

INSPECTION REPORT

Metropolitan Training

28 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

Metropolitan Training is part of Wigan Council. It has three training centres in Wigan and one in Leigh. It provides work-based training for young people in 10 occupational areas. There are 412 learners, of whom 232 are modern apprentices and 172 are following other NVQ training programmes. Eight learners are on a foundation programme in Life Skills.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in hairdressing and beauty therapy is satisfactory. Training is unsatisfactory in engineering, technology and manufacturing and in health, social care and public services. Training is weak in land-based provision, construction, business administration, management and professional and retailing, customer service and transportation. The leadership and management of Metropolitan Training are unsatisfactory.

Work-based learning for young people

Learners work in well-equipped salons and receive well-structured off-the-job training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Learner support is also good. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is, however, weak. Some weaknesses are common to all the other occupational areas. Retention and achievement rates are poor. Key skills training is inadequate. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is weak. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. In land-based provision, learners have a poor understanding of the NVQ. There is a lack of target-setting in progress reviews. In construction, health and safety is poorly monitored. Progress reviews are frequent and effective in engineering, technology and manufacturing. Jobsearch training for learners is poor. In business administration, management and professional, internal verification is poor. Some learners, working towards NVQs at level 3, are in inappropriate jobs. There is a lack of target-setting for learners on training programmes in retailing, customer service and transportation. Off-the-job training is well-structured in health, social care and public services. Learners are making slow progress on all training programmes.

Leadership and management

Metropolitan Training provides a wide range of training programmes to meet the needs of the local community. Strategic planning and internal communications are good. There is an effective system for staff development and review. There is no strategy to rectify the poor retention and achievement rates. Management information is not used effectively to monitor learners' progress. Some monitoring of

equality of opportunity does take place, but staff have not received any recent equal opportunities training. There are insufficient facilities for learners with disabilities. Comprehensive quality assurance procedures cover all aspects of the training provision. Feedback from employers and learners is collected and acted on. Overall, however, quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Self-assessment is not thorough and there is little evaluation of the training. Subcontracted training is inadequately monitored.

GRADES

Land-based provision	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

Construction	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

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

Business administration, management & professional	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

Retailing, customer service & transportation	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- good response to the training needs of young people in the local community

KEY WEAKNESSES

- low retention and achievement rates
- inadequate key skills training
- insufficient assessment in the workplace
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient evaluation of training
- no strategy for improving retention and achievement rates
- poor use of management information
- inadequate monitoring of subcontractors

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more specific targets in progress reviews
- greater involvement of workplace supervisors in progress reviews
- more involvement by staff in self-assessment

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Metropolitan Training, which is part of Wigan Council, was formed in 1988 to provide occupational training for young people and unemployed adults. It has three training centres in Wigan and one in Leigh. There are currently 54 members of staff and 412 learners. There are 99 advanced modern apprentices, 133 foundation modern apprentices, eight learners on a foundation programme in Life Skills and 172 learners on other work-based training programmes. Thirty-eight learners have additional learning needs and 22 learners have additional social needs. Training takes place both in the training centres and in the workplace. Some training is subcontracted to local further education colleges. The provider also trains some New Deal 18-24 clients. This provision, subcontracted from Wigan Borough Partnership, was not a part of the inspection.

2. The training is funded by the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The largest sectors of employment in Wigan are manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing. In July 2001, the unemployment rate in Wigan was 4 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.3 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups comprise 0.8 per cent of the local population, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Wigan achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of 10 inspectors spent a total of 40 days with Metropolitan Training in August 2001. They conducted 62 interviews with managers and provider staff and interviewed a senior manager from Wigan Council. Inspectors interviewed 105 learners at the training centres and at 44 work placements. They also interviewed 37 employers and visited one subcontractor. They examined 71 learners' portfolios of evidence and 65 individual learning plans, as well as other documents relating to the provider's work. They examined data on retention and achievement rates. Inspectors also observed and graded 12 training sessions. The inspection covered seven of the 10 areas of learning provided by Metropolitan Training, representing 95 per cent of the current learners. The three remaining areas were not inspected due to low numbers of learners. Inspectors studied Metropolitan Training's self-assessment and action plan, which were produced in April 2001.

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	1	0	0	0	1
Construction	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Total	0	3	5	3	1	0	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Land-based provision

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	28	5

4. There are currently 28 learners on work-based training programmes in land-based provision. Eight learners have additional learning needs and four have additional social needs. There are five advanced modern apprentices, with four working towards NVQs in amenity horticulture and one working towards an NVQ in agriculture and commercial horticulture. There are three foundation modern apprentices, with two working towards an NVQ at level 2 in agriculture and commercial horticulture and one working towards an NVQ at level 2 in floristry. There are 20 NVQ trainees, with 18 learners working towards an NVQ at level 2 in fence erection and two working towards an NVQ at level 3, one in floristry and one in amenity horticulture. Seven learners are employed. Learners are recruited through contact with existing learners and employers and also by referral from the careers service, local colleges and the local borough partnership. Training in fence erection is carried out by Metropolitan Training, with work placements provided on borough housing and regeneration projects. Off-the-job training and assessment for the other training programmes are subcontracted to three local colleges of further education and two specialist land-based colleges. Some learners attend college for off-the-job training one day a week. Others carry out all their training and assessment in the workplace. Agriculture learners unable to attend college during the foot and mouth disease crisis were provided with theory material by post. Key skills training for modern apprentices is provided by the subcontracted colleges.

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		7		26		0	
Still in training			0	0	1	14	1	4	0	0
FMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			3	100	1	14	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			0	0	6	86	25	96	0	0

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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			4		5		3		0	
Still in training			1	25	2	40	2	67	0	0
AMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			3	75	3	60	1	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			12		12		19		0	
Still in training			0	0	6	50	9	47	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			1	8	0	0	1	5	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			9	75	6	50	9	47	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			2	17	2	17	2	11	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	8	0	0	1	5	0	0

STRENGTHS

- wide range of work placements

WEAKNESSES

- low retention and achievement rates
- poor assessment practice
- insufficient understanding of NVQs by most learners
- unsystematic additional learner support
- slow progress towards achievement of key skills
- inadequate target-setting in progress reviews

5. The wide range of work placements enable learners to develop the full range of skills required for the NVQ. Fence erection learners work with four teams, run by Metropolitan Training, carrying out commercial fencing contracts on local authority

housing and regeneration projects. They receive good on-the-job training from well-qualified and experienced fencing instructors. Most agriculture, amenity horticulture and floristry learners are employed. The work placements, which include golf courses, landscape contractors, farms and florists, provide a wide range of training and assessment opportunities. Employers provide good support for their learners, including assistance with collecting evidence and portfolio-building.

6. Retention and achievement rates are low, a weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report. For the NVQ training programme, the retention rate has been 50 per cent or below for the past three years. The retention rate for the foundation modern apprenticeship programmes is particularly poor. In 2000-01, 25 out of 26 learners left the training programme early, without achieving any qualifications. The retention rate for the advanced modern apprenticeship programmes has improved from 25 per cent to 67 per cent from 1998-99 to 2000-01, but the number of learners on this training programme is very low. Very few learners achieve the qualifications indicated on their individual learning plans. In the last three years no modern apprentices have completed the full framework. No advanced modern apprentices have achieved an NVQ and only four foundation modern apprentices have achieved their NVQ at level 2. Only two NVQ trainees have achieved their NVQ at level 2.

7. Assessment practice is poor on all training programmes. There is no regular assessment for the fence erection NVQ. Learners are not told when assessment will take place. They do not know when they have been assessed and receive little feedback. Portfolios of evidence contain very little assessment evidence for most NVQ units. Observation records do not provide sufficient information about how competence is demonstrated. Learners make very slow progress towards completing their NVQ. Some learners have been on the training programme for 18 months and have only completed one NVQ unit in health and safety. A training and assessment schedule has recently been introduced, but this has not yet been fully implemented. Learners who leave the training programme early do not receive accreditation for the skills they have gained while in training. Some learners are not registered for the NVQ until they have been on the training programme for several months. There is no plan for the internal verification of the fence erection NVQ and learners' portfolios are not internally verified until they are complete. Assessors are, however, observed by the internal verifier on a regular basis. Most learners on other training programmes have very little assessment in the workplace. One amenity horticulture learner, however, is assessed in the workplace and visited regularly by the college assessor.

8. Most learners do not fully understand the NVQ they are working towards. Many do not know how many units they need to complete to achieve the qualification. In fence erection, they do not fully understand the content of the units or the evidence required to demonstrate competence. Learners do not understand how their training and the related in-house certificates relate to the NVQ. Portfolios of evidence are kept at the training centre and are only given to learners when they attend an off-the-job training session at one of the training centres. Some learners have not seen their portfolio for many months.

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9. Additional learner support is not provided systematically. Not all learners are given an initial assessment of their basic skills. Where additional support needs are identified, these are not routinely met throughout the training programme. Two-thirds of the NVQ learners are identified as having additional learning or social needs. The strategies designed to tackle these needs are not identified on the individual learning plans. In some cases, the need for basic skills training is recorded, but is not provided. Training and employment officers do help some learners overcome difficulties with individual assessments, but this is not routine.

10. Modern apprentices make slow progress towards achieving their key skills. Most learners complete their NVQ before key skills training takes place. In some cases, learners do not know that they must achieve key skills to achieve the modern apprenticeship. Subcontracted colleges are responsible for key skills training, but do not routinely integrate this with the rest of the training programme or link it to workplace activities. One learner, working towards an NVQ at level 3 in floristry, was previously following a foundation modern apprenticeship programme with Metropolitan Training. The learner completed their NVQ at level 2, but did not complete any key skills.

11. Targets agreed at learners' progress reviews do not consist of clear, measurable goals that learners can achieve in the short term. Most learners make slow progress towards achieving their qualification. Due to staff shortages, many progress reviews, which previously took place every six to eight weeks, are now infrequent. One floristry learner has not had a progress review since January 2001. In this case, problems with training provided by a college subcontractor over a long period were not resolved.

Poor Practice

One learner working towards an NVQ at level 3 was put into a level 2 class for their off-the-job training.

Construction

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	143	5

12. There are 143 learners on work-based training programmes in construction. Fifty-eight learners are modern apprentices and 85 learners are on NVO training programmes at levels 1, 2 and 3. Twenty-four learners have additional learning needs and 13 have additional social needs. Learners work towards NVOs in electrical installation, plumbing, wood occupations, bricklaying, plastering, construction operations, painting and decorating, building technician skills and civil engineering. Seventy-three learners are employed and attend off-the-job training at one of the training centres or at one of the local subcontracted colleges. All other learners attend the training centre full time. The construction department has five full-time members of staff involved in training and assessment. A senior training and employment officer manages the assessment team and internally verifies the assessments. Learners are recruited by referral from the careers service, advertisements in the local press and through direct contact with employers.

The following tables show the retention and achievement 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			4		5		14		0	
Still in training			0	0	2	40	11	79	0	0
FMA framework completed			1	25	0	0	1	7	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	1	20	1	7	0	0
Left without completing the framework			3	75	3	60	2	14	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			19		7		13		0	
Still in training			4	21	3	43	13	100	0	0
AMA framework completed			2	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			9	47	1	14	2	15	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			3	16	1	14	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			13	68	4	57	0	0	0	0

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NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			116		93		115		0	
Still in training			11	9	20	22	23	20	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			36	31	4	4	12	10	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			69	59	69	74	80	70	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			49	42	29	31	16	14	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			27	23	10	11	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good learner support

WEAKNESSES

- low retention and achievement rates
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- inadequate assessment in the workplace
- poor training for NVQ in plastering
- poor monitoring of health and safety
- unsatisfactory key skills training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater participation of employers in progress reviews
- better resources for training and assessment

13. Learner support is good. Many learners, working towards an NVQ at level 1, have additional social needs, additional learning needs, or both. They receive good additional support from training and work-placement staff. Staff meet regularly with learners to discuss and remedy any issues or concerns. Minutes of these meetings are routinely reported to the senior training officer for action. As a result of these meetings, improvements have been made to Metropolitan Training's welfare facilities. For

example, an open day is now held for employers and parents. Training staff work closely with learners and work-placement officers to identify further opportunities for employment. Many employers have a long-standing relationship with Metropolitan Training and speak well of the learners.

14. Retention rates for both NVQ and modern apprenticeship training are poor. In 2000-01, 70 per cent of the learners left the NVQ training programme without achieving the qualifications on their individual learning plans. Only 14 per cent of them achieved their NVQ at level 1 and no learners achieved their NVQ at either level 2 or 3. Although retention rates on the advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship programmes have improved, only 14 per cent of modern apprentices have achieved their full framework in the last three years. NVQ achievements by modern apprentices have significantly deteriorated over the last three years.

15. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. There is little formal planning of on-the-job training. In most cases it simply reflects the work being carried out by the employer. Although learners often work to demanding targets in the workplace, they have to repeat these tasks during their off-the-job training sessions. Employers are generally unaware of the skills taught during off-the-job training in college and are therefore unable to plan relevant training in the workplace. This prevents learners from developing the skills needed to achieve their NVQ. Most employers lack understanding of the NVQ structure and their role in the training process. This prevents formal planning of off-the-job training and makes target-setting, linked to the NVQ, difficult to achieve.

16. There is inadequate assessment in the workplace. Very little evidence from the workplace is used for assessment. Where learners have achieved competence in their NVQ units, there is often insufficient record of work-based evidence in their portfolios of evidence. Learners are rarely encouraged to gather evidence in the workplace. There is no structured system for the recording of this evidence. Insufficient assessment is carried out in the workplace and some learners repeat work during their off-the-job training. Employers are issued with a handbook that describes the need for work-based evidence, but this has not had a significant impact on the provision of on-the-job training. Staff have developed forms to record witness statements, but these are not used effectively. Progress reviews are satisfactory and include discussion on issues such as health and safety, equal opportunities, progress and targets for achievement.

17. Training is poor for those learners working towards an NVQ in plastering. Almost half of the learners are employed by dry lining companies. The range of work activities available to these learners is poor and makes the achievement of the target NVQ difficult. Staff qualifications and training centre resources are insufficient to allow a more appropriate qualification to be provided. Resources used for assessment in other areas also fail to provide a realistic simulation of workplace activities. Some tools and equipment are old and poorly maintained.

18. Inspectors identified some poor health and safety practices in both the on- and off-

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the-job training. Learners in trowel occupations were observed cutting and dressing bricks without suitable eye protection, although this was available and they were being supervised. In plastering, learners were preparing background surfaces by removing dust from walls, but the use of protective equipment was not enforced. Training staff do not maintain a list of learners authorised to operate machinery. Where one learner was operating a woodwork machine without supervision, there was no record to indicate that the learner was competent to operate the machine. Two learners were not wearing safety helmets in a situation that required them to do so. Another learner was observed working in a machine shop without appropriate footwear or a dust mask.

19. Key skills are not integrated with the NVQ assessment process. Key skills training is given in isolation, with little use of evidence from the workplace. For example, learners frequently calculate quantities of materials in the workplace, but this activity is not used as evidence for the application of number. Most learners do not fully understand the relevance of key skills to their occupational area. Most employers also lack understanding of key skills.

Poor Practice

A learner regularly uses woodwork machines, and as a result of poor monitoring of health and safety the provider was unaware whether his employer had given him proper training in the use of these machines.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	36	4

20. There are 36 learners on work-based training programmes in engineering and manufacturing. Of these, 15 are advanced modern apprentices, four are foundation modern apprentices and 17 are on other work-based training programmes. There are 22 learners in general engineering, seven in motor vehicle engineering and seven in manufacturing. All of the learners on general engineering and manufacturing training programmes are employed. Those learners working towards an NVQ at level 1 in motor vehicle engineering, attend the training centre full time. Some learners approach Metropolitan Training and are referred to employers. Others are already employed and are referred to Metropolitan Training. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme, and some of the manufacturing training programmes, consist of an initial year of off-the-job training, for one day each week, towards an engineering foundation NVQ at level 2. Learners then work towards an occupationally specific NVQ at level 3, over three to four years. The foundation modern apprenticeship programme consists of two years of off-the-job training for one day each week, towards an engineering foundation NVQ at level 2. The off-the-job training is carried out either in the training centre or at a local college of further education. All modern apprentices, and some manufacturing learners, study for vocational qualifications in engineering and key skills by attending a local college of further education for off-the-job training one day each week. NVQs are assessed in the workplace by Metropolitan Training's assessors or assessors from a local college. Three staff are qualified assessors and one is also qualified as an internal verifier. An independent internal verifier also works for Metropolitan Training on a regular basis. One of the staff has a training qualification. There are also a number of qualified work-based 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			1		4		4		0	
Still in training			0	0	1	25	1	25	0	0
FMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100	3	75	3	75	0	0

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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		3		12		0	
Still in training			4	40	0	0	9	75	0	0
AMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			3	30	0	0	4	33	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			6	60	3	100	3	25	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			19		14		26		0	
Still in training			0	0	1	7	13	50	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			10	53	6	43	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			9	47	7	50	13	50	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			10	53	6	43	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	1	7	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- frequent and effective progress reviews
- good understanding of key skills by learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate integration of key skills
- insufficient co-ordination of initial assessment and additional learner support
- poor jobsearch support for learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more thorough individual learning plans
- better co-ordination of training

21. Effective progress reviews are carried out in the workplace by Metropolitan Training's staff every four to six weeks. Dates for the next progress review are set in advance. Learners are set good short-term goals and the extent to which these are achieved is monitored at subsequent reviews. Learners understand what is expected of them, the progress they are making and any improvements needed. Progress reviews are also used to monitor additional learner support. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

22. Learners have a good understanding of key skills and the benefits that key skills training has to their long-term development. Learners collect good evidence from the workplace for key skills assessment.

23. Retention and achievement rates are poor on all training programmes. Over the last three years, only 52 per cent of learners have achieved the qualifications on their individual learning plans. No advanced modern apprentices have completed their apprenticeship framework or gained an NVQ at level 3. Only 28 per cent have achieved an NVQ at level 2. Similarly, over the last three years, no foundation modern apprentices have completed their apprenticeship framework or gained an NVQ at level 2. The achievement rate for NVQ trainees declined from 53 per cent in 1998-99 to 43 per cent in 1999-2000 with no qualifications being achieved in 2000-01. Some NVQs have been submitted to awarding bodies but these have not been included in the performance statistics because the certificates had not been received at inspection.

24. Integration of key skills training with the modern apprenticeship programme is inadequate, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners attend college for their key skills training and assessment. They are assessed through off-the-job assignments and exercises rather than in the workplace. Employers and workplace supervisors do not fully understand the key skills requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. They are unable to help learners collect work-based evidence and do not understand the need for learners to achieve key skills to complete their apprenticeship framework.

25. Initial assessment of learners' individual learning needs is not used to provide effective individual learner support. Detailed results of the initial assessment are not passed to the vocational trainers. The vocational trainers subsequently identify additional support needs during the vocational training. Vocational trainers are not, however, trained to assess or provide additional learner support. There is no system to monitor the provision of this additional learner support.

26. Jobsearch is poor for those learners not already in employment. There is no

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systematic or planned training to help learners gain employment, although Metropolitan Training is contractually required to provide it. Resources, such as assistance with writing curriculum vitae, are available, but are not promoted well to all learners. Many learners do not progress to more advanced training when they have completed their individual learning plans.

27. Individual learning plans are maintained as up-to-date working documents, but lack detail on how decisions about training are made. There are a number of partners involved in the training provision, but at no time do they all meet together. Metropolitan Training acts as a link between them, but this process is not effective.

Good Practice

An employer has obtained sponsorship from a major supplier to provide an awards ceremony to publicise the achievements of its learners.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 5**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	109	5

28. Metropolitan Training has 109 learners in business administration. Seventy-one are foundation modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 2. Twenty-four of these are employed and the rest are in work placements. Twenty-five learners are advanced modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 3. All of these learners are employed. Thirteen learners are on other work-based training programmes and are working towards an NVQ at level 2. Twelve of these learners are employed. Most of the learners who are not employed are given work placements in departments of Wigan Council. Learners in work placements attend the training centre one day each week for off-the-job training. Some employed learners also attend off-the-job training for a half or full day each week. All other training is carried out on the job by workplace supervisors. Learners are recruited either directly by the council or through the careers service. Metropolitan Training has one part-time and seven full-time staff members involved in the business administration training programmes. They give guidance and support to the learners at the training centre, visit workplaces to observe learners at work and carry out assessments and progress reviews. A significant number of learners in work placements gain permanent employment while in training.

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			67		59		59		0	
Still in training			2	3	6	10	33	56	0	0
FMA framework completed			11	16	14	24	1	2	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			52	78	27	46	5	8	0	0
Left without completing the framework			54	81	39	66	25	42	0	0

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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		20		16		0	
Still in training			2	15	6	30	6	38	0	0
AMA framework completed			1	8	3	15	1	6	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			8	62	4	20	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			6	46	7	35	2	12	0	0
Left without completing the framework			10	77	11	55	9	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			4		17		13		0	
Still in training			0	0	2	12	3	23	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			0	0	4	24	2	15	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			4	100	11	65	8	62	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	25	1	6	2	15	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	4	24	1	8	0	0

STRENGTHS

- thorough initial assessment and induction process

WEAKNESSES

- poor off-the-job training
- poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient workplace assessment
- inadequate key skills training
- poor internal verification
- some inappropriate jobs for learners working towards NVQs at level 3

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer target-setting at progress reviews
- more involvement of workplace supervisors in progress reviews

29. There is a thorough initial assessment and induction process. Learners receive a good explanation about their rights and responsibilities, health and safety, equal opportunities and appeals procedures. There is also a key skills assessment and the accreditation of prior learning. Assessments are marked by the training and employment officer and the results are discussed with the learners. Learners can join the training programme at any time throughout the year. Recruitment is followed by a thorough induction to the workplace and to the training programme and its requirements. All learners receive a comprehensive induction booklet and tutors use a checklist to ensure all relevant information is provided at induction.

30. Training and employment officers visit learners in the workplace, at least once every six weeks, to carry out progress reviews. Records of progress reviews are copied and given to all parties involved. Actions are identified but some targets set are not clear. Some workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the progress reviews.

31. Off-the-job training is poor. At the start of training programme, the training and employment officer and the workplace supervisor identify learners' on-the-job training needs and record how these will be met. Although the requirements of the qualification are explained and learners have access to library information and assistance from the trainers, they receive very little teaching of theory. There is little or no variety in the off-the-job training. In the training sessions, learners routinely work through task sheets, usually on their own. There is also a lack of resources in the training room, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report.

32. Retention and achievement rates are poor. A high proportion of learners leave before completing the qualifications in their individual learning plans. In 2000-01, 42 per cent of foundation modern apprentices and 56 per cent of advanced modern apprentices left without completing their framework. In the last two years, over 60 per cent of NVQ trainees left without completing their individual learning plans. Achievement rates are low. In 2000-01, only 2 per cent of foundation modern apprentices and only 6 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved their modern apprenticeship framework. In the three years from 1998 to 2001, only 12 per cent of learners achieved their framework and 13 per cent of NVQ trainees completed their individual learning plans.

33. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Training and employment officers do not always use their regular visits to carry out workplace assessments. Some departments of the council have qualified assessors available, but these are not used.

34. Some learners are unable to complete all the qualifications in their apprenticeship

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framework because they do not have key skills training. In recent months, all new learners have carried out tasks which will produce evidence for key skills. The teaching and assessment of key skills, however, are not an integral part of the training programme for all learners. There is no specific teaching of key skills, as Metropolitan Training does not have staff who are sufficiently qualified to do this. Some learners and employers do not fully understand the key skills requirements.

35. There is no strategy for the internal verification of learners' work. Portfolios of evidence are normally put forward for verification when they are complete. Metropolitan Training recognises that this is not satisfactory and has started a process of ongoing internal verification. Some learners do not complete full units one at a time. When their portfolios are verified, internal verifiers make general comments on the whole portfolio, rather than the individual units. Verbal feedback is given to the learners but they do not routinely receive the written proof of the internal verifier's comments. There is no system to observe assessment practice. In September 2000, the external verifier requested that key skills training should be integrated with the NVQ, but this has only just begun. Although feedback and discussion takes place with assessors and internal verifiers following external verification visits, there are no regular meetings for this team.

36. Some learners are employed in job roles which do not allow them to gather suitable evidence for the level 3 NVQ in administration. Although their jobs include varied administrative duties and responsibilities, they do not provide them with the supervisory experience appropriate to this level of NVQ.

Poor Practice

One learner did not have an initial assessment, but identified his own need for additional support with number skills. The provider was not able to offer this support and the learner enrolled at a local further education college to attend a GCSE mathematics course.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	16	5

37. There are 16 learners on work-based training programmes in retailing, customer service and transportation. Nine learners are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in customer service. Seven learners are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in retail operations. Six learners are modern apprentices and the rest are NVQ trainees. Most learners are recruited through the local careers service, or from other training programmes provided by Metropolitan Training. Retail off-the-job training is carried out at the training centre in Leigh, and the customer service off-the-job training at the training centre in Wigan. Most training, however, is carried out in the workplace. Eight learners are employed and eight are on work placements with local businesses. For retail learners, work placements range from toyshops to house and homeware stores. Wigan Council employs six of the customer service learners, and the remainder are placed in various customer service environments. For the retailing training programme, one member of staff is the assessor and one is the internal verifier. A different member of staff visits learners in the workplace to carry out their progress reviews. There are two assessors and one internal verifier for the customer service training programme.

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			6		5		5		0	
Still in training			2	33	1	20	1	20	0	0
FMA framework completed			0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	33	1	20	1	20	0	0
Left without completing the framework			2	33	2	40	3	60	0	0

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NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			5		7		25		0	
Still in training			1	20	1	14	5	20	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			0	0	0	0	2	8	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			4	80	6	86	18	72	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	20	1	14	2	8	0	0

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive off-the-job training in retailing
- good access to training programmes

WEAKNESSES

- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- no scheme approval for the retail NVQ
- low rates of achievement and retention
- lack of target-setting for learners
- poor internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more stimulating learning materials

38. Off-the-job training is good for those learners on the retailing training programmes. It includes coverage of the relevant legislation, customer service and harassment at work. This information is directly relevant to the requirements of the NVQ and is used in learners' portfolios of evidence. Learners are encouraged to relate what they learn to the NVQ standards. Off-the-job training is also offered to learners on customer service training programmes on a day-release basis, but does not take sufficient account of what can be learned and assessed in the workplace.

39. Learners are able to start the training programme at any time throughout the year.

Some learners have started on the training programme within two or three days of being interviewed and were then placed in a local business within the next week. All learners are given an induction when they attend the training centre for the first time. Over the last year all new learners have also had a basic skills assessment to identify any additional learning support needs. This is provided as part of the group training sessions or on an individual basis.

40. Co-ordination of the on- and off-the-job training is poor. Metropolitan Training does not make employers aware of either the schedule or content of the off-the-job training. Training sessions are not adapted to meet specific learner or employer needs. Evaluation is not sought from employers about the effect these sessions have on learners' performance in the workplace.

41. Metropolitan Training does not have approval from the awarding body to provide the retail NVQ, although some retail learners have been on this training programme for almost a year. No assessments have taken place and the learners have been unable to receive credit for any achievement. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

42. Retention and achievement rates are low. Over the past three years, few learners have completed their individual learning plans. For example, only two NVQ trainees achieved all the targets on their individual learning plans during 2000-01. Retention rates are low for the NVQ training programme, with only 14 per cent of learners still in training in 1999-2000 and 28 per cent in 2000-01. Over the past three years, 44 per cent of modern apprentices have left the programme without any qualifications.

43. Target-setting is poor, both during learners' progress reviews and on their individual learning plans. Individual learning plans specify only one final achievement date and do not identify any progression through the qualification.

44. Internal verification is poor and that which does take place is not planned. Records of internal verification have not been retained at the training centre but are kept in learners' portfolios of evidence. Copies are not given to the assessor. There is no internal verification strategy, although this is discussed during the staff meetings. No internal verification has taken place on the retail training programme. Assessment in customer service takes place by observation in the workplace and by the assessment of portfolio evidence during the weekly off-the-job training. The assessment and evidence in learners' portfolios is satisfactory.

45. The learning packs given to learners during induction are comprehensive but their presentation is poor and does not encourage learners to use them. Training resources in customer service, though satisfactory, often include only text and lack colour and graphics.

Poor Practice

One learner, who left the training programme early with no qualifications, had never been visited by his assessor despite having been on the training programme for seven months.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	43	3

46. There are 43 learners working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Three are advanced modern apprentices, 38 are foundation modern apprentices and two are on other work-based training programmes. Metropolitan Training subcontracts the off-the-job training to two local colleges. It recruits learners from direct application, by referral from the careers service or from employers. Learners are encouraged to find suitable employment, or a work placement, in a salon before joining the training programme. Metropolitan Training helps with this when necessary. Learners are recruited after an initial interview with the employer or work-placement provider and a college tutor. Learners may join the training programme at any time throughout the year. Learners receive an induction at the college and a separate induction to the workplace. All learners attend the college for one day each week for their off-the-job training. This consists of both theory and practical work. Key skills training is also provided by the college. The remainder of the learners' time is spent in employment or in work placements, where they receive on-the-job training. Most learners are employed. A training and employment officer visits learners in their salons every six weeks to conduct progress reviews and carry out work-based assessment.

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			19		27		20		0	
Still in training			8	42	7	26	12	60	0	0
FMA framework completed			2	11	10	37	6	30	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			6	32	5	19	12	60	0	0
Left without completing the framework			9	47	10	37	2	10	0	0

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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			16		5		34		0	
Still in training			4	25	2	40	15	44	0	0
AMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	12	0	0	15	44	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			2	12	0	0	1	3	0	0
Left without completing the framework			12	75	3	60	19	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			1		4		9		0	
Still in training			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			1	100	2	50	4	44	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			0	0	2	50	5	56	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			1	100	1	25	4	44	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	1	25	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good learner support
- excellent training resources
- well-structured off-the-job training
- thorough internal verification
- frequent and detailed progress reviews

WEAKNESSES

- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient work-based assessment
- low achievement and retention rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more specific NVQ targets in progress reviews.

47. Additional learner support is good. There is an initial assessment of basic skills at the college. Learners who require additional support are interviewed by a specialist tutor and an action plan is drawn up. Additional support includes individual tuition in basic and key skills and the provision of a learning support officer who attends group sessions to observe and provide help. The training and employment officer, college tutors and employers provide good pastoral support for learners. For example, learners have been assisted to find alternative off-the-job training arrangements and salon placements, where this has been necessary.

48. Resources for off-the-job training are excellent. The local college, which provides the training for most of the learners, has modern hairdressing and beauty therapy salons, equipped to a very high commercial standard. Learners have access to modern equipment and hairdressing products. Learners work on clients according to their own individual learning needs. Learners also work on reception, where the relevant NVQ units can be assessed. Separate training rooms and a laboratory are used for theory training and a large information technology suite is available for key skills tuition. Learners can also gain additional qualifications such as mens' haircutting, manicure, aromatherapy and specialist manufacturers' colouring and selling techniques. Learners also participate in national competitions. Three learners are following NVQs in both hairdressing and beauty therapy.

49. Off-the-job training is well structured and recorded, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The training comprises theory, key skills and practical sessions. Study packs are used to enable learners to study on their own. These packs also help those learners joining the training programme at different times. Learners are made aware of the NVQ requirements and training and assessment is introduced at an early stage in the training programmes. A qualified hairdressing trainer provides key skills training and assessment in communication, information technology and the application of number, with the use of work-related assignments. A second tutor provides additional learning support as required. Written feedback is provided to learners following the assessment of learners' assignment and project work.

50. Assessments, which frequently occur during the practical training sessions, are well planned. Learners are encouraged to provide their own models, especially for assessment in the level 3 NVQ and beauty therapy programmes. Learners complete a weekly log of their activities and the assessor provides guidance on assessment. The training and employment officer visits the college regularly to liaise with the college tutors and check learners' progress. Learners receive a copy of their unit-by-unit progress sheets every three weeks. In addition, the college tutors conduct a twice-yearly progress review with each learner.

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51. Internal verification is thorough. A schedule includes the verification of the assessor's performance and the portfolios of evidence. It includes the full range of assessment methods and covers all learners and units. Internal verifiers observe training sessions and interview learners throughout the training programme. Assessors are provided with verbal and written feedback and any issues are raised at assessor meetings.

52. Progress reviews are good. The training and employment officer visits learners in their salons at least every six weeks to conduct progress reviews. These cover all aspects of the training programme, including pastoral issues and progress in both the on- and off-the-job training. An action plan is agreed between the employment officer and learner. Progress on the action plan is discussed at the following progress review. All aspects of the progress review are recorded well and a copy is given to learners and employers. Employers also provide comments on learners' progress during the reviews. Employers are kept informed about learners' overall progress and about any further training needs. There is a lack of detailed reference to the completion of specific NVQ units during progress reviews.

53. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Employers are unaware of the off-the-job training programme at the college. Employers are unable to plan on-the-job training to complement the off-the-job training programme effectively. Most salons provide satisfactory on-the-job training. This ranges from planned and supervised training sessions based on learners' individual needs to more general support for those learners practising on clients.

54. There is insufficient work-based assessment. Only two learners are assessed in the workplace. The other learners are unable to provide evidence of their competences through their everyday work. Employers do not sufficiently record evidence of learners' achievements. No salon owners are training to be work-based assessors even though Metropolitan Training has encouraged them to do so. The training and employment officer, although a qualified hairdressing assessor, does not have time to conduct work-based assessments, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Employers and learners are frustrated by the lack of work-based assessment, particularly when they are working competently on clients.

55. Achievement rates are poor. Over the last three years, no advanced modern apprentices and only 27 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices, have achieved their full framework. Fifty per cent of NVQ trainees have completed their individual learning plans. Retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme have improved and are now satisfactory but remain low on the other training programmes.

Good Practice

Metropolitan Training provides all learners with a hairdressing kit enabling them to participate fully in practical learning without incurring any additional expense.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	26	4

56. There are 26 learners on work-based training programmes in health, social care and public services. There are 11 foundation modern apprentices and 15 learners on other work-based training programmes. Nineteen learners are working towards NVQs in care, six in playwork and one in dental nursing. All learners are either on work placements or are employed in residential and nursing homes, day centres or local leisure service departments. Learners are recruited by referral from the careers service or by direct contact with employers. Metropolitan Training staff provide induction programmes in the workplace or at the training centre. Employers also provide workplace inductions for learners. Training and assessment is carried out in the workplace by the trainers and assessors. There are also two work-based assessors. Metropolitan Training contracts with external trainers to provide some of the off-the-job training. This takes place for one day every two weeks, for care learners. Internal verification for this training programme is carried out by provider staff. Training, assessment and internal verification for the playwork training programme is subcontracted to a local provider. Playwork learners attend a combination of on- and off-the-job training. Provider staff conduct progress reviews in the workplace.

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		11		3		0	
Still in training			0	0	4	36	2	67	0	0
FMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	3	27	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100	7	64	1	33	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			16		6					
Still in training			1	6	0	0				
AMA framework completed			0	0	0	0				
NVQ level 2 completed			2	12	1	17				
NVQ level 3 completed			1	6	0	0				
Left without completing the framework			15	94	6	100				

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			22		11		27		0	
Still in training			1	5	1	9	10	37	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			6	27	1	9	3	11	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			15	68	9	82	14	52	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	1	9	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			6	27	1	9	3	11	0	0

STRENGTHS

- well-structured off-the-job training
- good range of work placements

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement and retention rates
- no key skills training
- inadequate additional learner support
- slow learner progress on all training programmes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better information about off-the-job training for employers

57. Off-the-job training is well structured with a well-planned programme of one-day workshops. Trainers have designed clear learning objectives, with each workshop providing good coverage of the requirements for units of the care NVQs. Extensive reference is made to changes in legislation, which will influence care practices in the workplace. Trainers use a variety of resources including videos, overhead projectors, handouts and flipcharts to engage learners fully in the training activities. Good care practices are discussed throughout the workshops. The up-to-date training materials include relevant trade journals. Learners gave many examples of ways in which they have improved their practice as a result of attending the workshops.

58. Work placements provide a wide variety of on-the-job training, covering key areas including orientation within the workplace, environmental hygiene and infection control. Mentors support and train learners in the workplace to enable them to provide a high standard of care for residents. Training in practical skills includes bed-making, resident cleanliness and nutritional needs, communication and basic first aid. Playwork learners also receive extensive on-the-job training, including moving and handling, first aid, fire safety and a wide range of play-based training workshops.

59. Achievement and retention rates are poor. Achievement of objectives in individual learning plans is poor. Since 1998, only 17 per cent of NVQ trainees have completed their individual learning plans and 63 per cent of learners have left their training programmes early, without any achievements. No learners have completed their full framework. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme was discontinued in 2000. Since the programme began in 1998, 77 per cent of advanced modern apprentices left without any achievements. Over the last three years, only 20 per cent of foundation modern apprentices have achieved their NVQ at level 2. Forty per cent of foundation modern apprentices have left the training programme early without achieving any qualifications.

60. Key skills have not yet been introduced into the apprenticeship programmes. An initial assessment of key skills has been carried out but there is no planned key skills training. Learners have a poor understanding of key skills requirements. Trainers and assessors are not qualified or experienced to teach or assess key skills.

61. Additional learning support is inadequate. Although learners have carried out an initial assessment, those identified as requiring additional learning support have not received it. Some learners who require additional support for literacy have struggled to produce written evidence for their NVQs.

62. Overall, learner progress is slow. Assessment in the workplace is infrequent and often starts too late in the training programme. Learners' performance in the workplace

is not used as evidence for their theoretical knowledge. Staff do not set sufficiently demanding targets to ensure learners make suitable progress towards their qualification. Learners often have to request staff to carry out assessments.

63. Employers participate in the six-weekly progress reviews with learners and assessors, but do not receive written copies of the review documents or schedules of off-the-job training. The provider has made arrangements for employers to receive copies of the reviews in future.

Poor Practice

One learner completed her NVQ in June 2000 but has not received her certificate. Her portfolio of evidence has only recently been externally verified as the subcontractor had her file for over 12 months.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

64. Wigan Council's business regeneration panel oversees the work of Metropolitan Training and receives monthly reports on its operations. The senior managers of Metropolitan Training comprise the manager, the quality assurance co-ordinator, the finance and administration co-ordinator, the marketing co-ordinator and the co-ordinator from one of the training centres. Five senior training and employment officers are responsible for the occupational areas. Metropolitan Training achieved Investor in People status in 1997 and was re-accredited in 2000. It has an equal opportunities policy and a policy and procedures for quality assurance. Self-assessment has been carried out since 1998 and Metropolitan Training produced its fourth self-assessment report in April 2001.

STRENGTHS

- good strategic planning
- responsiveness to local training needs
- good internal communications
- effective staff review process
- comprehensive and well-audited quality assurance procedures
- good use of feedback from learners and employers

WEAKNESSES

- poor planning within occupational areas
- inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- no strategy to rectify low retention and achievement rates
- lack of targets for retention and achievement rates
- insufficient staff training in equal opportunities
- poor access to some accommodation for learners with mobility difficulties
- insufficient use of management information
- insufficient evaluation of training
- insufficient self-assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- updating of the equal opportunities policy
- more involvement by staff in self-assessment

65. Strategic planning is good. The annual business plan is agreed by the senior managers and contains a review of the previous year's performance and the strategic priorities for the current year. It includes seven business objectives, each accompanied by an action plan for its implementation. Achievement of the action plan is monitored at

the monthly meeting of training co-ordinators.

66. The organisation provides training according to the needs of the local community. In some occupational areas, such as floristry and meat processing, it is the only training provider in the area. Managers fully understand the provider's mission, as a part of the local authority, to provide training for all sections of the community. When the organisation cannot meet the demand for a particular type of training, it subcontracts the work to another provider. Extensive use is made of local further education colleges. Marketing staff provide a useful service in finding and approving new work placements and expanding the provision to meet anticipated demand.

67. Internal communications are good. A well-established meetings' schedule allows effective sharing of information and consultation between staff. All members of staff receive the minutes of the monthly senior managers' meetings. Any important issues arising from the minutes are discussed at the monthly team meetings. General staff meetings are held in September and March. All staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work to a clear management framework.

68. Line managers conduct an annual review with all their staff. Staff report that they find the reviews helpful in identifying their own individual learning needs. Following a review, an individual learning plan is drawn up in line with the business plan. Staff speak highly of the availability of training. The outcomes of the review and any resulting training are followed up at a further interview after six months.

69. Planning is weak in the occupational areas. There are no development plans or budgets, to enable staff in each area to set priorities for the purchase of resources. In many cases, staff respond to circumstances as they arise, but conduct little forward planning. For example, there has been insufficient preparation for the introduction of new standards in business administration and poor co-ordination of training in many areas.

70. There is inadequate monitoring of the work of subcontractors. Poor practice is not identified for long periods of time. In some cases, the information received from subcontractors on learners' progress is insufficiently frequent or thorough. The provider has not established detailed agreements setting out subcontractors' responsibilities for training and the means by which these will be monitored.

71. There are no strategies to rectify the poor retention and achievement rates. No targets have been set for the occupational areas or for the organisation as a whole. Managers have not monitored performance to identify trends or areas for improvement. A set of performance indicators, including those for learners' achievements, have recently been agreed, but are not yet in use.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

72. Metropolitan Training has adopted the equal opportunities policy of Wigan Council, but has not adapted it to meet the requirements of work-based training. The policy is widely publicised and displayed. It does not, however, include the latest legislation. The provider requires all employers providing work-based training, to have an equal opportunities policy. The learner handbook includes a comprehensive list of learners' rights and responsibilities, including the complaints procedures.

73. The provider has an equal opportunities plan stating that equal opportunities will be monitored twice a year through questionnaires to employers and learners. The questionnaires are thoroughly analysed and followed up, although the timescale has not been adhered to. In a separate questionnaire, learners are asked whether the provider has abided by its equal opportunities policy. Over 90 per cent of learners report that it has. The remaining cases are individually followed up by managers. There is a procedure for staff to follow in the case of bullying and harassment. Instances of discrimination and harassment are dealt with effectively.

74. The provider has recently attempted to improve learners' awareness of equal opportunities by including a detailed set of related questions in each progress review. The responses are analysed and followed up by managers. Despite this, learners' awareness of equal opportunities is still poor in some occupational areas. There has been little action to promote equality of opportunity by tackling gender stereotyping or attracting under-represented groups to the training programmes. There are some inappropriate displays on workplace walls. Although managers are required to ensure that the equal opportunities training needs of staff are reviewed annually, staff have not received any recent equal opportunities training.

75. An audit has been carried out of the accessibility of premises and resources to those with mobility difficulties. It shows that wheelchair access is poor in some areas and that there is no provision of equipment for those with visual and hearing difficulties.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

76. There is a comprehensive quality assurance policy and procedures covering all aspects of the training. These include approval of work placements, recruitment and monitoring of learners, staffing and training and assessment. The procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. Most procedures are accompanied by a flow chart, which is clear and easy to follow. A quality assurance officer systematically audits implementation of procedures. Reports of the audits are produced regularly and support given to staff to rectify areas of weakness.

77. Surveys of learners are routinely carried out when they leave the training programme. Periodic surveys of employers are also carried out. Response rates are good and results of these surveys are collated and reports produced. The quality assurance manager reads all survey responses. Where any issues give cause for concern, these are quickly followed up. Prompt action is taken to rectify any issues raised. For example, improvements were made to canteen facilities at one training centre as a result of feedback from learners. There are, however, no ongoing surveys of learners while they are on the training programme.

78. Management information is poor. The database used is inflexible and data are not routinely produced to monitor either learner performance or the training. The only data routinely produced are monthly reports on numbers of starts and leavers. There is no routine evaluation of retention or achievement rates. There is no overall procedure for monitoring learners' progress, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

79. There is insufficient evaluation of the training and no systematic observation of training provided by either Metropolitan Training or the subcontractors. There is little sharing of good practice in training and assessment across occupational areas. Performance in each occupational area is not evaluated. As a result, there is no comparison of the retention and achievement rates or the training provided in each occupational area. Internal verification is weak in most areas. There is no overall internal verification policy and no systematic evaluation of assessment across the organisation.

80. Metropolitan Training produced its fourth self-assessment report for the inspection. Managers in each area were responsible for writing sections of the report. Not all staff were involved in its preparation and some have not seen the complete document. Self-assessment is not sufficiently self-critical and does not comprehensively cover all aspects of the provision. For example, some areas of learning were not included and others, notably land-based provision, did not cover all the training programmes offered. The key weakness of poor retention and achievement rates in most areas, was not recognised. Not all occupational areas produced an action plan. There is no procedure for monitoring progress towards achievement of action plan targets by learners.

Poor Practice

One learner registered with a subcontractor on NVQ at level 2 in playwork in July 2000 but did not receive a copy of the standards until six months later. Having attended off-the-job training for one day each week and been told to find their own work-based assessor, the learner was not assessed at all during the past year. The learner has since re-enrolled on a foundation modern apprenticeship programme in August 2001.