some were found to be good, others inadequate, though many were satisfactory. Of those judged to be good, there were clear aims for continuous improvement, including the quality assurance of key learning processes and the good use of learner feedback. Others had few systems in place and were reliant on other agencies, such as, external moderators and contractors, to provide this information.

Self-assessment

19. The approach to self-assessment by most providers is satisfactory. Reports, though similar in structure, are clear and informative. Although sometimes overly descriptive they are judgemental and provided an honest account of providers' key strengths and weaknesses. There is some over emphasis on strengths that were judged to be no more than normal practice. Although many larger mainstream providers have been carrying out self-assessment for some time, they contain little information about ESF provision.

ANNEX 1

THE SEEDS TRUST – September 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

20. The Slough Environmental Education Development Service Trust (the SEEDS Trust) is a registered charitable trust established in 1998. It has an administration office in Slough, Berkshire and runs social and environmental projects from a nursery in Wexham. The organisation provides training in environmental awareness for people from disadvantaged backgrounds including young offenders, ex-offenders, the unemployed and those affected by drugs or alcohol misuse. Five voluntary trustees who work in the community run the organisation. A manager has overall responsibility for the projects and is assisted by a full-time landscape and construction support worker and part-time administrator.

21. The SEEDS Trust has an ESF contract co-financed by Jobcentre Plus under policy field 2, measure 2. The contract started in March 2004 and finished at the end of September 2006. The project supports learners who have barriers to employment to help them find a job. The programme is called the new leaf project and is designed to give individual support and guidance alongside appropriate counselling and raising of environmental awareness. It provides organic horticulture, landscape and light construction training. Learners are generally on the programme for up to 26 weeks and attend training for two full days each week. The organisation is contracted to have 60 learners start the programme and 12 to have gained employment by the end. Other learners should have progressed into further education or training. There are 12 learners currently on the programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

22. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

23. Retention rates and progress into employment are satisfactory. Recruitment onto the project is good and has met the agreed contractual target. Learners develop effective social skills, teamworking skills, confidence and self-esteem and use these skills effectively when applying for jobs. Rates of progress into further education and training are poor and do not meet the ambitious contractual targets.

The quality of provision

24. **Support for learners is particularly good.** Staff provide much additional support to address personal circumstances including housing, benefits, addiction issues and also help learners to complete personal forms and letters. They encourage informal self-help sessions for learners. The domestic needs of learners are met by the provision of transport to and from training and through the provision of a subsistence allowance. Learners gain self-confidence and motivation from the social aspect of meeting together at the nursery.

25. **Resources for horticulture training are outstanding.** They include a poly tunnel, a dry seating area and a Mongolian yurt. There are, however, no formal classroom or ICT

facilities. Induction is satisfactory and learners are given a useful handbook that clearly outlines their rights and responsibilities.

26. Job preparation activities are effective. Staff display job vacancies on site and many learners use this facility well. Staff download job information from the internet and work in partnership with a local jobsearch project to help learners to produce curriculum vitae and application forms, and to prepare for interviews. Staff have organised productive visits to other horticultural sites.

27. Staff have developed effective methods of engagement with disadvantaged groups. **Strong partnerships have been developed with local support agencies** who are encouraged to refer learners to the project. Recruitment materials are clearly written though there is insufficient focus on employability activities. Marketing materials include positive images to encourage more recruitment of women and minority ethnic learners.

28. **Initial assessment is weak** and does not focus sufficiently on the identification of learners' basic skills needs and preferred learning styles. There is insufficient promotion and focus on skills for life and formal internal counselling support for learners, though some learners receive counselling support from external agencies. **Individual action plans are poor** and there is insufficient specific target-setting. Informal learner reviews are carried out regularly but these are not always recorded effectively. Assessment activities are not fully developed and no use is made of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. Staff recognise this and have started to develop more formal assessment methods. **Planning of teaching and learning is satisfactory.**

Leadership and management

29. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are regular monthly management meetings between the SEEDS trust and project manager where details of the project, self-assessment and learners' progress are thoroughly discussed. **The project manager has a clear strategic vision** with a realistic plan to improve the provision and provide a wider range of programmes over the next five years. Although there are inadequate links with employers and local colleges this has been identified by the project manager and the development plan aims to rectify this.

30. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and data is clearly monitored and reviewed. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory and there are adequate arrangements for learner feedback and the checking of contract compliance. Soft outcomes are adequately monitored at the end but not during the programme. **Staff training is good** and the project manager and support worker are well qualified and experienced in environmental studies. They have both recently completed a basic teacher training course and have plans to progress further. The SEEDS Trust recently completed its first self-assessment and the report gives a clear and reasonably accurate account of the organisation.

ANNEX 2

BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CLUBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (BACYP) – September 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

31. The Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP) is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The original charity was formed in 1949 as the Boys Club, became the Berkshire Association of Youth Clubs, and more recently a limited company to enable the charity to hold contracts in its own right. The main central office is in Reading, with branches in Wokingham and Newbury. The youth service operates across the whole of the Royal County of Berkshire.

32. Currently BACYP holds contracts with Berkshire Connexions, the LSC, the Local Network Fund, Sport England and six unitary authorities to deliver a range of programmes. These include an education programme, Millennium Volunteers, Sports Development, Accrediting Learning through Informal Voluntary Education (ALIVE), developing solutions for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET Solutions), Get-In, Healthier Communities, and a variety of other projects for young people. Qualifications and training include a level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in youth work, NVQ background knowledge training, health and safety awareness, child protection awareness, a variety of nationally recognised first aid courses, and road-user education and communication skills including assertiveness, active listening and working with aggression.

33. The organisation includes a chief executive and six voluntary directors, supported by six full-time and 14 part-time staff. NEET Solutions is delivered under policy field 1, measure 2. The programme has a research and development phase, carried out by Reading University, providing information for the programme delivery phase, designed to tackle significant barriers to re-engagement in learning or employment, which is not met by current provision. The project started in April 2005 and will finish in June 2007. Currently, five learners have completed a pilot programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

34. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

35. **Achievement and retention rates on the ESF programme are excellent** and significantly exceed the targets identified for the programme. Of the five learners that started the pilot programme, four completed it and one left early due to finding employment. All four who completed the programme have gained jobs.

36. Learners increase their knowledge and motivation and work well towards overcoming barriers to re-entering employment, education or training. **The standard of learners' work is good.** Portfolios of evidence demonstrate good use of external and research literature.

The quality of provision

37. **Learners achieve a wide range of accredited qualifications and internal awards.**

Learners complete courses in first aid, health and safety and a safe driving programme. All learners who completed the pilot programme also achieved the Bronze Youth Achievement Award.

38. **Learners benefit from a programme that is closely matched to their needs** and is delivered and supported in the local community. **Learners receive good support from BACYP** and from local youth workers. **Involvement from businesses and the local community is good.** Learners benefit from good range of carefully planned visits to local businesses including Reading Football Club, the Fire Service, Debenhams and Taylor Woodrow. A member of staff from the Connexions service has been seconded to BACYP to provide support across the provision. Learners use the internet to research careers.

39. **Arrangements for the initial assessment of learners are insufficient.** The outcomes of initial assessments are not systematically recorded and additional support is not appropriately identified.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management of the programme are satisfactory. BACYP has developed satisfactory management information systems including a system for recording beneficiary details, learning outcomes and course progression. After a good start with the pilot programme, recruitment has fallen below contractual requirements, with the planned number of learners for April to June and July to September in 2006 not being recruited. Locally held team meetings are effective in bringing all staff together and sharing information and good practice.

41. Reinforcement of equality and diversity throughout the programme is adequate, though staff have a good understanding of the key issues relating to equality and diversity.

42. The self-assessment process was not sufficiently focused on the ESF programme and contained few specific references to it. Staff induction is recorded well with all staff receiving an in-depth induction pack. Appropriate service level agreements are in place to monitor subcontractors.

ANNEX 3

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – September 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

43. West Sussex County Council (the council) covers seven borough and district councils. It includes a large rural and coastal area in the South of England, but also encompasses urban areas including Chichester, Worthing and Crawley. The council headquarters is located in Chichester. The council makes use of ESF to help finance the five key themes of regenerating the coastal economy, a new vision for the northeast of the county, improving neighbourhood quality, social inclusion, and supporting individuals in need. The council's adult services works in partnership with external agencies to help disadvantaged people living in West Sussex to find work. Adult services focuses its work on helping people to stay independent for as long as possible.

44. The council has four contracts to deliver ESF programmes under the heading of Pathways to Work. Delivered through objective 3 under policy fields 2 and 3, projects are co-financed by Jobcentre Plus. Since the programmes started in April 2004, 697 learners have started on the project. Programmes provide help and support for vulnerable groups in society including offenders and ex-offenders, those with severe and enduring mental health needs, learning difficulties, physical and sensory impairment, and those who misuse alcohol or drugs. All project aims include production of personal development plans, improvement of basic skills, involvement in work placements, on-the-job training and, in some instances, paid employment. Learners receive financial benefit advice and assistance with jobsearch skills including applications and interviews. The seven partners in the projects are Workability West Sussex, Worthing and Littlehampton MIND, Shoreham Mental Health Association, Sussex Careers, Sussex Drug and Alcohol Action Team, Aldingbourne Trust and Outreach 3 Way. The programmes are delivered through partner outreach venues.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

45. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

46. **Learners gain self-esteem, increased self-confidence, motivation, and employability skills.** They achieve improved independence and social skills. Many start to take positive action to change and improve their personal situations. Learners improve their ability to sustain contact with people and groups in social situations and in work placements. Learners actively participate in planning marketing activities and producing promotional materials for the projects.

47. **Retention is good** with 83 per cent of learners completing the programme. Overall, the four projects are currently meeting their contractual targets. To date, 49 per cent of learners have achieved a contracted outcome. One of the partners achieved all its targets at the time of inspection.

48. **The range of training and qualifications completed and achieved is very good.** Detailed individual action plans identify well-considered personal and vocational training

aims. Learners attend appropriate internal training, college courses or training arranged through other training providers. The training is carefully managed to provide good support for learners' personal and learning needs.

The quality of provision

49. The quality of provision is particularly good. All centres are in accessible locations with good public transport. Reviews of progress regularly take place in informal venues to help learners feel more at ease. These include community centres, coffee houses, training providers, work-placement premises and residential settings.

50. The initial assessment of learners' personal and learning needs is very effective. Learners have a very thorough initial assessment with their project officer, sometimes extending over two interviews. Information from referring agencies is used well to aid assessment. The initial assessment identifies potential goals and reviews current levels of academic, vocational and personal skills and qualities such as timekeeping. The assessment also identifies wider social factors that could be a barrier to progress, such as debt management and independent travel arrangements. Detailed plans of action are developed in agreement with the learner.

51. Programmes are well structured, flexible and support individual learner progress. They provide a range of learning and support activities carefully structured to learners' individual needs. Learning and assessment are well planned and in some cases learners gain accredited qualifications. Learners are also referred onto a range of appropriate other training.

52. Pastoral and individual support provided for a vulnerable learner group is very good. Project officers provide extensive support on a wide range of issues to help learners to progress and to benefit from their programme. Support includes helping learners with personal issues, such as housing, and obtaining state benefits and additional funding. Learners are also supported to prepare for work experience and job interviews by helping them obtain and complete application forms and carrying out mock interviews.

53. Some aspects of the programme have good employment experiences in a range of settings. Placements and tasters in the private and voluntary sectors are carefully selected to reflect individual identified needs.

54. The planning and monitoring of training and work placements is insufficiently detailed. The aims of attending a work placement are not clearly identified. There is little systematic evaluation of learners' progress in developing their personal and vocational skills.

Leadership and management

55. The operational management of programmes is good. The Pathways to Work programme is well established and used well by referring agencies. Relevant activities support learner progress. Records of learners' reviews are thorough. Appropriate resources are readily available. Line managers and other professional colleagues provide suitable support for project officers. The range and number of learners have increased and partners are achieving contractual targets. Communications across the partnership are satisfactory.

56. Partnership working with a wide range of organisations is good. Project officers have a wide range of contacts with relevant local organisations. These include organisations that provide specialist advice and support on matters such as drug and alcohol misuse,

organisations such as volunteer bureaus that provide work experience, and local further education colleges that provide courses relevant to learners.

57. There is insufficient use of management information. A regular quarterly meeting of all project managers evaluates achievements against contract targets, and pre-determined partner targets are adjusted accordingly. Although the central team collects data on learners' achievements, there is little evaluation of trends within diverse groups or analysis of additional outcomes many learners achieve. There is no strategy or procedure to manage learner waiting lists.

58. Strategies to engage employers are insufficient. Although project officers make good use of their individual knowledge of local employers and volunteer bureaus to obtain work experience for learners, there is no strategy to make better use of this knowledge across the partnership. There is little systematic promotion of the programme to engage employers in providing work experience and jobs, and to help them understand the needs of learners on the programme.

59. The council's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The Pathways to Work programme engages a wide range of vulnerable learners. Learners access the programme in convenient and accessible locations. There is some recording of learner profile data, but there has been little further use of the data for management purposes. Although there have been some attempts to increase the number of minority ethnic learners, they have not been successful.

60. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Project officers and their managers received training to develop their self-assessment reports based on the Common Inspection Framework. Judgements on two key questions are tested by the partnership before the final individual self-assessment reports are developed. The overall self-assessment report for the partnership is based on the individual self-assessment reports. Inspectors are broadly in agreement with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the overall and individual reports. Partners have taken action to improve identified areas for improvement in their self-assessments.

ANNEX 4

SUSSEX PROBATION AREA – September 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

61. The Sussex Probation Area is part of the National Probation Service. They are the key partner responsible for an ESF project co-financed by Sussex LSC. The project, Integrated Learning and Skills for Offenders, is managed by the Sussex Probation Area on behalf of the three bidding partners, including HMP Ford and HMP Lewes. The project comes under ESF policy field 3, measure 1. The aim of the project is to improve the capacity of the partners to work together within the context of the National Offender Management Service, the new sentencing framework, and the prison common delivery framework. The project also aims to provide new learning as well as information, advice and guidance for learners who are nearing their date of release. The project started in April 2005 and is due to end in March 2007. There are 35 learners who are currently on the project and 40 learners have already completed it.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

62. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

63. Achievement of qualifications is satisfactory and most learners who start their programme achieve accreditation. However, some learners leave their programme early though this is often due to circumstances beyond the control of the project team. The project has been successful in recruiting good numbers of learners in line with their contract. Seventy-five learners have started the project so far which exceeds numbers planned.

64. **Learners develop a good range of relevant skills** to help improve their chances of future employment. Their programmes also help them to improve their confidence and self-esteem. Learners are progressing well and are enthusiastic about their work. Many have a good understanding and knowledge of their subject.

65. **There is inadequate monitoring and analysis of achievements and soft outcomes.** Data is mainly used for contract compliance and although data is collected on starts, little use is made of data to help identify trends or improve provision.

The quality of provision

66. **Lessons and training sessions are planned and taught well.** Learners are clearly engaged and enjoy their learning. Resources for teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. At HMP Ford, horticulture resources are particularly good.

67. **There is good and well-planned information, advice and guidance.** Learners benefit from effective individual teaching by well-qualified staff. Information discussed is clearly recorded and learners receive a copy of this. The project team has taken particularly good

care to design documentation that does not identify learners as ex-offenders to ensure they are not disadvantaged upon release.

68. **Partnership working is particularly good.** This includes strong partnerships between the Probation Service, the Prison Service, Sussex Youth Ltd, Northbrook College, Sussex Downs College and Jobcentre Plus. Learners receive clear information about the wide range of provision that has been developed as part of this project. They are able to participate in an increased programme of learning and access a wide range of employment opportunities. Support given to learners to ensure they achieve their qualifications is satisfactory.

69. **Individual learning plans are poorly used** and clear targets are generally not set during progress reviews. **Initial assessment results are not always recorded** or shared with tutors in vocational areas. **Learning support is not recorded well.**

Leadership and management

70. **Leadership and management are good.** Managers and staff from Sussex Probation Area, HMP Ford, HMP Lewes, Sussex Youth Ltd, Northbrook College and Sussex Downs College meet regularly and there is thorough discussion about learners' progress. These meetings are clearly recorded. There is a particularly strong culture of sharing best practice and good collaborative working between key agencies in both prisons.

71. Staff have a good understanding of the project aims and also have a clear vision for the future. **There is good strategic planning** to further share the good practices developed during this project with other prisons. The project has enabled the development of a good range of useful and relevant short courses for offenders. These include car valeting, roofing, and book-keeping.

72. **Strong and productive links have been established with local employers and colleges.** Employers are invited into the prisons to speak to staff and offenders and there are clear plans to develop employer champions. Local colleges have guaranteed learners continuity of learning upon release.

73. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory although data is not thoroughly analysed or used effectively. **Quality improvement is good** and the self-assessment report provides a clear and honest account of the provision.

ANNEX 5

IBP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT – October 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

74. International Business Park Training and Employment Limited (IBP), was formed in 1999 as an organisation to help employers in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight identify and meet their training needs. The organisation has its head office in Eastleigh, with a further office in Andover. IBP is a not-for-profit organisation. It employs 17 full-time staff, in addition to several part-time specialist staff engaged as required. A board of directors oversees the work of the company and the chief executive is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation. IBP works with over 3,000 local employers. The company does not deliver training directly but subcontracts with a range of training providers and local colleges throughout the Southeast who deliver training on its behalf.

75. IBP offers five ESF projects, one of which, Collaborative Solutions contains no elements of learning and is outside the scope of the inspection. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight LSCs co-finance the ESF projects. There is a programme for adult apprenticeships in marine, engineering, and manufacturing and a programme in construction skills development. A programme called Lean Skills for the marine, engineering and manufacturing industries, is designed to equip learners with two units of an NVQ before progressing, where appropriate, to a full NVQ.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

76. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

77. **Retention rates are very high across all programmes** at 95 per cent overall. On the construction skills development programme, retention is particularly high at 99 per cent and out of the 200 who started, only two learners have left. None of the 87 learners who have started the Lean Skills programme have left.

78. **Achievement rates are good.** On the adult apprenticeship programme, the success rate is particularly good at 74.5 per cent. On the Lean Skills programme, 10 learners have successfully completed their programme. Adult learners develop useful skills to help them perform better in their jobs. The rate of achievement on the remaining programme is satisfactory. Employers fully understand that the training has a beneficial impact on their businesses as well as on learners whose self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation to carry out further learning have improved.

The quality of provision

79. **Partnership working is particularly good.** There are strong collaborative and productive links with employers, training providers and local colleges. Regular meetings enable employers and partners to communicate effectively. Additionally, there are particularly informative and professionally produced newsletters and marketing materials.

IBP selects its training providers carefully to ensure that a wide range of provision is available to learners.

80. Accreditation of learners' prior learning and experiences is well managed and effective. **IBP develops learners' knowledge and skills effectively**, enabling them to make good contributions to workplace efficiency. Learners with considerable experience have good opportunities to obtain accreditation of their prior experiences. Learners receive highly effective support.

81. **Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is insufficient** on the Lean Skills programme and no systematic diagnostic assessment of these skill needs is carried out. IBP regularly monitors and reviews the progress of learners and acts quickly on identified problems, such as the placement of learners on the wrong programme.

Leadership and management

82. **Leadership and management are good.** There is a clear strategic vision and good operational management. Directors on the board are well chosen for their broad range of expertise. They bring a variety of perspectives to the work of the company. New staff have an effective induction programme and all staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Internal communication between project teams is good.

83. **The identification of local labour market needs and training opportunities is highly effective.** Knowledge of the local labour market is very good and the company is particularly well informed about workforce development needs in the region. IBP uses this information well to plan and deliver a wide range of flexible training programmes, effectively tailored to meet the requirements of learners and employers.

84. IBP's approach to equal opportunities is satisfactory, with publicity materials effectively challenging gender stereotypes in construction and engineering. The need for more female participation in construction and engineering is acknowledged and the provider has worked particularly well to attract more women into these areas of work.

85. Quality improvement is generally satisfactory and effective processes are in place to collect feedback from learners and employers. There is, however, insufficient quality monitoring of some aspects of the provision and the terms and conditions laid down in the service level agreements are not routinely enforced. The monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not sufficiently thorough. Self-assessment is generally accurate although the report contains some strengths that are no more than normal practice.

ANNEX 6

ASSOCIATION OF LEARNING PROVIDERS - SURREY (ALPS) – October 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

86. The Association of Learning Providers in Surrey (ALPS) was established in 2003 as a not-for-profit company. It is a membership organisation for work-based providers with contracts with Surrey LSC. These include 17 privately owned training companies, four colleges, seven national organisations and three voluntary sector groups. Between them, they deliver 58 different work-based learning qualifications across Surrey. Within the membership there are five Centres of Vocational Excellence covering rail, travel and tourism, financial services and aerospace. The group works with 800 employers and currently there are 2,000 learners following training programmes in Surrey and the surrounding area.

87. An ESF contract with the LSC provides training and qualification at levels 2 and level 3 for 200 women over the age of 22. The project is delivered through 10 providers and is principally for those wishing to return to work in skill shortage areas, and women in work with little or no vocational qualifications. The contract is delivered under policy fields 5, measure 1. It began in June 2005 will end in December 2007.

88. ALPS also contracts directly with the South East Government Office to deliver employment skills and vocational qualifications to women across Surrey. It works in partnership with the Connexions service, using ESF funding to tackle the needs of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

89. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

90. **Learners gain increased confidence, motivation, and vocational skills.** Many learners start on the programme with few or no qualifications. Learners improve their self-confidence and better develop their career aspirations, with many considering, for example, applying for supervisory posts they had not considered before starting the programme.

91. **Retention rates are good.** At the time of inspection, the retention rate was 91 per cent. Providers have effective strategies in place to identify and support learners at risk of leaving early, for example, some providers contact all early leavers, recording their reasons for leaving. However, ALPS has no systematic method to collect, collate and analyse this information as part of its quality assurance process.

92. **The range of appropriate qualifications in specific vocational skills shortage areas is good.** Through the provider partnerships, learners have an extensive and appropriate range of vocational qualifications at level 2 and level 3. Programmes available to the learners include hospitality and catering, customer service, business administration and care. There are good opportunities for progression onto other qualifications after completing the project.

93. ALPS is not achieving its project outcomes. However, providers are reassessing their achievement outcomes on a monthly basis to reflect learner progress. Some learners work within the school term system and, although they started the programme in June, the school holiday timetable interrupted their training and delayed their potential achievement. Many learners are progressing well towards their vocational NVQ.

The quality of provision

94. ALPS has well-structured and flexibly designed programmes that match learners' and employers' needs. Learners complete a diagnostic assessment, effectively used to determine the most appropriate optional units in the learners' chosen qualification. Assessor visits are regular, frequent and organised well to suit learners' working patterns. **ALPS provides good training in the workplace.** Training is well planned and co-ordinated, with relevant work-related situations. There is good integration of employers' working practices and paperwork. Some employers work particularly collaboratively with the training providers, taking an active role in the on-the-job training.

95. ALPS provides appropriate and well-presented information, advice and guidance to most learners. Information and advice for learners interested in the project is good. ALPS uses a comprehensive initial assessment effectively to guide the learners onto the most appropriate level of programme.

96. Individual targets are not set as part of individual learning plans or during progress reviews. ALPS bases completion dates on a standard or average length of stay and not individual learners' needs. Target dates for units are not always appropriate and in some cases not set. The quality checks carried out by ALPS have identified that targets set during progress reviews are neither sufficiently specific nor challenging.

Leadership and management

97. Collaboration and networking through the provider partnership is particularly good. There are well-structured communications through steering group meeting, workshops and training events. Training providers in the project communicate well and are starting to work collaboratively, and share paperwork and good practice.

98. The recording and collection of management information is good. Detailed summaries are prepared on start and completion information, including early leavers and comparisons made by ethnicity and age for each qualification and subcontractor. There is careful management of the financial arrangements with subcontractors.

99. Quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently developed. ALPS has relied very much on providers' own quality improvement processes. There is insufficient review of key processes and standard materials. ALPS is not sufficiently evaluating learner feedback questionnaires and not taking actions to lead to improvements. ALPS collates and records learner feedback in a recently introduced initiative of contacting learners directly by telephone. There is insufficient analysis of the reason learners leave the programme early although many providers hold this information. ALPS has established a risk-assessment process to manage subcontracting providers. Regular monitoring visits are starting to take place.

ANNEX 7

AMICUSHORIZON GROUP – October 2006**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

100. AmicusHorizon Group (AHG) is an organisation established in April 2006, from a merger between the Amicus Group and the Horizon Housing Group. It is managed by a group board, which includes representation from each group's operating association boards, and tenant representation. AHG has a commitment to creating neighbourhoods where people want to live and to delivering grant-funded projects to engage local people through the work of their regeneration directorate, known as people for action. The group employs 1,030 full- and part-time staff, with 35 employed within the people for action team. Six of these staff are employed to deliver three ESF-funded projects.

101. The Women in Action project started in April 2004, secured an extension to its delivery contract in July 2005, and is due to finish in December 2006. To date, Women in Action has engaged 487 learners against an overall target of 527. The project assists hard-to-reach, unemployed women to overcome the barriers associated with returning to employment, education or training through the delivery of pre-vocational personal and careers development courses. These courses are designed to raise confidence levels and enable learners to identify and acknowledge the relevance of their skills.

102. Skillspeak started in April 2005 and is due to end in August 2007. To date, the project has engaged 102 learners against the project target of 250. Skillspeak delivers accredited English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses from community settings to engage individuals for whom mainstream or larger-scale provision is not accessible. In addition, the project developed tailored non-accredited ESOL courses for individuals in employment, delivering training in an employment setting and relevant to the needs of both learners and employers.

103. The Crest project started in January 2004 and is due to complete in December 2006. The project has an overall target of engaging 240 learners, with 235 recruited onto the project to date. The project delivers the non-accredited changing rooms course that equips learners with a range of basic level construction-related skills in order to open discussion with learners on further training opportunities and career options.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

104. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievement and standards**

105. **Retention rates on the Women in Action programme are outstanding.** Of the 473 learners on the programme, 95 per cent have been retained. **Retention rates and progress into employment on the Crest project is very good.** Of the 112 starters, 91 per cent were retained. **Retention rates on the Skillspeak programme are good.** Of 96 starters, 88 per cent have been retained.

106. **Learners demonstrate increased levels of self-confidence and develop good communication, painting and decorating, social, and teamworking skills.** They acquire practical experience of working in teams. For example, one group of learners carried out a project that required setting up a stall on a local pier to sell products for a local charity.

107. **Achievement rates on the Crest programme are good.** Twenty-eight learners have to date successfully gained a health and safety qualification, against a contractual target of 25. Rates of progression into employment or education are also good.

108. **Rates of progress for learners on the Skillspeak programme into further education or employment are poor.** To date, 20 learners have progressed against an overall target of 125. The contractual outcomes on the Women in Action programme are generally satisfactory.

The quality of provision

109. **Support for learners is good.** Staff provide additional learning support and advice to help learners meet their career aims and to resolve concerns on personal matters including housing, benefits and health issues. The domestic needs of learners are met by the provision of help towards travel costs and childcare. Induction is satisfactory and learners are given key health and safety, equal opportunities and complaints information.

110. **Staff work effectively with partner organisations to encourage referrals and to build links with organisations that can provide additional support for learners.** These include local colleges, training providers, job centre staff and a wide range of community-based organisations. There is, however, insufficient focus on building working relationships with organisations that have established links with employers. Employers are not encouraged to participate in courses and the work-placement programme is not fully developed.

111. **Initial assessment is weak.** There is insufficient use of initial assessment on some teaching programmes. Individual project worker assessments are not comprehensive and there is little systematic focus on the recording and utilisation of information. Staff use informal assessment methods to identify learners' needs and share this information with key staff. The promotion, use and understanding of the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning is underdeveloped in the organisation. Individual action-planning systems are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient reference to learning plans in some progress reviews and by some tutors. Planning of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

112. **There is good strategic co-operation within AHG.** Working relationships are good between regional ESF teams. There are also good strategic relationships with partner organisations, for example, local colleges and Jobcentre Plus. The overall management of the programme is generally satisfactory.

113. AHG's approach to equality opportunities is satisfactory. It has an equal opportunities policy, and disability and diversity strategies. Learners receive equal opportunities training at induction, but there is very little reinforcement of this throughout the programmes. Some staff have received recent equality and diversity training. AHG does carry out some analysis of equal opportunities data. It has developed effective recruitment arrangements. These include liaison with referral organisations, direct marketing, leafleting schools and a range of innovative methods including visiting places of worship and women's refuges. **Good use is**

made of diverse images in publicity materials and good working relationships have been formed with local minority ethnic groups.

114. **AHG uses feedback well** to identify and implement improvements to the programmes and contribute to the business planning process. **The monitoring of ESF programmes is well developed** and monthly evaluations are used effectively as part of management communications. Service level agreements are in place for all partners, though, there is insufficient clarity about quality assurance arrangements. The self-assessment process is inclusive of learners, staff and other stakeholders. The self-assessment report is sufficiently critical and judgemental.

ANNEX 8

ANJALI DANCE COMPANY – October 2006**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

115. The Anjali Dance Company (Anjali) was founded in 1993 for professional dancers who have learning disabilities. The company is a registered charity governed by a board of trustees. Anjali has a training section that offers educational programmes for people of all ages with learning difficulties and disabilities. Anjali has developed dance programmes specifically for its learners accredited by the Open College Network (OCN). Anjali contracts with Milton Keynes LSC to deliver the programmes at centres in Milton Keynes, Bicester, Wycombe and Banbury. It employs an education director and an education officer to co-ordinate and administer all aspects of the accredited provision.

116. The ESF project, known as chance 2 dance, is offered by Anjali under policy field 1, measure 2, and is an accredited training programmes for male and female learners between the age of 16 and 49 years. The programme aims to raise participation and achievement levels, enhance key personal skills, and improve employability skills. Learners with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities are recruited on to the movement and dance courses. They have good opportunities to gain accreditation at entry level and at levels 1, 2 and 3. Many learners gain accreditation at more than one level. The contract runs from January 2004 to December 2006.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

117. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievement and standards**

118. **The programmes are well matched to learners' needs.** The introductory programme is dual accredited at entry level and level 1, according to the skill levels of the learners. **Learners progress well.** Of the 90 learners who started on the project, almost half have progressed to level 2 and a further 10 have progressed and achieved level 3.

119. **There is particularly good development of learners' skills** through participating in practical dance-related activities. They improve their poise and deportment and become more aware of general body movements. Learners improve their oral and non-verbal communication skills and become more adept at developing and managing social and interpersonal relationships. Tutors and parents comment on the improvements in learners' self-confidence and self-esteem. Tutors, through their humour, energy and passion for dance, encourage learners to develop good teamworking skills and to become more expressive, creative and artistic. One learner has auditioned for a residency at another dance company.

The quality of provision

120. **Additional opportunities to extend the learners' performance experience are excellent.** These include theatre visits for all learners and organised master classes with dancers from the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Rambert Dance Company. Level 3

learners can complete mentor training and use this to support level 2 learners. Learners have performance opportunities at local theatres and some were involved in a set piece for Channel Four television. Video techniques training is provided from entry level to level 3.

121. Learners' needs and personal support are met very well. Two tutors, both professional dancers, who have specific specialist knowledge of the subject content, teach small groups of learners. Anjali uses a range of venues in locations convenient to the learners and good transport arrangements are made for learners. A non-teaching member of staff is always present to assist learners who may not be feeling well or who need emotional or personal support.

122. Teaching staff are all professional dancers. Anjali selects staff well, taking account of technical ability and enthusiasm for teaching learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Tutors are very knowledgeable and skilled dance practitioners with many years' experience of professional performance. The tutors' expectation of learners is beneficial to skill development and raises learners' aspirations and commitment.

123. The recording of learners' skill and personal development is insufficiently detailed. Many of the individual learning logs are not detailed enough, with some areas not completed. Where tutors have identified further development there is little evidence of the method of support or process of review.

Leadership and management

124. Since the contract began in 2003, there has been good extension of the accreditation opportunities. Anjali promotes the programmes in various ways, for example, through carers, community groups, day centres and other performing companies.

125. Formal structures to support quality improvements are insufficient. The company has not designed or implemented a quality improvement cycle. Anjali inadequately records the informal monitoring of provision to show incremental improvements to the learning experience. For example, there is no recorded observation of teaching and learning, and learners' assessments are not subjected to systematic internal moderation. Self-assessment is not a well-established process and is overly descriptive.

126. Key management processes are insufficiently monitored and recorded. Managerial and leadership responsibilities are not clearly defined or devolved. Managers are not systemically reviewing and recording key aspects of the learners' journey, such as the learning and review processes. Although staff are concerned about learners' wellbeing, and ensure learning venues are appropriate, these and other venues visited by learners are not always rigorously risk assessed. While most staff have been formally checked to assess their suitability for working with vulnerable learners, this is not systematic process. Management information is not easily accessible and managers do not always use it as part of management planning.

ANNEX 9

BLACKTHORN TRUST – October 2006**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

127. Blackthorn Trust (BT) was established in 1985 and became a registered charity in 1986. The organisation has offices and training facilities in the same premises as Blackthorn general practice surgery in Maidstone, Kent. The trust founded the Blackthorn Garden in 1991 and this social enterprise facility offers a work and learning environment that includes a kitchen, an organic vegetable and flower garden, plant nursery, craft facilities and a café. A Board of Trustees and a strategic director manage BT. It employs nine full-time and six part-time staff.

128. The organisation works on a range of projects including the ESF project training for independence, co-financed by Kent and Medway LSC. Delivered under policy field 3, measure 1, the programme started in April 2004 and is due to end in December 2006. To date, the project has engaged 401 learners. The project is designed for people with severe learning needs, and long-term and enduring mental health disabilities, who live in the areas of Kent and Medway, and is delivered by BT along with two subcontracted providers. These are Kent Supported Employment and Focus to Work. The contract includes delivery of a level 2 NVQ in horticulture and an OCN accredited work induction programme at entry level 1 and 2. The provision includes a range of optional units including bread making, café preparation and serving, catering, confidence building and self-awareness, horticulture, health and safety, preparation for work and teamworking skills. The contract also funds support to access further education, employment, supported employment or voluntary work as required. Learners are referred to the provision through the medical or social services community mental health, secondary care and learning disability teams and specialist doctors.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

129. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievement and standards**

130. **Retention rates on the Training for Independence programme are outstanding.** Almost all learners who start the programme have been retained or have gained employment or voluntary work. At least 123 learners have been supported into employment opportunities or voluntary work.

131. **Learners demonstrate high levels of confidence, and outstanding communication and teamworking skills. They acquire particularly good practical horticulture, catering and craft skills.** They work in small supportive teams in the kitchen and gardens and improve their social skills by eating lunch together and by attending staff meetings. Learners demonstrate good skills in food service and cooking, budgeting, and health and safety. They use these skills effectively in their workplace settings. Learners demonstrate increased confidence in dealing with customers, peers and staff.

The quality of provision

132. **Teaching and learning are particularly good and well planned.** Teachers are caring and understanding and ensure that learners receive appropriate medical and psychiatric support to help their learning. **Learners develop good self-esteem and independence.** Staff are well qualified and experienced in working with difficult and challenging learners. They have a broad range of skills to be able to help learners. These include medical, psychiatric, counselling, mentoring, horticulture, and catering skills.

133. **BT has developed outstanding partnership arrangements** with referral organisations and with a wide range of supportive organisations and employers who can offer learners good sheltered employment, and voluntary sector and work placements. Staff work effectively with partner organisations, doctors and social workers to develop support and employment and training opportunities for learners. There are highly effective systems in place to share good practice and other information.

134. **Support for learners is outstanding.** Learners have good access to a wide range of additional therapies and programmes including art, counselling, massage and manipulation. Staff offer intensive support for learners while on college courses and work placements. This involves transporting and supporting learners until they develop adequate self-confidence and skills to cope independently. Other support includes help with legal advice, resolving benefit and housing issues, and organising additional learning support for learners with sight or hearing impairments. Induction is satisfactory and learners are given key information about their rights and responsibilities in a suitable format to ensure they clearly understand it. Assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills are satisfactory at BT. Support for literacy and numeracy is generally good.

135. **BT has an innovative process to record learners' progress.** The use of daily diaries helps to record this although there are several other systems in place, which often duplicate the work that staff already do. This is not effectively integrated into the review process. A recognised system for the recording of soft skills is currently being investigated.

Leadership and management

136. **Leadership and management are outstanding** and there are clear strategies for the further unique development of businesses that will support learners into useful and challenging employment. BT has a clear business plan for future developments. It works well with its subcontractors building a strong working partnership to help learners succeed. Staff are well cared for and it has been acknowledged that they are exposed to a difficult and challenging group of learners. They have access to good counselling and other support if they need it.

137. **Quality improvement is good** and although many processes are informal, they work well at identifying issues and tackling concerns. The self-assessment report is sufficiently judgemental and highlights many of the areas for improvement, although it did not identify many of the key strengths. Self-assessment does not include the two subcontractors' views as they have completed their own separate reports. **Equality and diversity are strongly promoted through the organisation.**

138. **There is slow progress to meet contractual targets with some learners.** Only a small number of learners have achieved two or more units towards a level 2 qualification. Training for this was originally delivered by another organisation who withdrew from the project part-way through. BT has worked well to try to rectify this problem.

ANNEX 10

SKILLNET – October 2006**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER**

139. Skillnet is a private training organisation established in 1997. It has an administrative office in Margate and delivers training programmes to employers and in community centres throughout East Kent. Two managers run the organisation. They also deliver training and assessment along with three other trainers and an administrative assistant. Skillnet has operated as a subcontractor to a local further education college for many years and has worked with other training providers on various projects. It offers a range of business-related qualifications from a short ICT course at level 1 through to workplace management programmes.

140. Skillnet has a contract to deliver an ESF-funded programme, Second Time Around, co-financed by the Kent and Medway LSC under policy field 1, measure 5. The contract started in April 2004 and will end in December 2006. The project delivery is split between Skillnet as the lead partner, and East Kent ITEC, which provides ICT training from its training centre in Margate. Skillnet provides ICT training in six community centres and NVQs at level 3 in employer's premises. The project is designed to re-train and improve the skills of learners over the age of 45 to meet the needs of local sector growth areas, voluntary groups or social enterprise. The project focuses on people under threat of redundancy, recently made redundant, or retired. Skillnet has a contract to recruit 360 learners with a target of 300 achieving qualifications. There are 111 learners currently on the programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

141. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.**

KEY FINDINGS**Achievement and standards**

142. **Learners develop a good a range of IT skills and/or occupational skills.** Many learners have no previous qualifications and use this programme to start them on a series of qualifications. Several have progressed from level 1 to level 2 either through this project or by accessing additional funding. Learners increase their self-esteem and self-confidence and apply this well to new roles and responsibilities at home, in the community, and at work. In some cases, learners apply for promotion or retrain and consider alternative careers or voluntary work in their local community.

143. **The project is successfully achieving most of its agreed contractual targets.** The partners are making good progress in achieving level 1 and level 2 qualifications in ICT. Some of the progression targets are ambitious and challenging for older learners and Skillnet has recruited additional learners to ensure achievement targets are achieved. **Progress on achieving level 3 qualifications has, however, been slow.**

The quality of provision

144. **Support for learners is very good.** ICT is taught in group sessions at local venues across East Kent. Staff are experienced and work very effectively with older learners in community settings. Learners effectively support each other, enjoying and benefiting from the social aspect of learning in a group. East Kent ITEC provides additional support to some learners through **learnirect** provision located in the training centre.

145. **Skillnet uses an effective approach to delivering NVQs in the workplace.** In residential care settings, managers work towards qualifications to allow them to become workplace assessors and provide them with good support to deliver level 3 care qualifications to supervisory staff. Skillnet uses a good range of assessment practices and effectively cross-reference workplace evidence to several NVQ units.

146. **Initial assessment does not clearly identify learners' previous skills and knowledge,** or any additional learning needs and support required. Some learners record their level of knowledge and experience before starting the programme. There is insufficient focus on identifying and supporting learners with language, literacy and numeracy skills. Tutors are not always aware of learners who may require additional support.

147. **Learners' progress during the programme is not sufficiently analysed.** Learners have insufficient time to allow them and their tutors to reflect on the development of softer skills and employment-related issues. Learners do not set personal goals or objectives and no use is made of the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. Skillnet does not routinely review the development of wider personal and work-related skills or review issues relating to health and safety and equal opportunities.

Leadership and management

148. **Skillnet has a strong focus on monitoring the achievement of project outcomes.** It produces a useful monthly report, shared with partners at project meetings, comparing planned profiles against actual outcomes. Appropriate actions are identified and carried out to ensure all targets are achieved.

149. **Skillnet works closely with local community groups and the voluntary sector** to provide a good range of opportunities for learners. Networking with local groups is good, providing a clear understanding of the various funding opportunities that can provide learners with additional training opportunities and work. Skillnet has been involved in a regeneration project in the centre of Deal to provide it with an effective local profile and appropriate location to offer training courses.

150. **Quality improvement arrangements are incomplete.** Skillnet has recently completed a self-assessment report and has identified many of the areas for improvement. There is too much use of informal systems and discussions. Many of the current quality improvement arrangements, for example, observations of teaching and learning, are based on checks carried out by other organisations, to whom Skillnet is a subcontractor. A service level agreement is in place, but there is insufficient detail on the quality assurance arrangements. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between the partners and learners' experience is different depending on where they do their course. There has been some analysis of learner evaluations forms, however they have not yet been used to identify trends or areas for improvement. Skillnet is starting to collect information on why learners left the programmes early, but has not analysed this to review the programme or make changes and improvement for future programmes.

ANNEX 11

IMPACT INITIATIVES – October 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

151. Impact Initiatives (Impact) is a registered charity based in Sussex and founded in Brighton in 1978. It provides a range of services across Sussex to support and enable individuals and communities to improve their quality of life. It works particularly with vulnerable groups who need help with employment, education or training, and with their daily living skills. Impact delivers a range of services across East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove. Staff are supported by an equivalent number of volunteers. The charity is governed by a board of trustees, though responsibility for the day-to-day management of ESF projects lies with local managers and staff. Impact covers six service areas, with Impact Workability being the lead partner for ESF programmes.

152. Impact delivers its project, bridge to learning, under policy field 2, measure 1, and is co-financed by the LSC. The project started in January 2004 and is expected to end in December 2006. The toolkit for work project is co-financed by Jobcentre Plus and is delivered under policy field 2, measure 2. This started in January 2004 and is expected to end in March 2007. Projects are designed to assist disadvantaged adults, for example, those with disabilities, mental health problems or who are recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, and who are actively seeking employment in the labour market. Parts of both projects are subcontracted to other local organisations. Workability is contracted to start a total of 1,059 learners over the life of the projects. To date, 814 learners have started and currently there are 235 learners on these programmes.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

153. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

154. **Retention and achievement rates are good.** On the bridge to learning project, 73 per cent have achieved their targeted action plans. Of those learners who attended short training courses, 76 per cent achieved their qualification. On the toolkit for work course, 79 per cent completed the course. **Learners' self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation improve while on their courses.**

155. **Learners' standards of work is good.** Portfolios of evidence demonstrate the range of practical skills developed along with evidence of their ability to identify and overcome barriers to employment.

The quality of provision

156. **Courses are well matched to learners' needs.** Improvements have been made to the taught aspects of the Work it Out course following an analysis of attendance patterns. Substantially revised, it is now highly valued by participants. **Learners make good use of these opportunities to improve their employment skills and personal effectiveness.** Training rooms are well equipped and learners have access to internet resources through a

range of up-to-date information technology equipment. The Toolkit for Living course has also recently been revised and re-launched. The staff to learner ratio is good. Learning resources for delivering the course are insufficient with too much use of handouts.

157. **Work placements are carefully matched to meet individual learners' needs.** Regular and frequent visits by Impact's staff ensure learners are supported well. **There is insufficient work with local employers** to increase the number and range of voluntary and paid work opportunities for learners. Some employers are reluctant to accept learners with mental health problems. Too little research is carried out to identify occupational skills' gaps as a basis for ensuring that learners are equipped with the knowledge and practical skills needed to enable them to obtain sustainable employment.

158. **Information, advice and guidance are good and well planned.** Impact provides learners with relevant information and a good range of vocational activities including work placements, paid work, benefit information, and services offered by external agencies. Staff are appropriately qualified and have a good level of experience of dealing with the problems faced by the learner group.

159. **The Workability programme provides a good package of support to meet learners' needs.** There is good support for people with mental health difficulties and other disabilities. Impact makes good attempts to maintain contact with learners for at least six months when they begin employment. The marketing of the provision has recently improved. There are now satisfactory opportunities for potential learners to self-refer to the provision in addition to referrals by mental health trusts and general practitioners.

160. **Action plans and records of progress are not sufficiently detailed.** Impact maintains records of progress though these are more often a record of contact. They contain detailed records of discussion but make little reference to learner progress. Many of the action plans agreed between Impact and learners do not contain short- or medium-term targets.

161. **Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not sufficiently developed.** Although Impact attempts to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills, it does not systematically identify their literacy and numeracy levels nor diagnose any learning needs. There is insufficient literacy and numeracy support in training sessions. Learners diagnosed as having dyslexia are provided with coloured pens and paper to assist them. Impact has acknowledged this through its self-assessment process. Staff have now received basic training in adult learner support.

Leadership and management

162. Strategic and operational management are good. **Impact has good systems to monitor learners' progress** and can monitor targeted outcomes well for all learners. Communications are good across the organisation and all staff are aware of issues that affect learners.

163. **The quality of the provision is insufficiently monitored.** Impact collects learner feedback through recently revised questionnaires. These are given to learners at the end of their course and also sent to them after 13 and 52 weeks. The completed questionnaires however are not analysed sufficiently and are not used to improve the quality of the provision. Teaching and tutoring are insufficiently observed and reported on.

164. The self-assessment report is generally accurate. It identifies the key strengths and areas for improvement and the provision is accurately graded. The approach to equality of

opportunity is satisfactory. Staff have a good knowledge of equality and diversity issues, particularly in relation to the client group.

ANNEX 12

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN STUDIES (NIAS) – October 2006

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

165. The National Institute for African Studies (NIAS) is a voluntary organisation set up in 1998 as a registered charity. Originally established to develop research capacity in resident African communities in England, it began its involvement in the delivery of training in 2000. The organisation provides access to management training and teacher training, predominantly for minority ethnic groups. Responsibility for the delivery of training is subcontracted to the Thames Valley University (TVU). NIAS's offices are located on the premises of the TVU in Slough. The organisation has 12 full- and part-time staff that run a variety of programmes. The executive director and the training quality manager manage the ESF projects. The organisation's executive director has overall responsibility for the programmes and reports to a board of 11 trustees.

166. NIAS has an ESF contract co-financed by Berkshire LSC. The two projects offered are designed specifically for people who live in Berkshire. The first, Access to Management for black and minority ethnic staff, is designed to enhance the management skills of people from black and minority ethnic communities who are employed in small and medium enterprises and the voluntary sector. This started in January 2004 and is due to end in June 2007. The second, BME Teachers and Tutors Training into Further and Adult Education, targets employed people who wish to enter the teaching profession. This also started in January 2004 and is due to end in March 2007. Projects are offered under policy field 4, measures 1 and 2. There are 23 learners currently on the management programme and 10 on the teaching programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

167. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.**

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

168. **Achievement rates are good.** To date, approximately 70 per cent of learners on each programme have achieved their qualification. A further 20 per cent have achieved units of their management course. Standards of work are satisfactory, and learners are making satisfactory progress through their awards.

169. Learners have a good awareness of the progression routes that are open to them. Following the success of the management course, TVU started a management diploma with 90 per cent of learners on this course progressing from the ESF project.

The quality of provision

170. **NIAS makes good use of initial assessment information.** This includes detailed information about job roles, career aspirations and academic history, with a particular emphasis on barriers to employment.

171. **Learning and pastoral support for learners is very good.** NIAS ensures that learners' financial situation does not form a barrier to learning by offering them sponsorships to many learners, and the ability to make programme payments by instalments. Payments are also made to learners to partially offset the costs of childcare. Staff from NIAS provide good support on a wide range of personal matters, and use appropriate agencies where appropriate.

172. **Information, advice and guidance given to learners are good,** particularly in relation to literacy, numeracy and language skills. NIAS provides learners with a good range of skills to assist with career progression, for example, the preparation of curriculum vitas.

173. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Assessment is by assignment and is marked by college staff. Marking is detailed when improvements are required. However, if work is at least satisfactory, little guidance is given to learners on how to improve. Learners have access to a satisfactory range of resources.

174. **Records of progress are insufficiently detailed.** They often show a clear evaluation of the programme followed, but little to show the progress made by learners. Targets are not set and there is little contribution from tutors to the review.

Leadership and management

175. Senior managers in NIAS **have a clear strategic vision for the organisation.** They are acutely aware of the temporary nature of ESF funding, and contingency plans are in place to ensure NIAS continues to draw funds from a number of sources. Meetings are frequent, regular, and clearly recorded. **NIAS has strong and effective links with other organisations.** These include local colleges, minority ethnic organisations and women's groups.

176. **NIAS has a satisfactory approach to equal opportunities.** The organisation collects and analyses data on ethnicity and gender for learners starting on the programme, though analysis of achievement is done only by group and gender and not ethnicity.

177. **Arrangements for continuous improvement are good.** Programme feedback is collected from learners on a regular basis and is used well to make changes to the courses, for example, ensuring tutors were changed following poor feedback. Detailed subcontractor arrangements are in place, with particular emphasis on the quality assurance procedures that NIAS expects from the subcontractor.

178. NIAS has produced its first self-assessment report. This was generally accurate and matched the findings of inspectors.