

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Rotherham MBC (Rotherham Managing Agency) Reinspection**

**19 June 2003**



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. 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 **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

Rotherham Managing Agency is part of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's social inclusion unit. It provides work-based training to 300 young people in construction, and engineering, technology and manufacturing, and business administration, information and communications technology, and hospitality, and early years care and education. It also provides foundation programmes. In addition, at the time of the original inspection, it offered land-based training and training in hairdressing and beauty therapy, and retailing and customer services. These programmes have now been withdrawn.

### Overall judgement

At the original inspection, inspectors judged that with the exception of Life Skills programmes, the quality of training was unsatisfactory. Leadership and management were also unsatisfactory as was quality assurance. The arrangements for equal opportunities were satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were satisfactory or better.

### Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	3	3
Quality assurance	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Construction</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

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	Original	Reinspection
<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Hospitality, sport, leisure &amp; travel</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	2

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Foundation programmes</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Life Skills	3	3

## ROTHERHAM MBC (ROTHERHAM MANAGING AGENCY) REINSPECTION

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### KEY STRENGTHS

- particularly effective support for learners
- clear strategic direction
- effective use of management information system in decision-making
- wide range of learning and assessment resources
- comprehensive initial assessment

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- some slow progress
- lack of challenge in some individual targets
- insufficient monitoring of subcontracted training
- insufficient monitoring of effectiveness of additional support

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better management of learners' progress reviews
- better co-ordination of information on learners' progress

## THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Council (Rotherham Managing Agency) (RMA) was carried out in two stages over a total of 30 days between April and June 2003. RMA had prepared a revised self-assessment report in July 2002. Inspectors visited 25 workplaces and interviewed 14 employers or supervisors. They interviewed 50 learners and examined 37 portfolios and 47 individual learning plans. Inspectors observed and graded six learning sessions.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	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
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Information & communications technology	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- clear strategic direction
- effective use of management information system in decision-making
- good management of the wide range of support for learners

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient evaluation of the support provided for learners with additional needs
- insufficient monitoring of subcontracted training

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better co-ordination of information on learners' progress
- better management of learners' progress reviews

2. Since the original inspection, RMA has experienced considerable change. The management structure has been substantially reorganised and new, detailed job descriptions have been issued to all staff. The general manager and three training managers are supported by a finance manager, a management information manager, a quality auditor and a health and safety officer. One training manager is responsible for learners' support services. RMA is a member of a consortium which has been awarded a contract for entry to employment (E2E) training. It is not the lead provider for the contract, and this will affect the foundation programmes. A training trust is being developed in Rotherham to manage all work-based learning in the town, and the borough council intends to free RMA from council control by January 2004. RMA is housed at several temporary sites while new premises are commissioned.

3. All the aspects of leadership and management which were weaknesses at the original inspection have been dealt with satisfactorily, and many have now become significant strengths. A recent audit has confirmed RMA's accreditation with the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

4. RMA now has a clear strategic view. In the face of major impending changes, the organisation is now fully aware of its options and has appropriate plans to deal with the strategic development needs. There is a coherent meetings structure which ensures that all staff are aware of the options and are well informed of the implications for them, the learners and RMA. The development plan is effective, and includes strategies to support

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RMA during the changes. Many of its targets have been met. For example, RMA now has effective financial control and resource allocation systems.

5. There is now a very effective management information system that is used in management decision-making. Accurate data are held on all learners, and relevant information is readily available. Detailed weekly reports clearly identify learners who are making slow progress. Team leaders receive copies of the reports and use them at team meetings to plan action. Reports are also used by the management team to track the success of staff in improving learners' progress. Management and financial information has been used to review the range of programmes on offer to learners. Some programmes have now been discontinued.

6. Learners at RMA receive well-managed support from all staff. Approximately 30 per cent of the learners have identified additional learning and social needs. All learners have easy access to a counselling team. Staff have been trained to act as mentors to learners. There is a clear strategy to support learners who have numeracy and literacy needs. An identified member of staff co-ordinates the support, offering materials and help to occupational teams. A key skills co-ordinator has been appointed and is already bringing about an improvement in the achievement rate for key skills qualifications.

7. There is no formal system to evaluate the support available in the different occupational areas. Staff in all teams are clear about the effectiveness of the support and they track learners' attendance at support sessions. They can identify many learners whose progress has been improved as a result of the support offered. Senior managers do not have an overview of whether the support arrangements represent good value for money, or whether the support staff are effective.

8. Since the original inspection, RMA has reviewed and developed its system and paperwork for learners' progress reviews. Clear attention is given to checking health and safety and equal opportunities. Progress review dates are monitored and action taken to deal with delays. Review forms are monitored by the quality assurance auditor. However, not all review documents include detailed targets and clear time limits. Some are poorly completed, and the equal opportunity forms are only given superficial attention.

9. A number of systems ensure careful monitoring of learners' progress. These cover all the major elements of the learners' programmes, including the national vocational qualification (NVQ), key skills and assessments. All occupational staff have a clear picture of the progress of their learners, but there is no mechanism that effectively links all the elements and is readily available to all staff and learners.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 3**

10. The original inspection identified the lack of a strategic approach to equality of opportunity as a weakness. This has now been remedied. There is a clear strategic lead on equal opportunities that supports RMA's commitment to inclusivity. RMA aims to meet the diverse needs of all its learners. Responsibility for the development and implementation of equality of opportunity lies with the senior manager for learner support services. There is now a range of equal opportunities policies and procedures including, those for dealing with bullying and harassment, and complaints and grievances. Policies reflect recent legislation and are regularly reviewed to ensure full compliance.

11. Staff and learners have good training in equal opportunities in their induction programmes. Learners have equality of opportunity reinforced in training sessions. Their understanding is checked at progress reviews although the checking varies in thoroughness between occupational areas.

12. Learners are well supported by RMA and this is reinforced by very effective links with outside agencies. RMA offers counselling and mentoring services to learners. Every effort is made to help learners to deal with problems that may be a barrier to their progress.

13. All starters, early leavers and learners gaining qualifications are now monitored for equal opportunities purposes. RMA recognises, and is trying to deal with, the gender imbalance on some programmes, for example, there are few women in engineering and men on early years programmes.

14. RMA has introduced effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour and harassment. The complaints and grievance procedures are known to all. There is evidence of the procedures being used and effective action being taken.

15. The progress review process is used to monitor the promotion of equal opportunities by employers. The effectiveness of this varies between occupational areas. The data collected are collated but have not yet been analysed or evaluated in detail.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 3

16. Since the original inspection, all quality assurance procedures have been reviewed and updated. There is much tighter control of subcontractors, with regular formal and informal meetings and contacts. RMA now has a detailed quality assurance manual that covers all aspects of the training and experience of learners, from their first contact with RMA to the end of their programme. There are clear policies, procedures and work instructions. A quality assurance auditor has been appointed and there is now a high level of support for teams to help them apply systems consistently. The quality assurance auditor holds a teaching qualification. He has a timetable for auditing all aspects of the provision and has carried out first audits of all occupational areas. He also carries out lesson observations. There is evidence of action-planning and follow-up visits in some areas, but it is too early to see the full impact of the system. There is some inconsistency in the use of the learners' progress review system that has not yet been dealt with.

17. There is a clear system for monitoring subcontracted provision. The number of subcontractors has been reduced since the original inspection. Regular formal and informal contact between RMA and the subcontractors means that most issues affecting learners are dealt with quickly. There is evidence of very frequent informal discussions about the progress of specific learners. RMA holds copies of reports by external verifiers and inspectors on its subcontractors, but does not monitor the quality of their training itself.

18. There is a clear and effective internal verification system that covers all occupational areas. The overall quality assurance is monitored by the quality assurance auditor. Learners are interviewed as part of the internal verification system. Information is shared between teams through the senior training managers who are lead internal verifiers for their respective areas. They monitor the external verifiers' reports and ensure appropriate action is taken.

19. There has been limited collection of feedback from learners and employers. A range of methods have been tried, but there has been little systematic analysis of the results. RMA is, however, very responsive to issues that are identified and takes action to deal with them as soon as possible.

20. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. The most recent report was produced in July 2002. The resulting development plan was very detailed, and has been reviewed and updated frequently. All the teams work to the development plan, and there is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the plan in all occupational areas.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	63	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- particularly effective support for learners
- improving retention rates

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of work-based evidence
- weak target-setting in reviews

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of learners' progress
- better monitoring of basic skills support

21. RMA has experienced serious difficulties in recruiting staff to the construction department, and a subcontractor now carries out all the vocational training and assessment. Two of the strengths at the original inspection related to RMA's own provision and are no longer relevant.

22. Support for learners is particularly effective and has further improved since the original inspection. Staff demonstrate excellent understanding of individual learners' needs. Since the original inspection, RMA's staff have begun to offer a counselling service for learners. Learners are able to discuss personal issues in complete confidence. RMA has also introduced a mentoring service for learners who lack self-confidence and who require significant personal development. RMA's training co-ordinator responds effectively to learners' concerns about their on-the-job training and college attendance. There is regular communication between RMA and its subcontractor, particularly to deal with attendance problems. Learners' concerns are recorded and monitored to ensure a satisfactory conclusion. Learners receive good support from their employers, who are sympathetic to their training and personal needs. RMA has encouraged good working relationships with employers and they work closely together to ensure the welfare of learners. Learners work under close supervision, and

are given tasks which enable them to practise their skills and gain confidence. They enjoy their work placements and speak highly of their employers.

23. Retention rates have improved since the original inspection, when between 70 and 90 per cent of learners left the programme early or without a qualification. All the 16 advanced modern apprentices recruited since 2001-02 have either reached the end of their programme or are still in learning. The proportion of foundation modern apprentices remaining in learning was only 12 per cent in 1999-2000 and 15 per cent in 2000-01. In 2001-02 and 2002-03 the proportions have improved to 26 and 40 per cent respectively. It is too early to make any judgements on improvements in achievement rates.

24. Learners now receive an initial assessment both for basic and key skills. If required, they also take a key skills diagnostic assessment to establish whether they need additional support. Support sessions are readily available. The subcontractor now provides basic skills support where a need is identified. Individual learning plans are now satisfactory. They contain all the appropriate information including learners' support arrangements. Individual learning plans are referred to during progress reviews and are kept up to date.

25. The arrangements for the teaching of background knowledge are now satisfactory. Workbooks are used to give learners job-related knowledge. All learners expressed satisfaction with this method of learning, although some were still dissatisfied with the balance between background knowledge and practical sessions. Learners' attendance is compatible with their needs. For example, modern apprentices are given an additional one and a half hours each week for key skills training. RMA now monitors programme planning more effectively through regular meetings with the subcontractor.

26. The subcontractor carries out assessment and verification. Internal verification is a continuous process and includes the observation of assessors and the verification of portfolios and other sources of evidence. Sampling plans cover a range of learners and NVQ units. There are regular standardisation meetings between assessors and the internal verifier.

27. There is still insufficient use of work-based evidence. Learners do not routinely collect witness statements, photographs or products of work, and some learners are unaware of the requirement to collect work-based evidence. The recently appointed training co-ordinator, who has extensive experience of on-site assessment and training initiatives, has begun detailed discussions with learners and employers to reinforce the importance of, and methods of collecting, diverse evidence. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this. Many employers are keen to assist learners, but do not have the necessary knowledge and understanding to effectively contribute to the collection of work-based evidence. RMA has provided employers with information on NVQs, but there has been insufficient follow-up to test and reinforce their understanding. Again, the training co-ordinator is beginning to remedy this. At progress reviews, planned activities in the workplace are recorded, but reviewers do not set sufficiently detailed

targets for the collection of evidence linked to these activities.

28. There is some weak target-setting during learners' progress reviews. A summary of the training carried out on- and off-the-job is recorded during reviews, but it is rarely linked to the NVQ or key skills standards. There is no clear progression from one review to the next in terms of actions agreed and followed up. Targets set do not always challenge and motivate learners or help them to make faster progress towards their qualification. Employers are not always involved in the review or the setting of targets. They sign the review document but do not discuss the learners' progress with both the training co-ordinator and the learner. The frequency and quality of reports from the subcontractor, which are used at the progress reviews, have improved since the original inspection. However they too lack sufficiently challenging targets for learners.

29. RMA relies heavily on information from individual tutors at the subcontractor to monitor learners' progress. The training co-ordinator has begun to compile a database to provide a comprehensive picture of learners' progress, but so far only a third of learners' details have been entered.

## Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	110	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- good on- and off-the-job training
- particularly effective support for learners

### WEAKNESSES

- some slow progress

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more co-ordination of information on learners' progress
- better monitoring of subcontracted training

30. Learners are effectively supported by their training officers. Training officers visit the workplace every six to 12 weeks to formally review learners' progress. They also visit informally and to carry out assessments. Since the original inspection, short-term targets and dates have been included in the formal progress reports. These are also recorded in action plans after informal support visits. Learners appreciate and value this frequent contact with the training officer. Most learners have work placements from very early in their programmes and their employers are closely involved in the training process. Training officers encourage learners to contact them for guidance and support. They arrange additional off-the-job training for some learners to help them with portfolio-building and the collection of key skills evidence. Learners now know what is expected of them, are producing a good standard of work and are on target to achieve their qualifications on time.

31. Learners produce a high standard of work in RMA's workshops. They work with a range of materials and perform various engineering operations to meet the standard required for their NVQ in performing engineering operations. Basic motor vehicle training is also good and enables learners to acquire valuable skills. In all workshops there is a relaxed atmosphere and good adherence to health and safety procedures which is conducive to an effective working environment. Learners gain good skills from workplaces offer a complete range of learning opportunities. The standard of learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Most are well indexed and some contain photographic



evidence.

32. There is still some slow progress towards completion of qualifications. One advanced modern apprentice from the 1996 intake, four from the 1998 intake and 13 from the 1999 intake are still in learning. Progress in key skills portfolio-building has been slow. Assignment projects have recently been produced for key skills in application of number and information technology (IT). Some learners have completed their first assignment, but in many cases progress has been slow. One learner who is working towards his NVQ at level 3 in production engineering has only produced two pieces of evidence in 12 months. However, progress has improved with the current intake of learners. Three of the four manufacturing learners at level 2 have completed 75 per cent of their portfolios within 10 months.

33. Since the original inspection, retention rates have shown signs of improvement. Twelve of the 17 advanced modern apprentices who started programmes in 2001-02 and all eight who started in 2002-03 are still in learning. The proportion of foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners still in learning is still low, but showing improvement. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices was 8 per cent in 2000-01 and 21 per cent in 2001-02. Of the learners who started programmes in 2002-03, 37 per cent of foundation modern apprentices and 58 per cent of NVQ learners are still in learning after 10 months.

34. All learners now have a detailed initial assessment of their basic and key skills. Many of the learners on programmes in performing manufacturing operations have been identified as requiring additional support in numeracy and literacy. This is given individually in the workplace and includes help in portfolio-building. RMA does not monitor the uptake of this support or its effect on learners' performance.

35. The internal verification of engineering training is thorough and is monitored by the senior manager. In key skills, however, internal verification had missed some issues. These were identified by the external verifier and dealt with promptly.

36. RMA's staff visit the motor vehicle subcontractor frequently to review training and learners' progress. There are effective quality assurance procedures, which include service level agreements. RMA's staff do not, however, observe the quality of training and learning. They use external reports on the subcontractor, but these are not always up to date.

37. Resources in engineering and production are old, but adequate for their purpose. In the motor vehicle workshop the vehicles are more than 15 years old and lack some modern features. There is an adequate supply of hand tools and equipment.

**Business administration, management & professional**

**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	51	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- very effective support for learners
- good work placements

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficiently detailed learning plans
- slow progress for some learners

38. Staff at RMA provide very effective support for learners. Learners meet their training officers every two to four weeks to review progress and agree actions. Staff are enthusiastic and work closely with learners, responding quickly and effectively to any problems that arise. They are well qualified and experienced and provide good individual coaching at teaching sessions. Some staff have qualifications in counselling and learners receive good support on personal issues. There is also a mentoring service available. Learners with additional support needs are given good individual support. All learners with literacy and numeracy needs attend basic skills sessions that effectively meet their identified needs.

39. Initial assessment is comprehensive and consists of a basic and key skills assessment. Learners have either a three-day induction at RMA's premises or a half-day individual induction in the workplace. They are able to recall key aspects of their induction including health and safety, equal opportunities and the course content. Teaching sessions are satisfactory and the small groups enable staff to provide individual support for learners.

40. All learners are employed or have good local work placements. Placements include the local college, council departments and small and large firms. Learners collect relevant evidence towards their qualifications through their work tasks. Employers are supportive of learners and many provide time for learners to work towards their qualifications. Supervisors are keen to support learners. They provide good advice and guidance on aspects of the job role, and this helps the learners to gather evidence for their qualification. Employers understand the requirements of the qualifications, and are fully involved in learners' progress reviews. Learners also work towards additional

qualifications in IT.

41. Individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed. Each learning plan includes a list of units with information on which ones the learner has achieved or is working towards. However, an overall learning plan is not agreed at the start of the learning programme following initial assessment. The plans do not identify what training will be required to achieve the units. There is short-term assessment planning, but no effective way of measuring progress over a period of time. Some learners do not achieve their qualification within the expected time.

42. Some learners make slow progress. At the original inspection, both retention and achievement rates were poor. RMA's staff have worked hard to improve the situation. New learners are now working towards their NVQ and key skills qualifications from the beginning of their programmes, and where possible, key skills training is integrated with the vocational programme. There is a dedicated team of staff who provide effective key skills support. New learners are making satisfactory progress, but some who have been on the programme for some time are still making slow progress and this has not yet been dealt with. Assessment practice is satisfactory, but there are no formal plans to improve achievement and progress rates. Some learners are receiving additional assessment visits in an effort to improve the situation. Workplace assessment in accountancy was a weakness at the original inspection but this is no longer the case. There are three learners on accountancy programmes, of whom two are awaiting their examination results and the other is ready to take the examination. Workplace assessment in business administration is satisfactory. Internal verification is also satisfactory and is conducted throughout the programme. Internal verifiers keep satisfactory records and provide feedback for assessors on the quality of assessments.

43. The retention rate has improved. In 2001-02 36 per cent of foundation modern apprentices were retained for the duration of their programmes. This increased to 36 per cent in 2001-02. Of those who started programmes in 2002-03, 77 per cent are still in learning. The retention rates for advanced modern apprentices improved from 33 per cent in 2000-01 to 60 per cent in 2001-02. All those who started programmes in 2002-03 are still in learning.

## Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	16	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- comprehensive initial assessment
- good induction programme
- good targeting of basic skills support

### WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards NVQ
- too few work placements

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more recording of personal development issues in progress review documents

44. The initial assessment of information and communications technology (ICT) learners is very comprehensive. The process includes a detailed interview, a skillscan and basic skills and key skills assessments. The basic and key skills assessments use an interactive CD-ROM which learners enjoy and find interesting. The initial assessment process is carried out by well trained, supportive staff. Learners have detailed and effective individual learning plans which use the results of the initial assessment.

45. RMA has a very effective induction programme. The ICT programme attracts many applicants with additional learning needs. The three-day induction programme effectively accommodates a mixed-ability group of learners. Staff employ a good range of teaching styles, and use team-building exercises to great effect. Videos on health and safety and equal opportunities provide good opportunities for the discussion of sensitive subjects. Staff evaluate training sessions to ensure their effectiveness, and are very attentive and supportive to the needs of the group.

46. Basic skills support is very well targeted. The basic skills tutor uses a well-equipped training room with up-to-date computers and occupationally specific CD-ROMs. Learners attend for half a day each week, or one and a half hours a day. The ICT tutor is informed of any absences. The basic skills tutor negotiates a weekly action plan with

each learner, setting clear and specific targets for the next week. Progress reviews are carried out every four weeks and copies of both the action plan and the progress review documents are sent to the ICT tutor.

47. Resources in the ICT training room are satisfactory, and learners are taught by experienced and qualified staff.

48. At the original inspection, there was no provision for key skills training and assessment. Staff are now supported by a well-qualified key skills co-ordinator, and key skills training is introduced when learners start their vocational training. Appropriate assignments and tasks ensure that key skills training is integrated with the vocational programme.

49. There is some slow progress towards gaining NVQs. RMA's assessment processes are satisfactory and learners produce portfolios that meet awarding body requirements. Since the beginning of this year, strenuous efforts have been made to remedy the slow rate of progress, and action-planning is now taking place more frequently. Assessors identify the evidence that learners have already collected and point out areas where additional evidence is needed to complete an NVQ unit. Action-planning occurs at least monthly but more frequently if required. Quarterly progress reviews reinforce the monthly action-planning process and are used to set targets over a longer period of time. The progress review form does not provide an opportunity to comment on personal development. Most employers view initiative, motivation and personal effectiveness as important aspects of the learners' development, but there is no record of these qualities. The quarterly progress reviews are satisfactory and cover most topics including health and safety and equal opportunities.

50. Internal verification is now satisfactory. It is planned to take place throughout the programme and meets the code of practice requirements.

51. Retention and potential achievement rates are satisfactory, and show a slight improvement. Eight of the 13 foundation modern apprentices who started programmes this year are still in learning, compared with three out of five in 2001-02. RMA no longer recruits advanced modern apprentices in this area of learning. Three of the five learners who started NVQ programmes in 2001-02 achieved their NVQ, and three of the four who have started in 2002-03 remain on programme.

52. There are too few work placements for ICT learners. Three learners are in work placements and a further three are employed. Ten learners have no work placement and receive their training in-house at the Maltby centre. Although these learners receive good training and provide a word-processing service for other departments of RMA, they are not exposed to the experiences, pressures and time limits of the workplace. Many learners spend six months in the training centre, where the range of work tasks does not allow them to identify and collect sufficient evidence for their NVQ. RMA's marketing department is attempting to increase the number of work placements available. The existing work placements are satisfactory and employers offer good

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support.

## Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- particularly effective assessment practice
- good support for learners
- good use of qualifications to enhance employability

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more use of diverse assessment methods

53. Assessment practice is particularly effective and the learners are actively involved in the assessment process. Assessments are planned to fit the learners' work rotas and shift patterns, to allow the collection of the best possible evidence. Assessors visit most learners every two weeks. There is a wide range of learning and assessment resources. Workplaces are of a good quality and offer learners a supportive environment, both for personal development and for assessment opportunities. Learners are part of workplace teams and are given challenging and demanding roles and responsibilities that promote self-confidence and develop practical skills. Learners are motivated and interested, especially in the practical part of their training. The food that they prepare and cook is of a high standard and well presented. Most learners work well within their own teams and can influence work activities to provide further assessment opportunities. Where a training need is identified, the RMA trainer and the employer jointly decide how best to provide it. Both can provide demonstrations of practical skills either at the workplace or in RMA's small kitchen facility. There are learning packs, linked to particular units, which have been designed to support the background knowledge requirements of the qualifications. Industry-specific workbooks and updates are available, and individual coaching is offered if needed. Key skills projects and work packs are now integrated with the learners' programmes starting at induction.

54. Learners produce good portfolios of evidence, completed to awarding body requirements. The main sources of evidence are observation of learners' performance in the workplace and oral and written questioning to check their knowledge and understanding. Learners are encouraged to use witness testimony, evidence diaries and photographic evidence to personalise their portfolios and develop their evidence file.

55. There is good support for learners. There is a good ratio of staff to learners and learners are visited every two weeks at their workplaces. There is good rapport and mutual respect between staff and learners. Employers and supervisors work closely with RMA's assessors to plan each learner's training and assessment. Workplace staff contribute to learners' progress reviews. There are many examples of RMA and the employers responding effectively and efficiently to support learners who are experiencing severe emotional and personal problems. These have resulted in learners staying on their planned programme and providing them with stability during a difficult time. Tutors have attended training in counselling, basic skills, and learning and development to enable them to further support their learners. Learners also receive exit support and basic skills support, which is adequate to meet their needs.

56. Learners are encouraged to enhance their qualification by taking additional NVQ or key skills units. This enhances the learners' employability. Currently, 29 per cent of learners are taking additional qualifications.

57. Since the original inspection, RMA has retained and enhanced its strengths and there are now no significant weaknesses in this area of learning. A new, effective, well-qualified team of assessors has been in place for seven months and the number of learners has increased. Low achievement rates were a weakness at the original inspection. It is too soon to make judgement on whether achievement rates have improved, but all learners are making good progress towards their qualifications. Most have achieved significant numbers of units and are on target to complete their qualification by the target date. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for key skills training. Staff now give very good support to learners, and the learners have a clear understanding of key skills and are producing good evidence and passing key skills tests.

58. Some learners have additional learning needs, and find it difficult to provide written evidence. Most learners clearly demonstrate their knowledge and are able to give the evidence verbally. There is a limited range of methods of recording evidence.

59. RMA's internal verification is satisfactory, and its recent response to the awarding body's requirements has led to further improvements. Initial assessment now involves skills scans to match the learners' job role to the requirements of the qualification. Individual learning plans contain realistic targets. They are used satisfactorily and updated as a result of the review process. The reviews are used to set satisfactory and achievable targets which will enable the learner to improve work and behavioural skills. Teaching and learning is adequately supported, in partnership, by RMA tutors, work-placement providers and employers. Basic skills support is also satisfactory and has enabled most learners to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.



## Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	54	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- particularly effective support for learners
- high level of learners' responsibility for the assessment process

### WEAKNESSES

- some slow progress for learners

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better information for employers
- more frequent observations in the workplace

60. Support for learners is particularly good. It starts with an effective and enjoyable three-day induction which learners remember well. Foundation modern apprentices have a day of off-the-job training every two weeks, with a key skills session on the alternate week. Advanced modern apprentices attend monthly off-the-job training sessions. There are flexible patterns of attendance available including evening sessions. Assessors and learners agree individual action plans that reflect the learners' progress. For example, one learner was keen to progress quickly, and she is now on target to complete her modern apprenticeship framework much earlier than planned. Staff respond promptly to problems when they arise. One learner was moved to another work placement when she was having difficulties, and is now working well. Learners with additional learning needs are receiving support for numeracy and literacy from a specialist employed by RMA, and also receive extra support with their NVQ. Staff with counselling skills are available to help learners with personal difficulties, and there are good links with external agencies. All contact is recorded on a learners' event log, which is kept in the learners' personal file.

61. Learners take a high level of responsibility for their own assessment. After an initial settling-in period, learners receive a full induction into the NVQ standards. From the start of their programme, assessors encourage learners to start gathering evidence for the NVQ from the activities that they carry out in their workplace. Learners write personal accounts, plan activities and collect work products and witness testimonies.

Assessors use questions as appropriate to fill gaps in the evidence. The learners plan their own assessment, and they ask for assessment when they are ready. Those who are more confident write up their own assessor's observation record. The assessors help learners develop the skills which will enable them to take responsibility for their assessment.

62. Some learners are still making slow progress. At the time of the original inspection, all training in this area of learning was subcontracted, and learners did not make good progress. The training is now carried out by RMA and learners are receiving good support. Most are making better progress, but some learners are slow to ask for assessment and need more frequent visits. Some learners who started in February are progressing well with their technical certificates, but have not yet started assessment in the workplace. Staff vacancies mean there is only one assessor, who is also responsible for the teaching, and the co-ordinator is also the internal verifier. A new member of staff has been recently appointed to join the team.

63. The health and social care department has changed completely since the previous inspection, and most of the original strengths and weaknesses are no longer applicable. RMA no longer offers training in care of the elderly. Training is now carried out by RMA rather than a subcontractor. A new team of staff has developed effective systems for training and assessment and there have been significant improvements. Retention rates for modern apprentices have improved since the programme has been restructured. Of the learners who started programmes in 2002-03, 56 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices and 75 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices are still in learning. The previous retention rates were around 20 per cent. It is too early to make a judgement on the achievement rate.

64. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. The staff have appropriate qualifications and good occupational experience. One member of staff is working towards a teaching qualification. Learners benefit from regular teaching sessions at RMA. Learners who started programmes after February this year are receiving appropriate teaching for the technical certificate. Teaching takes place in a comfortable classroom, which has attractive displays produced by the learners. A good range of resources is being developed, including text books, magazines, practical resources and videos. There are two computers.

65. Key skills training is integrated well with the vocational training. Learners attend good training sessions led by a key skills trainer. Evidence is gathered through assignments appropriate to the NVQ, and also through activities in the training sessions. Learners start key skills training early in the programme and are making satisfactory progress. The pass rate in the tests has shown a marked improvement this year.

66. The appropriateness of work placements was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. This is now satisfactory. More learners are in nursery placements. Those in schools usually have experience of working with children aged between three to five years. During the school holidays, work placements are being arranged in nurseries and

summer playschemes, and extra training is being made available.

67. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactory. They are carried out every eight to 12 weeks in the workplace. There is a thorough discussion between the assessor and the learner, and the assessor and the employer, but not between all three. There is some inconsistency in the use of the review documents. Some targets are recorded clearly, others are quite vague. There is too much reliance on tick boxes in the section for employers, and little use is made of the space for comment.

68. Employers receive an information pack from assessors, which includes a summary of the NVQ standards, some guidance notes and the training dates. They have little information about the content of training sessions to enable them to give appropriate support to learners in the workplace. Work has started to improve this. Assessors now talk regularly to employers about the learners' progress, and encourage them to seek help if they need it.

## Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	7	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- good inter-agency liaison to enhance opportunities for learners
- very effective support for learners

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient planning of work-related training
- lack of challenge in some individual targets

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of initial assessment
- further integration of basic skills with Life Skills activities

69. Learners on the Life Skills programme have a range of difficulties which include poor communication and numeracy skills, lack of confidence and self-esteem, behavioural problems, and lack of motivation. Many have left school with no qualifications and respond poorly to classroom environments. Most have problems with timekeeping and attendance. The programme team has established good links with a number of local agencies and training providers which offer opportunities for learners to overcome these difficulties. For example, they are able to attend a course in creative multimedia design which includes working as a group to make a CD soundtrack. One learner, whose design talent was identified while on the course, has benefited from a short placement at the studios and now intends to pursue a qualification in design or creative media. Other opportunities, such as a residential outdoor activities course, help to develop communication and team skills, encourage confidence and build self-worth. The community dietician provides training in healthy eating and another agency gives guidance on drug awareness.

70. The Life Skills team provides effective practical and emotional support for learners, many of whom require significant additional help to remain on the programme. In some cases this includes securing financial aid to buy clothes or personal hygiene products for learners' taking part in work placements. In others, staff have liaised with charities to find furniture for learners living by themselves. Where individuals have struggled to

travel independently, staff have accompanied them on journeys and helped them to gain confidence in using timetables or handling money. Learners have access to a counselling service, and within the past two months mentoring support has been introduced to follow-up learners who have stopped attending. Staff carry out frequent reviews with learners, discussing their support needs as well as encouraging them to comment on the programme. Monthly reviews are also held with Connexions' personal advisers to enable learners to discuss other progression possibilities.

71. Work-related training and development is not sufficiently planned. Learners who have secured work placements are not always given appropriate training to help them make best use of the opportunity and increase their chances of permanent employment. For example, learners about to enter work placements in catering or food retail establishments are not always trained in basic food hygiene, manual handling, or health and safety at work. A learner entering a work placement at a local infants school, where playground supervision formed part of the duties, had no training in health and safety at work, child protection, or activity supervision. Learners are not prepared well for the working environment, and miss the opportunity to gain vocational awards.

72. As they start their Life Skills programme, learners complete a learning plan which includes their personal targets and goals. Progress is reviewed at intervals, and targets or dates changed. However, while the reviews are frequent, in most cases every two to three weeks, the targets agreed with the learners are not challenging and often simply record programme content rather than defining measurable steps towards personal goals. There is little reference to the goals originally identified by learners. Learners and their trainers do not have clear objectives against which they can measure progress.

73. Resources for the programme are satisfactory and the programme team is gradually increasing the use of ICT in training sessions to enhance learning and skills acquisition. Staff are reviewing the range of learning aids and materials in order to identify alternative ways of offering training. They have recently begun to use a video camera to capture learners' experiences for future discussion in the groups. Staff have personal development plans which support their needs.

74. Staff have worked hard to re-model the induction process and have now established a learning styles review session as part of the first two days of the programme. The results of the session are compiled into a report for each learner. There has been some attempt to use this information to adapt teaching methods and help learners to recognise and overcome their learning difficulties, but it has not been fully applied to all of the programme.

75. Training in basic and key skills is not integrated with other Life Skills activities. Staff are now beginning to identify opportunities for the development and accreditation of such skills.