

INSPECTION REPORT

Rotherham MBC (Rotherham Managing Agency)

21 August 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Rotherham Managing Agency is part of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and has training premises in and around Rotherham. It provides training in agriculture, construction, engineering, administration, information and communication technology, retailing and customer service, hospitality, hair and beauty, health care and public services and Life Skills. There are 637 learners on programmes funded by the Learning and Skills Council and 21 New Deal clients funded through the Employment Service. Nineteen of the New Deal clients are on the environment task force option and two are on the full-time education and training option.

Overall judgement

Training in Life Skills is satisfactory. Training in all other occupational areas is unsatisfactory, as are the leadership and management of Rotherham Managing Agency. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

Work-based learning for young people

Life Skills training within the foundation programme is satisfactory. Learners receive good support and a wide range of vocational training. External links to help learners are good. A large number of learners, however, leave the Life Skills programme after induction. Work-based learning in all other areas of learning is unsatisfactory and many of the weaknesses are common to all the areas. Retention and achievement rates are low. Learners have not received training in key skills from the start of their programmes. They are not set demanding targets for the acquisition of key skills and national vocational qualification (NVO) competences. Learners make slow progress towards achieving the objectives in their learning plans.

New Deal

New Deal clients receive satisfactory training on the environment task force option. Clients value their jobsearch training and find it effective. They recognise the value of their practical work to the local community and most are keen to carry out a similar activity as a career. In the last year, 35 per cent of clients gained a job after working on the environment task force option.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Rotherham Managing Agency are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of strategic direction and staff are adversely affected by uncertainty

about Rotherham Managing Agency's place and role within the borough council. A number of senior staff have been on long-term sick leave or have left and not been replaced. There are poor procedures for financial control and the allocation of resources. Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate. Accurate data are not available on the qualifications learners are working towards, and on retention and achievement rates. All staff promote equality of opportunity, respect diversity, and ensure that all learners, especially those who are disadvantaged in some way, are treated fairly and equally.

GRADES

Land-based provision	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4
New Deal	3

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Information & communications technology	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Retailing, customer service & transportation	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

ROTHERHAM MBC (ROTHERHAM MANAGING AGENCY)

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective support for learners
- effective liaison with other support agencies
- broad range of training programmes
- good work placements
- comprehensive staff training on equality of opportunity

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate setting of targets
- lack of strategic direction
- inadequate monitoring of quality of training
- failure to set demanding targets for learners during progress reviews
- poor use of data in decision making
- failure to make key skills training and assessment integral to training programmes
- slow progress of learners towards achieving their qualifications
- insufficient assessment in the workplace
- poor understanding of NVOs among employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further updating of quality assurance procedures
- better co-ordination of some on- and off-the-job training
- more effective sharing of good practice in internal verification
- more occupationally relevant key skills materials

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Rotherham Managing Agency (RMA) was originally established as part of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Education Department. About four years ago a new service area, community regeneration, was formed within the council and RMA was transferred to it. The community regeneration area has since been disbanded and RMA now forms part of the new social inclusion unit. It provides training in agriculture, construction, engineering, administration, information and communication technology, retailing and customer service, hospitality, hair and beauty, health care and public services and Life Skills. Over the years, RMA has recruited a large number of learners identified as having additional learning and/or social needs, and these account for about 50 per cent of learners across the programmes. RMA also has a direct contract with the Employment Service to train New Deal clients on the environment task force option. The organisation's principal aim is to provide training for all young people regardless of their background, ability, or motivation to learn. Fulfilment of this aim has presented managers and staff with difficult challenges. Many young people in Rotherham have low educational attainment. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Rotherham who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 41 per cent, compared with 49 per cent in the country as a whole. Rotherham is a town in South Yorkshire with a population of about 250,000. The percentage of the population from minority ethnic groups is small at 2 per cent. According to a recent report by a local university, 27,800 people in Rotherham are aged between 18 and 24. Of these, 8,800 have social problems or learning difficulties, or both. The economy of Rotherham has been severely affected by the decline of the steel and mining industries in South Yorkshire. Unemployment has fallen recently, but it is still high at 6.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.7 per cent. The long-term unemployment rate for men is particularly high.

2. RMA has a staff of 90, of whom 64 are directly involved in carrying out training. Other staff are responsible for administration, catering and management. They operate from four sites in the area. One is located in the town centre and the other three are nearby at Dalton, Maltby and Mexborough. RMA subcontracts many areas of training to a variety of local colleges and other training providers. There are 637 learners on programmes funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and 19 clients on the environment task force option funded through the Employment Service. Of the LSC-funded learners, 58 per cent are employed with a range of employers across South Yorkshire. Thirty-four per cent of learners are not yet employed and are working in employers' work placements. A further 8 per cent of learners are unemployed and are on full-time training programmes. All the New Deal clients on the environment task force option have a six-month contract of employment with the council.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of 12 inspectors spent a total of 48 days with the RMA during August 2001. They interviewed 133 learners, 57 employers or supervisors, and conducted 90 interviews with RMA staff. They made 32 visits to sites used by RMA for training learners, visited 10 subcontractors' sites and 49 employers' sites. They examined 76 learners' NVQ portfolios, 86 individual learning plans and a wide range of documentation, including records of learners' progress reviews, records of training, assessment and verification forms, policies and procedures on staffing, quality assurance, management information, subcontractors' agreements and external verifiers' reports. The self-assessment report was updated for the inspection. This has evolved from the original self-assessment report written in 1998, which has been updated each year.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Land-based provision	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Information & communications technology	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	4
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	6	7	0	2	0	16

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Land-based provision

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	20	4
New Deal	19	3

4. Rotherham Managing Agency offers training in commercial and amenity horticulture, animal care, veterinary nursing, floristry, horse care, and agriculture. There are currently no learners on programmes in commercial horticulture, veterinary nursing, or agriculture. Of 20 learners on work-based training for young people, one is an advanced modern apprentice, four are foundation apprentices, and 15 are on NVQ training. Of the latter, four are working towards amenity horticulture at level 1, and 11 towards NVQs in other subject areas at level 2. There are 19 clients on the environment task force option of New Deal under a subcontracting arrangement with the Employment Service. Most New Deal clients are contracted as Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council employees for the duration of their programme. New learners receive an initial assessment of literacy and numeracy and an introduction to relevant policies and procedures. Further, vocationally relevant induction is provided by either the RMA, or by the training provider subcontracted to carry out off-the-job training. Off-the-job training leading to an NVQ in amenity horticulture at level 1, and for clients on the environment task force, is provided by the RMA. New Deal clients work towards horticultural skills tests. Off-the-job training, for learners on other programmes, including key skills, is subcontracted to other local training providers. Work-based learners usually attend off-the-job training on a day-release basis, over one or two years. Clients on the environment task force have one day of vocational training each week over the 26 weeks they are on their programme, and spend an additional half-day each week on jobsearch training. Learners who require it can receive extra help with literacy and numeracy at RMA's premises. RMA staff usually visit learners in the workplace once every 10 or 12 weeks, and more frequently if necessary. The provider of off-the-job training carries out assessment for the main qualification learners aim to achieve. Assessors hold the required qualifications to carry out NVQ assessments, and have suitable occupational experience.

ROTHERHAM MBC (ROTHERHAM MANAGING AGENCY)

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

New Deal										
New Deal (18-24)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			26		71		57		0	
Still in training			0	0	0	0	19	33	0	0
Gained job and/or planned learning completed			0	0	17	24	29	51	0	0
Gained job			0	0	9	13	20	35	0	0
Planned learning completed			0	0	8	11	9	16	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			1		14		3		0	
Still in training			0	0	3	21	1	33	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100	11	79	2	67	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	2		1		2		1		0	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0
AMA framework completed	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	2	100	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	32		27		31		27		0	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	1	3	14	52	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	2	6	6	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	29	91	21	78	30	97	13	48	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	2	6	4	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	5	16	2	7	0	0	1	4	0	0

STRENGTHS

- effective pastoral support for learners
- responsiveness of work-placement providers to learners' needs
- effective induction for most learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor planning of some training and assessment
- insufficient workplace assessment on some programmes
- inadequate setting of targets
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective induction for late starters on subcontracted programmes

5. As indicated in the self-assessment report, learners are able to join training programmes at any time of year. Learners are accepted, regardless of their prior experience or educational attainment. Induction is effective. General issues are covered in the first week. Learners then receive further induction from their off-the-job training provider and this covers vocational issues, such as the safe use of machinery and equipment. Learners are able to remember the content of their induction. Work-placement providers also carry out their own induction of learners. During learners' progress reviews, checks are made on the effectiveness of this induction. Where off-the-job training is carried out by a subcontractor and the learner is not able to join the training at the start of the academic year, the vocational induction is sometimes shorter and less formal.

6. Learners receive an initial assessment. The results of this are taken into account when drawing up individual learning plans. Learners' needs for additional learning support are identified through this initial assessment. The self-assessment report acknowledged that individual learning plans were not updated to reflect learners' progress. A new form of learning plan has been introduced. This gives details of the qualifications which the learners aim to achieve. To date, these new plans have not been continuously updated to take account of learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications. Key skills training is provided as part of the learners' off-the-job training. At a local college subcontracted to carry out off-the-job training, learners are encouraged to learn key skills, even though they are not required to do so as part of their programme. Many

work-placement providers have a poor understanding of key skills. In general, key skills training is not integrated sufficiently with training leading to vocational qualifications.

7. Training towards an NVQ in amenity horticulture at level 1 is provided by the RMA at its Maltby centre for work-based training learners. Resources here are adequate for the work involved and include glasshouses, gardens, and two small classrooms. The walls of the classrooms do not carry posters or stimulating display material. Class sizes are small and staff are able to give individual learners help and support. Other learners receive training at a local college with relevant specialist facilities. One of these colleges is located some 40 miles away, and learners travel there for their day-release class.

8. Clients on the environment task force option take part in outdoor community work projects with Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. There are two types of project. One project is concerned with the clearing of gardens on council properties to be reoccupied after a period of neglect. The other project involves work for older people who may not be able to look after their gardens themselves and includes fence and hedge maintenance. Clients recognise the value to the community of this work. Most expressed a desire to carry out such work as a career and wanted to progress to training in a vocational area, such as landscape gardening.

9. Work-placement providers are very supportive of the RMA. Many have provided work experience for learners over many years, and are committed to preparing them well for their respective industries. They provide good training and a variety of experiences for learners. They are, however, insufficiently involved in helping learners acquire evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences for their portfolios of evidence. Until recently, the work-placement providers were not given a copy of the learners' individual learning plans. Assessors visit learners in floristry and animal care work placements to carry out assessment through observation of learners as they perform their everyday tasks. Assessment of learners in other occupational areas is carried out entirely during off-the-job training sessions. Work providers have recently been issued with a list of the NVQ units to be covered, but in most cases have no further details of the qualification requirements for their learner. RMA staff make regular visits to learners in the workplace. Learners find their visits helpful. Staff use their visits to provide learners with pastoral support. During their visits, staff do not set the learners' targets relating to achievement of their qualification.

10. Assessment and internal verification for the NVQ in amenity horticulture at level 1 and the horticultural skills test are carried out by the senior land-based officer at the RMA. Internal verification is carried out satisfactorily. Records of learners' progress towards achievement of the qualification are insufficiently detailed and do not indicate clearly what further work learners have to carry out. The records show that some learners have started working towards many NVQ units but have completed few of them and it is unclear whether these learners are still on course to complete work for the qualification. Subcontractors carry out internal verification for programmes on which they are contracted to provide off-the-job training.

11. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, some of the training carried out by RMA staff is poorly planned. Staff have initial teaching certificates although some have no formal qualifications at supervisory level or above. Few have qualifications in teaching basic skills or providing learning support.

12. Some recording of assessment is satisfactory and gives details of work successfully completed. Some work, however, is not assessed adequately or promptly. For example, one learner's file contained evidence in the form of written work and photographs which had been collected over several months but little of it had been assessed or referenced to the NVQ standards.

13. RMA staff who visit work placements are qualified assessors and have relevant vocational experience. The subcontracted providers of off-the-job training are required to carry out assessment of learners. Staff from the subcontractors providing training in floristry and animal care visit learners in their workplaces in order to assess them. In other occupational areas, as the self-assessment report acknowledges, there is little or no assessment of learners in the workplace.

14. Retention and achievement rates for work-based learners are low. Most learners leave before the end of their programme option with either no, or only partial achievement of their qualifications. In 1999, the qualification aim for New Deal clients on the environment task force option was changed to certification through horticultural skills tests. This change was introduced in order to attempt to raise the very low retention and achievement rates of the clients. Since the introduction of these tests, clients' retention and achievement rates have improved. Of those who started their option in 2000 or 2001, just over half have progressed to a job or further training.

15. Learners appreciate the informal help and support provided by RMA staff. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to their learners and encourage them to stay on training programmes and achieve a qualification. Additional help with literacy and numeracy is provided for those who require it, and this is well received. Some learners, however, have experienced a delay in the start of their additional support sessions. New Deal clients on the environment task force option spend half a day each week on jobsearch skills training. They hold this training in high regard and find it valuable. Work-placement providers are supportive of their learners. Many are experienced in working with young people, having trained previous learners from the RMA.

Good Practice

During their vocational induction, learners are given a checklist on the use of machinery. The learner may only use the machine in question after he or she has completed the checklist and has had it signed off by a member of staff.

Construction

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	94	4

16. RMA offers work-based training for young people in a range of construction craft courses. There are 94 learners. They are distributed across programmes ranging from wood trades to sign-writing. Thirty-four of the learners are advanced modern apprentices and 17 of the learners are foundation modern apprentices. The remaining 43 are employed with local construction training organisations on other NVQ training programmes. Training programmes lead to NVQs at level 1, level 2 or level 3. Learners are referred by various agencies to the RMA. Some refer themselves to the 'starting point' town centre recruitment and training building. RMA accepts all applicants regardless of their background or academic abilities. Off-the-job training is carried out at the organisation's Maltby training centre for most of the level one programmes in partnership with another local private training agency. Level 2 and 3 programmes, and key skills training, are subcontracted to local colleges. Learners who are employed attend on one day each week. Those who are not employed and do not have a work placement attend full time. Of the seven staff in the department, five are qualified NVQ assessors. Three have internal verification qualifications and two have teaching or training qualifications.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	1		7		34		20		0	
Still in training	0	0	1	14	3	9	13	65	0	0
FMA framework completed	0	0	1	14	1	3	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	5	71	2	6	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	1	100	4	57	29	85	7	35	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	13		12		12		18		0	
Still in training	4	31	4	33	10	83	16	89	0	0
AMA framework completed	4	31	4	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	10	77	5	42	1	8	1	6	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	5	38	6	50	1	8	1	6	0	0
Left without completing the framework	5	38	4	33	2	17	2	11	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	48		58		84		115		0	
Still in training	0	0	1	2	8	10	34	30	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	2	4	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	46	96	53	91	76	90	80	70	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	14	29	11	19	11	13	4	3	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	2	4	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job practical training
- effective support for learners
- broad range of training programmes
- effective recruitment process

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rate
- failure to set learners challenging targets in progress reviews
- inadequate arrangements for the teaching of theory
- little gathering of portfolios of evidence in the workplace
- poor understanding of NVQ among employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better planning of some off-the-job training

17. At the time of the inspection, all training sessions took place at RMA's training centre because the local college was closed for training purposes during the summer. Sessions were well thought out and relevant to the needs of the learners. A high percentage of learners working towards an NVQ at level 1 are categorised as having additional learning needs. Much of the training is carried out through practical activities. In one training session, the tutor had drawn out a risk assessment form on a large whiteboard. The learners then completed a risk assessment for a task to be carried out later in the day. The tutor questioned the learners carefully and drew the knowledge they had. The session was effective in helping the learners to highlight potential risks, plan ways of minimising them and identifying the safety equipment required. In another session, the learners had to create a manhole to given dimensions. The learners worked in pairs without using mortar. The tutor prompted them to describe what they were doing and why. The following day, the learners were to be given the opportunity to carry out the task for assessment purposes using mortar.

18. The two support staff are the main point of contact for the learner. Staff use their contacts to find suitable work placements or employers and are the link for learners between the trainer and employer. Staff visit learners in the workplace every four to six weeks to carry out reviews of their progress. Learners expressed their confidence in the support staff and commented that they felt they were on their side. Many learners stated that on occasions they felt they wanted to leave the programme and that it had been the support, encouragement and guidance of RMA staff that had made them stay. RMA staff are occupationally qualified. Staff spend time building up good relationships with the learners. RMA staff's mobile phone numbers are given to learners. Learners had often contacted staff out of hours in the evening or at the weekend to ask for advice.

19. The training provider offers a broad range of programmes and learners can join these at any time of the year. 'Starting point' is a town centre site run by the RMA where learners are recruited and the initial training induction takes place. Learners found the system to be simple, quick and efficient. Form filling is kept to a minimum. Prospective learners then meet with the support staff within the occupational area in which they have shown an interest.

20. The retention rate on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme has risen sharply from 66 per cent in 1998-99, to 83 per cent in 1999-2000. Only half those who joined programmes in 1998-99 have obtained an NVQ at level 3. In 1998-99, only 33 per cent of advanced modern apprentices completed their framework and only 14 per cent of modern foundation apprentices did. In 1999-2000, the retention rate on the

foundation modern apprenticeship programme was only 12 per cent. Of 58 learners who started other NVQ training in 1998-99, only one carried out all learning plan objectives and only one remains on the programme. Tutors, in the main are unaware of these retention and achievement rates and do not receive summary information or data comparing rates from one year to the next.

21. Reviews of learners' progress are carried out regularly and frequently. During their reviews, however, the learners are not set demanding targets. RMA staff discuss the learners' general progress rather than how learners have carried out specific tasks.

22. The college subcontracted to provide training allows learners to join their programme at any time of the year. Training groups are made up of learners at different stages of their programme, who have different modes of attendance. Groups are also made up of learners working towards NVQs at different levels. There are resource rooms close to the construction workshops which contain books and learning packages. Learners are encouraged to make use of these learning materials and they make notes which are stored in their portfolios of evidence. Most of the learners interviewed expressed frustration that they had to spend a disproportionate amount of time finding out information for themselves and that they received insufficient teaching of theory from the tutors. Learners said that they often spent most of the day obtaining basic information on their own and did not carry out enough practical tasks. Many learners said that became bored, lost interest in their studies, and that their rate of learning was slow. They found the college day from 0800 hours to 2100 hours long and they disliked having to wait one and a half hours between 1630 hours and 1800 hours for the evening session to begin.

23. Learners collect insufficient evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences in the workplace. Some learners have been issued with work diaries, but others have not. Most learners do not keep a record of the tasks they carry out in the workplace. Staff do not encourage them to maintain such a record.

24. Employers have a poor understanding of NVQs. They said that the language used in NVQ documents was a major stumbling block to understanding NVQ requirements. The RMA, however, has not made any attempt to summarise these requirements in simpler language for the employers. Employers have little involvement in the learners' progress reviews.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	202	4

25. There are 202 learners on engineering and motor vehicle programmes. There are 125 learners following general engineering options and 77 learners following motor vehicle options. Of all the learners, 115 are advanced modern apprentices, 13 are foundation modern apprentices and 74 are on NVQ training. Off-the-job training is carried out either within RMA's own training centre, at the workplace or by a subcontracted training provider. Modern apprentices attend RMA's training centre where they work towards an NVQ in foundation engineering at level 2. Once they have achieved this NVQ, they attend a further education college on day release and work towards appropriate craft qualifications or national certificates. They spend the remainder of their time at work where RMA staff provide them with training and assessment towards an NVQ at level 3, carry out reviews of their progress and set them targets. Learners recruited now work towards the new NVQ in performing engineering operations or performing manufacturing operations. Visiting staff from RMA carry out all training leading to the NVQ in performing manufacturing operations. The engineering options include those in engineering production, maintenance and technical services. The work-based learners aim to achieve their NVQ in about 12 months and the modern apprentices in three to four years. Motor vehicle programmes include those in light and heavy vehicles mechanics, vehicle body repair and refinishing, vehicle parts and distribution, valeting, maintenance and tyre and exhaust fitting. Learners working towards qualifications in tyre or exhaust fitting attend the RMA training centre on day release, or as full-time learners. All other motor vehicle engineering learners are placed with, or employed at, local franchised or independent garages where a visiting assessor carries out their assessment. Learners may join a programme at any time in the year. There are no minimum entry requirements. Learners receive an induction to their programmes at the RMA's 'starting point' centre. This is followed by further brief induction at the training centre and in the workplace.

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The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			16		49		48		0	
Still in training			2	12	0	0	11	23	0	0
FMA framework completed			5	31	4	8	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			7	44	17	35	3	6	0	0
Left without completing the framework			9	56	40	82	36	75	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	56		171		57		57		0	
Still in training	4	7	48	28	32	56	31	54	0	0
AMA framework completed	2	4	26	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	25	45	35	20	20	35	8	14	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	13	23	69	40	2	4	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	43	77	38	22	17	30	22	39	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	112		124		134		123		0	
Still in training	0	0	13	10	11	8	50	41	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	14	12	7	6	5	4	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	91	81	95	77	115	86	70	57	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	21	19	20	16	28	21	16	13	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	24	21	10	8	4	3	3	2	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive range of programmes
- flexible arrangements to enable learners to join and transfer between programmes
- support from RMA for learners to work towards additional qualifications
- effective on- and off-the-job training
- good portfolios of evidence

WEAKNESSES

- little gathering of portfolio evidence in the workplace by foundation modern apprentices
- some slow progress towards achieving NVQs
- some inadequate reviews of learners' progress
- poor retention rates on some training programmes
- failure to provide key skills training and assessment throughout the training programme

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more thorough monitoring of assessors through observations by internal verifiers

26. The range of engineering and motor vehicle programmes is comprehensive. Learners can opt to work towards qualifications which meet their personal aspirations and are relevant to their employment. The general engineering qualifications include those in engineering foundation, performing engineering or manufacturing operations, engineering maintenance, technical services, mechanical engineering, fabrication and welding. The motor vehicle qualifications include those in light and heavy vehicle mechanics, vehicle body repair and refinishing, vehicle parts and distribution, valeting, maintenance, tyre and exhaust fitting. Six subcontracted training providers carry out the training leading to these qualifications.

27. Programmes are arranged flexibly and learners may join them at any time in the year. They may also transfer from one programme to another to meet their needs. Learners without employment or a suitable work placement normally join their programme on a full-time basis. When they obtain full-time employment, they then attend off-the-job training on day release. There are no entry requirements for

programmes. Advice and guidance for prospective learners are available from the organisation's 'starting point' centre in Rotherham.

28. Some learners are able to enhance their skills and knowledge by following additional courses over and above those required by the apprenticeship framework. RMA pay the costs of these courses. For example, learners may follow courses and work towards certification in air conditioning, fork-lift operation, higher level motor vehicle technology, computer numerical control, and programme logic control.

29. On- and off-the-job training are effective. Learners attending RMA's own training centre receive well-structured and good tuition. As the organisation allows access to its programmes throughout the year, groups contain learners at different stages of their training. Staff manage learning sessions with such groups well and ensure that they are able to meet the diverse needs of individual learners. Some learners receive tuition in the workplace from visiting RMA tutors. Tutors discuss the NVQ requirements, carry out assessment and assist the learners with portfolio-building. Learners spoke highly of the quality of their training and the attention and support that they received from staff.

30. Some learners' portfolios are well presented and contain a wide range of evidence. Many contain written reports produced by learners, photographic evidence of tasks undertaken, witness testimonies provided by workplace supervisors and learners' answers to knowledge questionnaires. Evidence in portfolios is referenced carefully to NVQ standards. In general, internal verification of assessment is carried out well. On one programme, however, there has been no observation of assessment by internal verifiers for some time, a weakness identified in an external verifier's report.

31. Learners who are working towards an NVQ in foundation engineering attend training at the RMA centre each week on day release. They are assessed when their tutor considers they have acquired the requisite NVQ competences. All assessment occurs during these sessions. Little or no assessment is carried out in the workplace. Learners collect little evidence of their NVQ competences in the workplace when carrying out everyday tasks. During their off-the-job training, learners have to repeat, for assessment purposes, tasks they have already carried out in the workplace. Some make slow progress towards achievement of their NVQ.

32. Some reviews of learners' progress are not carried out well. Reviews are conducted in the workplace but workplace supervisors are not always fully involved in them. During the reviews, learners are not set clear and specific targets relating to achievement of the NVQ. Staff who monitor the progress of motor vehicle learners attend review and action-planning meetings with the subcontractor. The action points agreed at these meetings were not always discussed during the progress reviews. Some workplace supervisors received copies of the action points resulting from the reviews carried out by subcontractors but others did not. The organisation is taking steps to ensure that all relevant parties receive a copy of the records of progress reviews. Many workplace supervisors had a poor understanding of the NVQ requirements.

33. On some programmes, retention rates are low. On the foundation apprenticeship and NVQ training programmes, they have averaged only 16 per cent over the past three years. The retention rate on the modern apprenticeship programme over the same period is far higher, at 73 per cent. The proportion of foundation modern apprentices who began their programme in 1998-99 and have completed their framework is 31 per cent, but 13 per cent of those who started are still on their programme. The proportion of foundation modern apprentices who have so far achieved an NVQ is 13 per cent. Of the advanced modern apprentices who began their programme in 1998-99, 16 per cent have completed their framework, but 45 per cent are still in training.

34. Learners do not receive training in key skills from the start of their programme. Some learners on the third year of their programme have only recently begun to gather evidence of their acquisition of key skills. Learners who have recently joined training programmes have been introduced to key skills. Their key skills training, however, is not an integral part of their programme. Learners are allowed time to work on key skills packs, provided they have completed other NVQ activities. Learners give the acquisition of key skills a lower priority than the acquisition of NVQ competences. Learners who start their key skills training late in their programme make slow progress towards completing their apprenticeship framework.

Good Practice

RMA provide a free minibus service to take learners from Dearne valley, Rotherham to the Maltby training centre and from Rotherham to a subcontracted training provider in Doncaster.

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	75	4

35. RMA provides modern apprenticeship training in administration and accountancy, leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. It also provides training leading to an NVQ in administration at levels 1 and 2. All learners are either employed or have suitable work placements in the local area. Of the 75 learners currently on programmes, 55 are administration advanced modern apprentices, eight are administration foundation modern apprenticeships, six are working towards NVQs in administration at level 2 and two are working towards NVQs at level 1. The remaining four learners are all advanced modern apprentices in accountancy and are working towards qualifications at level 3. Assessment and progress reviews for administration programmes are carried out in the workplace by RMA staff. Off-the-job training takes place at either the main site at Millside or at the Maltby training centre. A subcontractor provides accountancy training and RMA staff carry out the reviews of learners' progress.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			5		20		25		0	
Still in training			0	0	1	5	7	28	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	20	1	5	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			2	40	12	60	10	40	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	55		99		95		60		0	
Still in training	13	24	14	14	18	19	14	23	0	0
AMA framework completed	4	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	22	40	13	13	14	15	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	13	24	9	9	3	3	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	34	62	39	39	64	67	32	53	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	64		56		63		52		0	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	4	6	4	8	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	6	9	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	48	75	44	79	53	84	42	81	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	8	12	10	18	7	11	4	8	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	24	38	4	7	5	8	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good support for learners
- good work placements
- good provision of training leading to additional qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- failure to gather key skills evidence through all aspects of training
- no workplace assessment in accountancy
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more thorough recording of assessment sampling by internal verifiers

36. RMA staff provide good support for learners. They make frequent visits to the workplace to help learners acquire a clear understanding of the evidence requirements relating to the qualifications they are working towards. All staff are well qualified. Most have already achieved, or are working towards, an NVQ in administration at level 3. All staff are well qualified. They make frequent visits to learners in the workplace. Most staff have already achieved, or are working towards, an NVQ in administration at level 3. They are able to explain clearly to learners how they should gather evidence of their acquisition of skills and, in particular, how to cross-reference this evidence to NVQ standards. Learners with social problems or particular needs can be visited more frequently. Staff are particularly patient and supportive towards them and help them

gather evidence of competences they have acquired during their work experience. These learners are now gaining in confidence. Learners' portfolios are well structured and contain a diverse range of relevant evidence. Recently this has included more records of the relevant direct observation of learners' work on employers' premises. The quality of portfolios was highlighted as a strength in the self-assessment report.

37. All learners are either employed or have good work placements in the local area. These include firms of accountants, council offices, engineering companies, estate agents, a transport company, solicitors, charities, a motor home dealership, schools, at the RMA offices and an alcohol and drug abuse advisory centre. Through the tasks they carry out in their work placements, learners are able to gather relevant evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences. Employers are supportive, have a clear understanding of the learners' qualification requirements and are fully involved in the learners' progress reviews. The self-assessment report identified these work placements as a strength.

38. Learners are able to work towards additional qualifications in this occupational area. RMA sponsors learners to attend courses at local colleges leading to qualifications at various levels, including those in computer literacy, business technology, word processing and audio word processing at various levels. In-house courses include those in mail handling, telephone techniques, use of photocopiers, using binding and laminating machines, an introduction to a computing operating system and a course leading to certificate in first aid. Other courses cover confidence building, teamwork, communications skills, jobsearch and curriculum vitae preparation. Learners who are waiting for a work placement, gain work experience in a realistic office environment where they gather evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences. Training rooms are well equipped. Resources include telephone equipment that can record conversations.

39. Administration learners do not collect evidence of their acquisition of key skills through their work towards completion of NVQ units. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, key skills training is not an integral part of the NVQ training programmes. Assessment of key skills has taken place after learners have completed work for their NVQ. Learners' prior attainments in key skills have not been recognised. For example, one learner who started in 1999, had already achieved certification in the key skill of number at level 2 but no allowance had been made for this. Several members of staff have now achieved qualifications in key skills. There is now closer integration of key skills assessment and NVQ assessment. Key skills workshops for learners are now also taking place.

40. A subcontractor carries out assessment and internal verification for NVQs in accountancy. Learners attend training courses at a local college once or twice a week and these include key skills training. They set examinations of a professional body, which are designed primarily to assess the learners' background knowledge and understanding in key areas of accounting. In addition, learners' compile a portfolio of evidence of their acquisition of competences, gathered through carrying out exercises for each accounting unit under simulated work-based conditions. Accountancy learners,

however, do not receive any assessment in the workplace. Assessors do not visit learners who are working in accountancy workplaces. The evidence learners gather in the workplace relates mainly to health and safety units.

41. Achievement and retention rates are low in this occupational area. During the past three years, only one of the 182 modern apprentices has completed the apprenticeship framework. In 1998-99, only one apprentice completed the framework, 13 apprentices achieved an NVQ at level 2 and nine achieved an NVQ at level 3. The remaining 26 left without obtaining any qualifications. In 1999-2000, no apprentice completed the framework and of 82 apprentices who joined the programme, 14 achieved an NVQ at level 2, three achieved an NVQ at level 3 and 40 left without obtaining any qualifications. During the last three years, of the 49 foundation modern apprentices who joined programmes, none has fulfilled all the objectives of an individual training plan. Of these apprentices, only two have achieved an NVQ at level 2 and 24 have left without gaining any qualifications. Eighteen learners have transferred from other programmes to the modern apprenticeship programme. Of the 171 learners who have joined training programmes over the last three years, only 30 have achieved NVQs at levels 1 and 2. Of the remainder, 24 have transferred to other programmes and 90 have left without gaining any qualifications. Learners, however, are now making more progress towards the achievement of their qualifications.

42. Internal verification takes place continuously. Internal verifiers give assessors clear feedback on their assessment practice. Programme meetings are held on a quarterly basis and are minuted. Team meetings which information technology tutors attend are held weekly and are also minuted. Both the programme and team meetings include standardisation workshops to determine what constitutes acceptable evidence in learners' portfolios. Assessment and internal verification files contain records showing the allocation of assessors to learners, plans for internal verification sampling covering all assessors and a range of assessment methods. The files also include records of the observation of assessments and interviews with candidates. Some sampling of assessments by internal verifiers is not recorded.

Information & communications technology

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	20	4

43. There are 10 advanced modern apprentices, four foundation modern apprentices and six learners on other NVQ training programmes in information and communications technology. Learners on some programmes are employed and RMA staff visit them at their workplace to carry out training and assessment. On other programmes, learners who are employed or have work placements attend the RMA's training centre in Maltby once a week for training and much of their NVQ assessment. The length of time learners spend on work placements varies from a few weeks to several months. Some learners who are working towards an NVQ at level 1 attend the training centre at Maltby on a full-time basis. A subcontractor provides some information technology programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were only two learners on these. Learners work towards a range of NVQs in information technology. At the time of inspection, 10 advanced modern apprentices, four foundation modern apprentices and six learners on NVQ training programmes were working towards an NVQ at level 1. Learners receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills in order to determine which level of programme is most suitable for them. Once they join their programme, RMA tries to find them a job or work placement relevant to the career in information technology which they wish to follow. Formal reviews of learners' progress are carried out once a month.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			1		2		8		0	
Still in training			1	100	0	0	3	38	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	1	50	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			0	0	2	100	5	62	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			8		15		9		0	
Still in training			1	12	3	20	6	67	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			3	38	2	13	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	12	2	13	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			7	88	12	80	3	33	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					20		16		0	
Still in training					0	0	6	38	0	0
Individual learning plan completed					6	30	1	6	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan					14	70	9	56	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed					3	15	1	6	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					3	15	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- good support for learners
- detailed and effective reviews of learners' progress
- good portfolios of evidence
- flexibly arranged work-based programmes

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate individual learning plans
- failure to provide key skills training and assessment throughout the programmes
- some poor training for advanced modern apprentices
- some unplanned and unsystematic internal verification
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better key skills workbooks

44. Learners are able to gather ample evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences at their places of work. Most have demanding roles and responsibilities, involving work with industry-standard hardware and software. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, many are also able to develop information technology skills, such as website design and they can undertake training in more advanced applications, such as database management or design.

45. Tutors maintain regular contact with work-based learners through phone calls and e-mails. They respond promptly to any problems which the learners encounter. If learners are encountering difficulties with a particular NVQ unit, tutors will visit them more frequently or give them help by e-mail. The ratio of tutors to learners is high and the self-assessment report failed to acknowledge this as a strength. Learners do not have to wait long for assistance. Groups rarely consist of more than 10 learners. There is always more than one tutor available to help learners in any group.

46. Reviews of learners' progress are carried out regularly. At the beginning of the review, the tutor and learner look at the actions agreed at the last review. A detailed record is made of the actions carried out. Reasons why any action has not been carried out are discussed. Where appropriate, alternative action is decided upon, such as that relating to the gathering of evidence in portfolios, or training the learner requires. Reviews conclude with the tutor and learner agreeing further action to be carried out by an agreed date. The required action is recorded in detail and the learner is in doubt what he or she needs to do by the time of the next review. This action-planning was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report as a strength of the review process.

47. There is a wide range and diversity of evidence in learners' NVQ portfolios. Evidence is well presented. The portfolios contain a clear record of how the evidence relates to NVQ units and performance criteria. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the RMA assessors emphasise to learners the importance of collecting evidence which can be cross-referenced, wherever possible, to several NVQ units.

48. The programmes followed by work-based learners are arranged very flexibly. They are organised to suit the needs of both learners and employers. Tutors identify employers' needs and the requirements of learners' job roles carefully. Learners are offered a diversity of programmes. For example, some learners can undertake advanced training in databases and others can work for a qualification in information technology as part of their engineering programme. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge as strengths, the wide range of NVQ options available to learners, and the way training programmes are tailored to meet the needs of learners and help learners carry out their jobs effectively.

49. Individual learning plans are general and insufficiently specific. They do not specify timescales and targets. The plans do not state who is responsible for providing training, or what training will be undertaken. They lack specific detail. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that the plans do not help the provider and employers to avoid unnecessary duplication of training activity, or enable the learners to carry out action-planning for achievement of their qualification.

50. Learners make slow progress in acquiring key skills. Two of the information technology tutors are qualified as key skills assessors but in the past 12 months there has been very little assessment of learners' key skills. There is no plan to introduce the assessment of key skills on a systematic basis, or to accelerate the assessment arrangements for learners on advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships who have been on information technology programmes for some time.

51. Subcontracted training in information technology for advanced modern apprentices is poor. There has been high turnover of assessors in the past 12 months. Some assessors have not fully understood the specifications which the NVQ learners aim to obtain and this problem has not yet been fully resolved. Learners have received no assessment for their NVQ in the workplace, and little assessment elsewhere. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that learners have been given little effective guidance on how to collect evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences. Learners make slow progress. There has been very little NVQ assessment, none of which has been in the work environment, despite the fact that the work environment provides excellent opportunities for evidence collection and is located in the premises where the assessors are based. This practice has recently changed but previously, assessment evidence was primarily generated in a workshop situation. The approach to evidence collection has also been ineffective, with learners given little effective guidance on the types of evidence they should try to collect. Learners have made slow progress as a result. This was not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

52. There are two internal verifiers but only one follows all the planning requirements of the RMA internal verification policy. One has a clear plan for internal verification of units but the other does not. Internal verification is recorded and assessors receive written feedback on their assessment practice. There is little formal observation of assessors as a part of the verification process. One assessor has not been observed at all in the past 12 months.

53. Retention and achievement rates are poor. In the past four years, no foundation or advanced modern apprentice has completed the apprenticeship framework. During this period, only one foundation modern apprentice, and only five out of 31 advanced modern apprentices have achieved an NVQ at level 2. Only three advanced modern apprentices have achieved an NVQ at level 3. No learners have achieved key skills certification. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices has improved in the last year to 62 per cent, from 20 per cent and 12 per cent in each of the two preceding years. The 34 learners on other NVQ training programmes have, between them, achieved only seven NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in the past two years.

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54. Training carried out by employers and the provider, is mostly satisfactory. The majority of learners, other than those being managed by the subcontractor, are making reasonable progress towards achieving their NVQs.

55. Learners are provided with key skills workbooks relating to information technology and application of number. These are well designed in terms of their layout but the exercises in them are not in a vocational context relevant to the learners' interests.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	47	4

56. There are 47 learners and two New Deal clients working towards NVQs in customer service and retail at levels 1, 2 and 3. Of these, eight are modern apprentices, three are foundation modern apprentices and 36 are on NVQ training programmes. Eighteen of these learners are in employment and 29 are on work placements. In addition, there are two New Deal clients receiving training in retail. New Deal clients work towards two units of an NVQ and are visited by RMA staff every two weeks. Employers include small independent companies and national companies. Learners are visited every four weeks for assessment and more often when necessary. Learners working towards an NVQ at level 1 receive progress reviews every six weeks and other learners receive them every 13 weeks.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			1		2		4		0	
Still in training			0	0	0	0	3	75	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100	2	100	1	25	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	9		23		5		25		0	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	2	40	6	24	0	0
AMA framework completed	0	0	7	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	1	11	0	0	2	40	8	32	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	2	22	0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	9	100	16	70	3	60	19	76	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	66		84		84		104		0	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	13	15	23	22	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	8	12	13	15	7	8	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	58	88	71	85	64	76	91	88	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	6	9	13	15	13	15	1	1	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	6	9	5	6	5	6	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- supportive attitude of employers towards learners
- good off-the-job training
- good handouts and assignments

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress by learners towards achieving the NVQ
- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor recording of assessment through observation
- failure to make key skills training an integral part of programmes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more thorough evaluation of assessment

57. All the employers interviewed were very supportive of their learners. They do all they can not only to help learners achieve an NVQ or complete their apprenticeship framework, but also to further their personal development. RMA assessors work very hard to place learners in suitable employment. The majority of the retail learners are unemployed and in work placements. They are able to participate in training activities for staff and many are offered employment at the end of the programme, and in several cases, before the end of the programme.

58. RMA offers a wide range of off-the-job training. A programme of key skills and

personal development training is offered to all learners. Key skills workshops are available to all learners. Many of the retail learners have personal problems. RMA offers them a range of personal development workshops on, for example, confidence building, motivation, positive attitude and correct behaviour training. Learners can also attend workshops on reading and writing. RMA provides learners with additional training on, for instance, lift truck operation and basic food hygiene. Support services are available to learners, including counselling and help and guidance on benefits.

59. Retail learners are given good printed information and project work to help them achieve their NVQs. Learners working towards an NVQ at level 1 are given a learning pack for each unit. This contains handouts, project work and questions on the background knowledge required. The questions have been devised by RMA staff. If the learners have not received enough assessment through observation of their performance, they can still complete the unit by answering these questions correctly.

60. Learners in retail are making slow progress towards achieving NVQs. Until recently, individual learning plans did not specify expected completion dates for units. A new individual learning plan has been developed. This has been issued to new learners only and many of those interviewed did not know when they should be completing units. Learners' progress reviews involve the learner and assessor only, and not the workplace supervisor. During their reviews, learners concentrate on planning their next assessment and they are not set demanding targets. Several learners said that they had completed all their written work for the NVQ and were waiting for their assessor to assess it.

61. Retention and achievement rates are poor across all programmes. In the last two years, no foundation or modern apprentice has completed the apprenticeship framework and last year, no apprentice carried out an individual learning plan in full. The retention rate on the foundation modern apprentice programme improved considerably last year but the number of apprentices is very small. Retention rates on the advanced modern apprentice and NVQ training programmes are low, at 24 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively.

62. In general, there is poor recording of assessment by observation across all programmes. On retail programmes in particular, all observations are carried out in the same way. Assessment of work for an entire unit is observed. As the external verifier identified seven months ago, in the recording of the assessment, evidence is not cross-referenced to a range of NVQ criteria.

63. Key skills training is not an integral part of retail and customer service programmes. Learners on the customer service programme do not begin their key skills training until they have completed work for their NVQ at level 2. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, key skills training is not an integral part of the training programme in retail.

64. The NVQ internal verification procedure is satisfactory and is being carried out competently. In the retail department there are four assessors, three of whom are also

internal verifiers.

Good Practice

European exchange visits are arranged. They vary in length from day visits to four weeks. One learner interviewed had just been to Hungary for four weeks. She works in a florist in this country and was placed in a florist in Hungary. She said that her confidence had increased significantly and her occupational skills had improved greatly as a result of her participation in an exchange visit.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	45	4

65. RMA offers training leading to qualifications in hospitality at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3. There are currently 11 NVQ learners, eight foundation modern apprentices and 26 advanced modern apprentices. Thirty-seven learners are employed with local businesses. Eight learners have additional learning needs, and are based in realistic work environments, at two of RMA's training sites. Learners can join programmes at any time throughout the year. The training programmes lead to NVQs in food preparation and cooking, reception, housekeeping, food service, hospitality multi-skill, on-licensed premises or butchery at levels 1, 2 and 3. Learners can also work towards additional qualifications in first aid, basic and intermediate food hygiene, licensing and inn-keeping. RMA subcontracts training leading to the butchery qualification and NVQs at the higher levels, to three providers. Learners are referred to RMA by local employers or the careers service. Some have responded to RMA's advertisements. At the beginning of their programme, learners discuss the qualifications they wish to work towards with training staff and their employer. They receive an induction to their programme and this covers important issues, such as health and safety at work. During their induction, the learners receive an initial assessment of their basic skills. Those who have weaknesses in literacy and numeracy receive additional training in basic skills. Learners waiting for work placements with local employers receive induction and help in RMA's realistic work environment. Learners have work placements across South Yorkshire. These include small coffee shops, hotels, nursing homes and industrial catering establishments. Specialist hospitality staff from RMA visit the learners regularly to review their progress. Most assessment is carried out in the workplace by RMA assessors or one of the subcontractors. RMA have three occupationally qualified staff. All are qualified assessors and one is also a qualified internal verifier. Two of the staff have training qualifications.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			3		5		10		0	
Still in training			0	0	1	20	7	70	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			3	100	4	80	3	30	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	6		17		17		27		0	
Still in training	0	0	5	29	9	53	12	44	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	3	50	5	29	6	35	8	30	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	6	100	12	71	8	47	15	56	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	32		28		13		23		0	
Still in training	0	0	4	14	1	8	6	26	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	31	97	21	75	12	92	13	57	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	7	22	11	39	3	23	2	9	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	2	6	7	25	1	8	1	4	0	0

STRENGTHS

- some good portfolios of evidence
- wide range of learning and assessment resources
- good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- low achievement rates
- no evidence gathering in the workplace by learners on one subcontractor's programmes
- failure to provide key skills training from the outset of programmes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater occupational relevance of key skills materials

66. As the self-assessment report identified, learners have good work placements where they receive help and support, further their personal development and can develop the requisite NVQ competences. Their places of work are modern and well equipped. Learners are part of workplace teams and given demanding responsibilities and roles in which they become more self-confident. In the best work placements, learners undertake a wide range of work which gives them a breadth of experience. They acquire a range of skills and can be assessed in these. Learners are motivated and interested in their work, especially in the practical part of their training. The practical skills of kitchen learners are particularly good. They prepare and cook food to a high standard and present it well. Most learners work well within their own teams. They are able to take part in the devising of menus, and their work in this respect can be assessed. If learners cannot acquire a particular NVQ competence in their work placement, they can develop this and have it assessed at RMA's realistic work environment. Assessors plan the assessments to fit in with the learners' work rotas and to ensure they are carried out at the times when learners are using the required NVQ competences. These include early mornings, late evenings and weekend shifts. Employers and supervisors work closely with the RMA trainer to plan training and assessment for each learner. The views of workplace staff about learners' progress are included in the record of learners' reviews.

67. There is a good range of learning resources. Some employers have their own training programmes and learning materials. Some have been accredited as an Investor in People and provide their own on-the-job training for learners. RMA trainers and employers decide together how best to meet learners' needs.

68. Demonstrations are carried out by learners and employers either in the workplace, or RMA premises. Learners then have the opportunity to practise the skills, which relate to the appropriate unit of their NVQ and to plan menu items for the following day. Learners have work packs, they answer background knowledge questions and their responses are used as portfolio evidence. Workbooks are available for learners and they can have one-to-one coaching. Learners' retention rates are improving. Learners also receive training and assessment at the RMA's realistic work environment. It is also used to help some learners who need further support before going into the workplace. The environment is well equipped. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, one of the subcontractors has a similar facility which provides hospitality services to the public.

69. The learners' portfolios of evidence are completed to awarding body requirements and contain appropriate evidence. The main sources of evidence are observation of learners' performance in the workplace and oral and written questioning to check learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners are encouraged to take pride in their portfolios and make them more personalised through the inclusion of evidence in the form of witness testimonies, diaries and photographic evidence.

70. A weakness identified in the self-assessment report is that learners have only recently been introduced to key skills training. There has been little cross-referencing of evidence for NVQ units to key skills units. Training in key skills is not carried out until learners have completed work for their NVQ at level 2. One learner who has already achieved certification in key skills has been encouraged to bring evidence of this in order that RMA may accord it recognition. Key skills training has not been made an integral part of the modern apprenticeship programmes. Staff have not received training in the teaching and assessment of key skills and they say they do not feel confident to carry out such work. Currently, key skills assessment is carried out by a different department within the RMA and subcontractors. Key skills workbooks used by the learners do not necessarily relate to their occupational area.

71. Learners on programmes with one of the subcontractors have been told that they should not gather evidence of their competences in the workplace but must be assessed in RMA's realistic work environment. The learners make slow progress and have become demotivated. One learner had only received one assessment within one year, and the RMA assessor was asked to intervene and assess the learner in question in the workplace.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	28	4

72. RMA offers modern apprenticeship training and training in hairdressing, leading to NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3. The programme is planned to enable most apprentices to complete the foundation modern apprenticeship framework in two years. Of the current learners, two are advanced modern apprentices, working towards an NVQ at level 3. There are six foundation modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 2. The remaining learners are undertaking NVQ training, four are working towards an NVQ at level 1, and 16 are working towards an NVQ at level 2. Most modern apprentices and learners are recruited through the careers service, employers, or in response to advertisements in the local press. Applicants have an initial recruitment interview with the RMA's employability officer and receive an initial assessment of their basic skills. This is followed by an interview with the vocational officer who outlines the basic programme and explains the off-the-job training aspects, work experience opportunities and progression routes. The five-day induction is split into two phases. The first phase includes a basic induction to RMA. This covers administrative detail and the rights and responsibilities of learners. Learners' personal statements from their school record of achievement are looked at. In the second phase, learners are introduced to the NVQ process, key skills and portfolio-building. They then agree an individual learning plan, which outlines targets, timescales for their achievement and details of any additional learning support required. RMA subcontracts all the hairdressing training to two local colleges of further education and two hairdressing training companies in Rotherham and Doncaster. Learners attend off-the-job training one day each week during college term time. This covers theory, practical training, assessment and some key skills training. An NVQ assessor visits learners on work placement to check their progress and carry out some assessments. All the off-the-job assessors have appropriate qualifications. RMA's vocational officer carries out reviews of learners' progress every six to eight weeks in the workplace. Forty-six per cent of the learners are employed in a variety of workplaces. These range from small family businesses to larger high street salons. Between them, learners have work placements with 26 employers. There are three qualified work-based assessors and one member of staff is working to become a qualified assessor. All the off-the-job trainer/assessors are appropriately qualified.

ROTHERHAM MBC (ROTHERHAM MANAGING AGENCY)

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			2		7		10		0	
Still in training			0	0	3	43	3	30	0	0
FMA framework completed			1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			0	0	0	0	2	20	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			10		2		10		0	
Still in training			1	10	0	0	1	10	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			9	90	2	100	6	60	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	7		17		20		45		0	
Still in training	0	0	1	6	5	25	14	31	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	4	57	5	29	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	3	43	11	65	15	75	28	62	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	2	29	3	18	6	30	10	22	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	3	43	6	35	3	15	4	9	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good basic skills and pastoral support
- good recruitment process
- responsiveness of employers to learners' needs

WEAKNESSES

- poor initial assessment of learners' key skills
- slow progress of learners towards achieving the NVQ
- poor retention and achievement rates
- little assessment of learners in the workplace

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed recording of targets in records of learners' progress reviews
- wider range of evidence in learners' portfolios
- better co-ordination of some on- and off-the-job training

73. Most learners experience a good recruitment process. Learners are either recruited as a group or on an individual basis at the RMA start-up centre in Rotherham. Potential learners have an initial chat with the employability officer who makes them feel at ease by asking them basic questions about themselves. The applicants are then asked to carry out a simple self-assessment exercise which identifies their employability skills. The results of this are discussed and the applicants themselves are involved in judging if they have the right skills for a job in hairdressing. Learners are then asked to undergo an assessment of their skills of numeracy and literacy. It is made clear to them that this not a test but a way of finding out what type of programme will suit them best. The vocational officer, who will be their main contact during their training, then talks to them. The officer is not a qualified hairdresser but is very experienced in dealing successfully with young people. Health issues are handled sensitively and reference is made to the applicants' self-assessment. They are made aware of what they will experience while training in the hairdressing profession. The applicants are then in a position to decide whether or not they are suited to hairdressing as a career.

74. As the self-assessment report recognised, learners receive good help and support to help them improve their basic skills. Those who are identified as needing help with basic skills, receive this from experienced staff in RMA's employability department. Learners attend RMA's start-up centre where they receive training in numeracy and literacy. One of the subcontractors provides individual learners with support in the theory classes. The learners welcome this and feel able to ask openly for help. The vocational officer also gives one-to-one support at work to learners who need help in completing their assignments by the appointed deadlines.

75. Learners benefit from the support employers give them. Some employers have a close involvement in the learners' progress reviews. Through their involvement, they are able to plan the learners' work-based training with them. One employer has paid for a learner to attend a hair extension course. The course has enabled the learner to acquire

a broader range of skills than those required for the achievement of the NVQ. One learner working towards an NVQ at level 3 has been greatly encouraged by having her work photographed by a professional photographer. She now intends to produce her own portfolio of hairstyles.

76. The procedure for the initial assessment of learners' key skills is poor. Some learners are working towards key skills certification at a level inappropriate for them. A new assessment procedure has recently been introduced by RMA. Learners' attendance at the subcontractors off-the-job key skills training sessions is poor. This session is slotted in at the end of the day. Over the last three years, of the 38 modern apprentices who joined the programme, only one has completed the apprenticeship framework, and six are still in training. Key skills training is not fully established and is not an integral part of the modern apprenticeship training programme.

77. Learners make slow progress towards achieving their NVQs. Most are taking two years to achieve an NVQ at level 2. One subcontractor covers all the theory work in the first year and carries out little assessment of learners' practical skills. Many learners do not achieve any full units of their NVQ until they have been on their training programme for 12 months. Learners begin to practise on models' hair early in their training, but they do not receive any assessment for several months. Learners collect little evidence of their acquisition of competence apart from some witness testimonies. Learners receive little assessment in the workplace. Most assessment is carried out off the job on the subcontractors' premises. Of the 26 work-based supervisors, only 11 per cent are qualified NVQ assessors. The off-the-job training centres are closed during the summer and for some of the traditional holiday periods.

78. The proportion of learners who complete the modern apprentice framework is low. In the past three years, of the 38 apprentices who started training, six are still on the programme and only one has completed a foundation modern apprenticeship framework. Only 20 per cent of advanced modern apprenticeship have achieved an NVQ at level 2 and none has achieved an NVQ at level 3. The achievement rates of learners on NVQ training programmes are low. In 1999-2000, 30 per cent achieved an NVQ at level 1 and 15 per cent achieved an NVQ at level 2. The retention rate on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme has averaged 12 per cent over a three-year period. The retention rate on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme has improved from 42 per cent in 2000 to 50 per cent in 2001. The retention rate for learners on the NVQ training programme has improved by 28 per cent in the last year. Of 45 learners who started training, 24 are still on their programme.

79. Learners' progress reviews are not carried out well. Learners set targets during their progress reviews, but these are not demanding. Learners are not made aware of the extent of their progress and achievements. They are not motivated to make faster progress. The portfolios of learners working towards an NVQ at level 2 are satisfactory, but they do not include enough evidence gathered by learners through their everyday work. For example, learners cut out pictures of hairstyles from magazines and stick them in their portfolios but they seldom include photographs of hairstyles they themselves

have created at work. Some on- and off-the-job training is not co-ordinated well.

Good Practice

During learners' progress reviews, health and safety issues are discussed. Learners are asked to recall issues of particular relevance to themselves and clients. Their hands are examined to check that they are not subject to irritation and appropriate advice is given if they are. Learners are reminded of the importance of protecting their hands by wearing rubber gloves at all times when handling toxic chemicals.

RMA supplies learners with their own personal hairdressing equipment. When they progress to level 2 they are given more equipment including a practise block. This provision of equipment motivates learners and increases their enthusiasm as they are able to practise their skills at any time. They are also given a salon uniform, which matches the requirements of the different subcontractors.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	89	4

80. Rotherham Managing Agency have 89 learners on care NVQ programmes. There are 52 on early years care programmes, 33 on health care programmes, two following operating department practice programmes, and two following oral hygiene programmes. There are 26 advanced modern apprentices, 24 foundation modern apprentices and 39 working towards NVQs at level 2 or level 3. The learners on adult care courses are usually employed. The learners on early years courses are not employed. They have work placements in schools, and private nurseries. There are two operating department practice advanced modern apprentices contracted to the local NHS Trust and they receive their training at the university. A subcontractor provides the remainder of training and assessment for adult care, early years and oral hygiene learners. The subcontractor took over the contract in February 2000, when the previous option provider withdrew at short notice. There are four staff at RMA who are responsible for the care programmes. Two are part time and they are responsible for recruitment, initial assessment and learners' progress reviews. Most learners on early years programmes are recruited in September. Learners may, however, join early years programmes throughout the year. All learners have an interview and an initial assessment and attend a one-week induction at the RMA training centre. The subcontractor also gives them an induction to the NVQ process. Learners working towards an NVQ at level 2 receive six days of theory training and also key skills training at RMA's training centre, provided by a subcontractor. Currently, learners working towards an NVQ at level 3 do not have training sessions. From September, 2001 RMA intends to provide a new programme for early learners and this will include training sessions. Assessment of all the early years learners, and most adult care learners is carried out by the subcontractors' staff. Fifteen learners are assessed for their NVQ in their workplace by staff of their employer, who are qualified assessors.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			5		25		31		0	
Still in training			1	20	5	20	18	58	0	0
FMA framework completed			1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	40	2	8	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			2	40	19	76	13	42	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	28		32		11		41		0	
Still in training	0	0	2	6	0	0	24	59	0	0
AMA framework completed	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	0	0	3	9	0	0	1	2	0	0
Left without completing the framework	26	93	28	88	11	100	17	41	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	98		88		87		62		0	
Still in training	0	0	6	7	16	18	17	27	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	3	3	4	5	2	2	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	93	95	75	85	69	79	42	68	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	9	9	12	14	7	8	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	4	4	4	5	4	5	2	3	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- productive liaison between RMA and subcontractors
- effective gathering of evidence in the workplace by care learners

WEAKNESSES

- poorly planned training programme for early years modern apprentices
- some inappropriate work placements for early years modern apprentices
- failure to provide key skills training throughout modern apprenticeship programmes
- low achievement and retention rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- involvement of work-based assessors in assessors' meetings and internal verification sampling

81. RMA subcontracts all the training provision in care. Relationships between the four RMA staff involved in the programmes, and the subcontractors' staff are good. RMA staff and the subcontractors' staff work as a team. They carry out reviews of learners' progress together. Assessors and internal verifiers are also involved in these reviews at which targets are set for learners. RMA staff and the subcontractors' staff have weekly meetings and continuous informal contact and they act swiftly to resolve problems relating to the learners.

82. The peripatetic assessors plan the NVQ assessment carefully to ensure that learners are assessed in the workplace. During their six study days, learners are encouraged to gather evidence from their workplace of their acquisition of NVQ competences, and are given guidance on how to do this. Staff discuss their current tasks and clients with them, in order to identify the best possible opportunities for gathering evidence.

83. The 11 early years advanced modern apprentices and the two learners working towards an NVQ at level 3 have work placements in schools. These do not provide them with sufficiently broad experience to enable them to gather evidence of their acquisition of all the requisite NVQ competences. Learners on the adult care and early years programmes do not have study days for theory work. The adult care learners, however, join in-house training programmes to cover the theory work for their NVQ at level 3. Learners on the early years programme have individual learning sessions with their assessors. The work in some of their portfolios, however, demonstrates that some learners have not covered the theory work required for an NVQ at level 3. Their knowledge of special needs is slight and their understanding of the importance of planning and evaluating development activities is weak. Early years learners working towards an NVQ at level 3 do not receive enough assessment through direct observation of their work. A disproportionate amount of assessment is carried out through giving learners questions to which they have to give written answers. Through their answers, some of the learners show that they have not yet gained the background knowledge required for achievement of an NVQ at level 3. The provider is aware of this problem and plans to start training sessions in theory for level 3 learners in September.

84. The learners working towards an NVQ at level 2 do not attend the study days regularly. Most of the adult care learners are employed in residential nursing and care homes. Many are expected to attend study days on the background knowledge for level 2 NVQ once a month in their own time. There are not enough work-based assessors for both adult care and early years learners. No early years learner has a work-based assessor. Forty-five per cent of adult care learners have an assessor in their workplace but they still make slow progress towards achievement of their NVQ. The early years learners have work placements and private nurseries and none is employed. Inadequate

arrangements are made for learners when the schools are closed during the holidays. During the summer holidays, some learners have worked part time helping with play schemes, and some arrangements have been made for learners to attend the training centre.

85. There are 49 learners on the care programmes. They have received little or no training in key skills. There are no training sessions on, or learning materials for, key skills. Some learners who are close to completing work for their NVQ have only been made aware of the need to undertake key skills during the last few weeks of their programme. Both learners and workplace assessors have a poor understanding of what learners have to do to achieve key skills certification. Most assessments to date have not included any assessment of learners' key skills. So far, only two learners have completed the full apprenticeship framework. Their apprenticeship was in operating department practice.

86. Achievement and retention rates are low. Eighteen months ago there was a break in the continuity of training and assessment before the new subcontractor was engaged and at this time, many learners left their programmes. Over the last three years, retention rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship programmes have been poor at 20 per cent. Only two learners completed their framework. Only four learners achieved an NVQ at level 3 and only three obtained an NVQ at level 2. Retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme are better and have averaged 60 per cent. Foundation modern apprentices' achievement rates, however, are low. Only one learner has completed the apprenticeship framework and only four obtained an NVQ.

87. The subcontractor has taken action to improve the implementation and recording of internal verification and, in particular, the processes for sampling assessment and observing assessors. This action, however, has not yet affected the work-based assessors who are responsible for the assessment of 45 per cent of the care learners. These assessors are not yet involved in the new sampling procedures and they do not attend meetings of assessors.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	17	3

88. The careers service personal advisers refer potential learners to RMA. Many of the learners have problems that have adversely affected their personal lives and school careers. RMA's Life Skills programme helps learners who have poor social skills, few or no qualifications, behavioural problems, poor skills of literacy and numeracy and face barriers to employment. The programme helps 16 to 18 year old learners to sample various kinds of work. It also gives them an opportunity to return to mainstream vocational education and training. The programme begins with a two-week induction and personal development phase that includes an assessment of learners' basic skills. During this introductory period, the learners clarify their vocational preferences and appropriate work placements are obtained for them. These may be within RMA or with suitable employers. From the start, learners are closely involved in the development of their individual learning plans. In order to help them find employment, learners develop jobsearch skills, practise interview techniques and have work taster placements where they receive help and support. Three members of staff at RMA work closely with learners during the introductory period and when they are sampling their chosen vocational areas in their work placements. Throughout the programme, learners' progress is frequently reviewed. The Life Skills programme usually lasts for 20 weeks. It can be extended if learners require additional time to sample other work areas or further their basic or personal skills.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Foundation Programmes										
Foundation Programmes	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							32		0	
Still in training							17	53	0	0
Gained job with training/progressed to further training and/or planned learning completed							4	12	0	0
Left without either							11	34	0	0
Gained job with training							4	12	0	0

STRENGTHS

- effective inter-agency liaison
- good support for learners
- flexibly arranged provision to meet learners' needs
- careful matching of vocational training to learners' needs
- frequent reviews of learners' progress

WEAKNESSES

- high number of early leavers following induction
- poor understanding of learners' programmes on the part of staff
- failure of some learning activities to stimulate learners' interest

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed information on new learners from the careers service

89. There are effective inter-agency arrangements for helping young disadvantaged learners. Many learners have a range of problems. These include homelessness, breaking the law, bullying, eating disorders, school exclusion and learning difficulties. Many have been in care. Some learners need specialist help and counselling and RMA staff work with a range of organisations such as youth offending teams, social workers, care teams, the Samaritans, housing associations for young people and personal advisers from the careers service. Learners derive considerable benefit from the work of RMA staff with external agencies. Staff are available to assist learners as much as they can. They aim to help the learners stay on their programme, increase their well-being and further their personal development. The support available to learners was highlighted as a strength in the self-assessment report.

90. Learners receive good pastoral support while they are on the Life Skills programme. Learners have daily contact with tutors during the introductory phase of the programme. When learners begin their work placements, their progress is frequently reviewed. Learners have regular contact with tutors and with personal advisers from the careers service. In addition, learners can receive help with basic skills at one of the training centres once a week, or more frequently. When personal problems arise, tutors and careers service staff give learners as much help as possible. Tutors supply learners with their mobile telephone numbers so that they can be contacted whenever a problem occurs. Learners value the support they receive.

91. The Life Skills programme is arranged flexibly to meet learners' needs. After the two week introductory phase, learners may not be ready for work 'taster' placements because of their weaknesses in basic skills, low self-esteem or lack of confidence. Other learners are absent a great deal and make slow progress. These learners are encouraged to remain at RMA and undertake further basic training to improve their basic skills, increase their self-esteem and self-confidence and prepare themselves for work sampling. Learners are enabled to progress at their own pace and strengthen their skills before being exposed to the world of work.

92. Vocational training is well matched to learners' needs. As the self-assessment report identified, learners can gain experience in a wide range of vocational sectors. This is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. These sectors include business administration, care, retailing and distribution, catering, engineering, motor vehicle maintenance and hairdressing. During the two-week introductory phase, learners identify which vocational areas they wish to sample. As soon as possible after the introductory period, learners are placed in sheltered workshop environments or with understanding employers for approximately six weeks. Learners sample their chosen vocational areas and find out whether they wish to work in them permanently. If they do, the six-week period can be extended in order that the learner may gain further experience, receive vocational education and training and obtain a longer-term work placement. If the learners find their chosen occupational area unsuitable, they can change it. By sampling different occupational areas, learners can make an informed choice of the sector for which they wish to train and in which they want to work.

93. Learners' progress is reviewed very frequently, and if possible, each week. The learner is set goals to be fulfilled in the forthcoming week. In addition, the tutor and the careers personal adviser see learners every two weeks to discuss their progress with them, set them new targets and discuss any problems they may have. Where appropriate, employers are also involved in the review process. A written record is made of each review and copies of it are given to the personal adviser, the learner and, where appropriate, the employer. A copy is retained in the learner's file.

94. There is a high drop-out rate when learners move out of introductory phase into work sampling. Some learners who leave the programme are often difficult to trace with the result that their reasons for leaving are unknown. The information on learners RMA receives from the careers service, is not always detailed enough to be of assistance to staff in accurately identifying learners' needs from the start of the programme. Insufficient priority is given to finding ways of ensuring that learners complete their programme.

95. Some staff do not know enough about the content of learners' programmes. Some vocational training staff do not fully understand the concept of Life Skills and what the purpose of the programme is. Some vocational trainers lack information about the introductory stage of the programme and how work sampling fits into the overall scheme. Some employers who provide work experience for learners are poorly

informed about the Life Skills programme. They do not understand the way in which learners can experience different vocational areas. According to the self-assessment report, staff who do not understand the concept of Life Skills have unrealistic expectations of learners. In some cases, when learners move into job sampling, their experiences are not planned and structured and they fail to benefit from their work placement.

96. Some learning activities are insufficiently stimulating for learners. Many learners on the Life Skills programme have left school early and they associate school with boredom and failure. The teaching methods and learning activities fail to command and hold some learners' interest. Staff have not investigated ways of making learning exciting. There is insufficient use of information technology on the Life Skills programme. Some learning is not given a vocational context. Tutors do not evaluate learning sessions enough to identify teaching methods and content which appeal to the learners and those which do not. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring that each learner's needs are addressed during the introductory phase of the programme and the sampling of occupational areas in work placements.

Good Practice

During the inspection, the first meeting of the Life Skills provider network took place. Members include Life Skills providers, lifetime careers' staff, and representatives from the local LSC and from the intensive supervision, support and advocacy project. The network has been created to bring staff together to share good practice, to investigate and solve problems, to deal with any issues relating to young disadvantaged learners.

In the introductory phase of the Life Skills programme, learners are taken on a visit. They are allowed to select the place to visit from a number of options. Learners have been to Manchester United, Leeds United and Sheffield Wednesday football clubs, to bowling, ice-skating and climbing activities. These visits promote group cohesion and help learners to develop communication skills and increase their self-confidence and self-esteem.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

97. Rotherham Managing Agency is part of the social inclusion unit of Rotherham Borough Council. The RMA is led by a manager who reports to the deputy chief executive of the council. For the six months before the inspection the manager has been absent on sick leave and his role has been taken by the deputy manager. There are 90 members of staff, of whom 64 are directly involved in training. Vocational training is provided by six departments, each headed by a senior officer. There are two training managers responsible for the work of these departments, and for subcontracted provision. Initial assessment, key skills training, and learner support are provided by an employability department. Other staff are responsible for administration, catering and facility management. The agency operates from three centres a recruitment and advice centre known as starting point in the centre of Rotherham; a training centre for practical skills at Maltby; its headquarters in the suburbs of Rotherham. The borough council has a policy for equality of opportunity which applies to the RMA. It has developed its own procedures for quality assurance. The RMA is accredited with the Investor in People award. The self-assessment report used in the inspection was the third produced by the agency, which initiated self-assessment in 1998 and completed its first self-assessment report in 1999.

STRENGTHS

- effective staff development procedures
- good self-assessment process involving all staff
- effective action to recruit disadvantaged learners
- well-developed links with external organisations
- comprehensive staff training on equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- lack of strategic direction
- inadequate management information systems
- poor management of key skills training
- weak systems for financial control and resource allocation
- poor use of data analysis in decision-making
- inadequate monitoring of quality of training
- no strategic approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficient monitoring of employers' promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further updating of quality assurance procedures
- more effective systems for sharing good practice in internal verification
- wider access to additional learning support at the Maltby centre

98. Staff at RMA have been adversely affected by uncertainty over the place and role of RMA in the borough council. In 1996, the RMA was transferred from the education department to the community regeneration unit, and subsequently to the social inclusion unit of the council. Following these changes, the management committee which formerly oversaw the work of the RMA, has lapsed. It has not been replaced by an equivalent management body. Staff do not have clear lines of accountability. They lack strategic direction and support. A number of senior staff have been on long-term sick leave or have left and have not been replaced. The RMA has produced a business plan which sets out incremental improvements in resources and provides a financial forecast for the year. The plan does not specify ways of improving poor retention and achievement rates on programmes.

99. Some learners are required to work towards qualifications beyond their capabilities. These learners have been identified as needing additional support in order to achieve an NVQ at level 1. Many succeed in obtaining this qualification. They are then required to continue on training until they have reached their eighteenth birthday. The funding body, however, will only continue to fund these learners on condition that they work towards a full NVQ. For many of these learners, however, achievement of an NVQ at level 2 is an unrealistic goal. They fail to achieve an NVQ at this level and the achievement rate for NVQ level 2 is low. The funding body and the careers service are required to meet their target of giving all young people who are not in full-time education, a training place. RMA recognises that provision of a training programme with short-term training goals the learners could achieve might serve the young people better. In order to receive funding, however, RMA must provide training leading to a qualification which is, for some learners, beyond their reach.

100. Managers do not have good access to reliable management information. Some information on learner numbers and learners' achievements was inaccurate. Managers are supplied with basic data such as lists of learners and their completion dates, but do not receive analysis of the data to show trends and help them in their decision-making. The RMA has recently updated its computer system for management information, but this has not yet produced discernible improvements. The RMA has poor procedures for financial control and resource allocation. All funds are held by the manager, who allocates them in response to requests for resources agreed in team meetings. There are no formal procedures for allocating resources or exercising budgetary control. The weakness of these arrangements has been recognised by the current managers, and plans are under discussion to allocate budgets to departments in future. The introduction of key skills has been poorly managed. A considerable number of staff have attended training events on key skills. RMA has not devised a clear policy on key skills.

ROTHERHAM MBC (ROTHERHAM MANAGING AGENCY)

Each department has devised its own approach to the implementation of key skills training. Most learners have made slow progress towards key skills certification. Key skills training has not been given a vocational context.

101. The RMA has good arrangements for staff development. The training needs of individual members of staff are identified during annual staff appraisals. Managers draw up an annual staff development plan to meet these needs. Many staff have undertaken staff development training in the past two years.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

102. Through its comprehensive range of programmes, RMA aims to meet the diverse needs of those who wish to undertake training. In particular, RMA staff do all they can to help those who are disadvantaged. A significant proportion of the learners the organisation has always sought to assist, have learning difficulties, or a disability, or emotional or behaviour problems, or a combination of these. The organisation has taken a wide range of specific measures to enable these learners to participate in training. Examples of these include the provision of minibuss transport to bring people from the Dearne Valley to Rotherham, personal hygiene support for a paraplegic to enable him to undertake work placement and training, a specific programme for learners with dyslexia, and special equipment for hearing impaired and partially sighted learners. The organisation also maintains relationships with external organisations such as the careers service and is helping it to address the problems of persistent young offenders. RMA provides practical support for the local multicultural centre in the form of transport, printing services and staffing. A significant proportion of the staff at RMA have had comprehensive equal opportunities training, and they have access to a number of staff focus groups organised by the council, such as the Black and Asian group where they can discuss issues they face in their work. All buildings have information signs in three languages and where appropriate, teaching and information documents are produced in languages other than English. Recruitment of staff is carried out in accordance with good equal opportunities practice. The proportion of staff with disabilities or who from minority ethnic groups, is more than proportionate to the number of physically disabled people and those from minority ethnic groups in the local community.

103. Many learners have a poor understanding of equal opportunities. Until recently, learners have not undertaken activities during induction to increase their understanding of equal opportunities. The induction programme has been significantly redesigned and covers equal opportunities in greater depth. Employers are required to sign that they have an equal opportunities policy but there are no measures to monitor their promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. RMA has no overall strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities. Targets relating to equal opportunities are set. There is, however, little analysis of equal opportunities data to assist managers in their planning. There is no systematic approach to recruiting male learners to training in occupational areas traditionally associated with women, and vice versa. Some promotion of engineering for women has taken place using female learners as role models but this has been incidental rather than continuous and carefully planned. Promotional materials on training programmes reinforce gender stereotyping in occupational areas. Some of the information disseminated to learners about equal opportunities is useful and clear. Several documents on equal opportunities, however, are written in complicated language which is difficult for some learners to understand.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

104. The RMA has a range of well-established quality assurance procedures. These date from 1997 and a few weeks before the inspection, work began on updating them. Some procedures are no longer implemented, but have not yet been replaced. The procedures do not cover all aspects of training. For example there are no procedures for key skills training or reviews of learners' progress. Self-assessment is not an integral part of the quality assurance process. Three self-assessment reports have been produced. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process, which has been used effectively to identify weaknesses and plan improvements. There is effective communication among staff. All staff teams meet weekly to review learners' progress and discuss issues such as resources and scheduling. The quality assurance system does not cover training and the performance of learners adequately. There has been no analysis of significant weaknesses, such as low retention and achievement rates, poor management of key skills training, and inadequate reviews of learners' progress, to determine their cause and devise ways of rectifying them. There is no manager with specific responsibility for co-ordination of quality assurance activities, though the need for this post was recognised in the 1999 self-assessment report. There is no systematic procedure for monitoring training carried out by subcontractors. RMA staff visit some subcontractors regularly to monitor the quality of their training. Training provided by other contractors is not monitored and RMA receives little information from them about their training programmes.

105. Procedures for the internal verification of assessment are mainly satisfactory. The procedures are clear and in all but a few cases, they are implemented well. The effectiveness of the system was recently demonstrated when a possible assessment malpractice was identified and dealt with successfully. Sufficient staff are qualified as NVQ internal verifiers. They provide good advice and guidance to assessors in their teams. There are, however, few opportunities for verifiers to come together to share good practice. Procedures for obtaining the views of learners and employers are not systematic, though they have been improved recently. The RMA now uses specialist software to devise questionnaires for learners and employers and to analyse responses to them. In their responses to a recent questionnaire, employers showed that they did not understand RMA's procedures. An improved information pack has now been mailed to all employers. A consultant has been engaged to gather learners' views about the quality of training.