

# INSPECTION REPORT

**BTAL (UK) Ltd**

**05 June 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

BTAL (UK) Ltd is a group training association based in Bradford. It has 50 member companies, 45 of which currently employ trainees on foundation modern apprenticeships and advanced modern apprenticeships, and other training programmes in engineering and manufacturing. Most of the trainees are advanced modern apprentices.

### Overall judgement

Work-based training is good. Leadership and management are good. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

### Work-based learning for young people

Work-based training for young people in engineering is good. Trainees complete their initial off-the-job training at the local further education college. This prepares them well for their work placements. All trainees are able to acquire a range of skills in their workplaces where they receive help and support from their employers and the company's training advisers. Trainees' portfolios contain a wide range of evidence. There is, however, insufficient assessment through direct observation of trainees' performance in the workplace. Trainees receive frequent reviews of their progress. Many trainees make slow progress through their apprenticeship framework.

### Leadership and management

The leadership and management of BTAL (UK) Ltd are good. Staff are fully involved in company business planning and financial reviews. Quality assurance systems are effective and BTAL (UK) Ltd carries out regular audits of their effectiveness. The effectiveness of policies and procedures is monitored regularly and systematically. Resources are used well. The company has introduced many initiatives to increase recruitment of trainees from under-represented groups on programmes. Managers do not make sufficient use of data on trainees' performance when making decisions. They do not set clear targets for trainees' retention and achievement rates.

## GRADES

Engineering	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- good initial training
- effective support for trainees
- good learning environment in workplaces
- close involvement of staff in business planning and financial reviews
- many initiatives to recruit under-represented groups
- regular and effective audits of systems

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- slow progress by trainees towards completion of the apprenticeship framework
- insufficient use of performance data in management decisions

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- better monitoring of trainees' progress
- more rigorous self-assessment
- more systematic analysis of employers' views

## THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. BTAL (UK) Ltd (BTAL) was established in 1967 to meet the training and staff development needs of a small group of manufacturing companies. It now has 50 members and, in addition to training engineering apprentices, it runs courses in management, health and safety and a range of personal development programmes. BTAL has a modern and well-resourced training centre at Laisterdyke, to the east of Bradford. The engineering training programmes are managed from here and initial assessment and guidance take place here. Once their initial assessment has been completed, trainees are based in the employing company or in a further education college. BTAL has 11 full-time staff and currently has 160 engineering trainees. The company has achieved the quality assurance standard ISO 9001 and is accredited as an Investor in People.

2. Training in engineering is funded through a contract with the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Bradford has a growing population and is the fourth largest metropolitan district in the country. In April 2001, the unemployment rate in Bradford was 5 per cent compared with 4.2 per cent for the Yorkshire and the Humber region, and the national average of 3.3 per cent. Bradford has substantial ethnic minority communities, which account for 15.6 per cent of the city's population. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Bradford achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 33.8 per cent, compared with 49.2 per cent nationally.

## THE INSPECTION

3. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 19 days at BTAL during June 2001. They interviewed 42 trainees and 11 BTAL staff. They visited 20 employers and interviewed 18 workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed training and assessment sessions, and reviews of trainees' progress. They examined a range of documents including trainees' portfolios of evidence, trainees' records, BTAL's plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and reports from external verifiers. Inspectors studied BTAL's self-assessment report and data on trainees retention and achievement rates.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	160	2

4. Modern apprentices at BTAL take at least four years to complete the advanced modern apprenticeship framework. Following initial selection and testing by BTAL, potential trainees are interviewed by the member companies who will employ them, and they join the training programme each September. Most trainees complete their initial engineering training programme at the local further education college where they work towards an NVQ at level 2. Trainees also work towards certification in three of their key skills during this period. After their initial training, trainees join their company and are enrolled on a suitable further education course which they attend on a day-release basis. They spend the rest of their time at work where they receive on-the-job training and are assessed towards achievement of an NVQ in engineering at level 3. They work towards achievement of their remaining key skills certification during their on-the-job 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	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Number that started							21	
Still in training							16	76
FMA framework completed							0	0

Work-based learning for young people								
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)								
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Number that started	45		40		31		23	
Still in training	20	44	25	62	23	74	23	100
AMA framework completed	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	41	91	30	75	25	81	17	74
NVQ level 3 completed	6	13	0	0	0	0	0	0



NVQ Training								
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started	30		20		28		8
Still in training	2	7	6	30	16	57	2	25
Individual learning plan completed	13	43	0	0	1	4	5	62
Left without completing individual learning plan	16	53	14	70	11	39	1	12
NVQ level 2 completed	7	23	4	20	1	4	1	12
NVQ level 3 completed	8	27	0	0	1	4	4	50

## STRENGTHS

- good initial training
- good work placements
- frequent and detailed reviews of trainees' progress
- good support for trainees
- wide range of appropriate evidence in portfolios

## WEAKNESSES

- lack of systematic action-planning during monthly reviews of trainees' progress
- slow progress of apprentices in completing the apprenticeship framework

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better planning of training in the workplace
- better co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- more frequent assessment by direct observation in the workplace

5. BTAL's initial training programme is good. Over the past five years, an average of 84 per cent of trainees have successfully completed their initial training and achieved an NVQ at level 2. Most trainees complete a full-time, one-year training course at the local further education college. Resources for engineering training at the college are good and trainees and employers value the training there. The college has modern, well-equipped workshops. Trainees can work on their own initiative, particularly on key skills, using modern computerised systems for training and self-assessment. A variety of assessment methods is used and achievement rates are good. Training sessions are well organised and there is good communication between trainers and trainees. Trainers encourage the trainees to ask questions. The college has effective systems for recording

trainees' progress towards achieving their NVQ at level 2. Employers value this initial training. The skills trainees develop during this period are very important to them in their work. Trainees go through comprehensive induction programmes at BTAL, the college and their company.

6. In their workplaces, the trainees are able to gain wide experience in engineering and manufacturing. BTAL member companies are involved in complex and demanding engineering processes, such as the manufacture of large pressure vessels and the production of electronic circuit boards. At work, the wide range of tasks trainees carry out enable them to gain all the competences they need to acquire in order to obtain their NVQ. The trainees' work is supervised by their immediate line managers. Many trainees also have mentors who help them gather evidence of their acquisition of competences. Supervisors and mentors are vocationally experienced and suitably qualified and some are also qualified assessors. Many employers draw up on-the-job training plans, which meet the needs of the trainees as well as the requirements of their company. In some instances, however, the planning of training in the workplace is not effective. BTAL employers have well-equipped premises and some have special training facilities. Trainees are encouraged to work on their own using modern manufacturing systems and help is available to them if they need it. In some cases, there is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Some workplace supervisors are not well informed about the content of the trainees' off-the-job training courses at college and college staff seldom know what training the trainees receive in the workplace. Neither workplace staff nor college staff are able to ensure there is a clear relationship between the training provider in college and the workplace.

7. Qualified training advisers visit employers each month to review trainees' progress and assess trainees towards the achievement of NVQ units. BTAL assessors also make additional visits to individual trainees to meet their needs. Many employers play an active part in trainees' reviews. In the best practice, employers liaise with training advisers before reviews and are fully involved in them. Some employers, however, do not attend trainees' progress reviews or help to set targets for the trainees. They are not fully aware of what the trainees need to do to reach their targets and are unable to plan work to help them achieve their qualification. Action plans are drawn up for the trainees every six months but there is a lack of consistency in the way these are developed and implemented. In some instances, the training adviser and the trainee agree specific action but this is not written down. In other instances, the trainee writes down what he or she has to do. In one instance, the employer produces an action plan and gives a copy of this to the trainee and training adviser. The colleges involved in providing day-release off-the-job training, inform employers and BTAL of the attendance and punctuality of individual trainees each week. The college sends reports on trainees' progress to employers once a term.

8. BTAL carries out the initial assessment of all trainees on behalf of the employers. Following this initial assessment, which includes accreditation of prior learning and experience, trainees have interviews with prospective employers. Once they have secured a job, they begin a programme of training which aims to meet their needs and

those of the employer. At all times, trainees are well supported by BTAL staff. Training advisers have responded to the needs of individual trainees by visiting the trainees more often. They encourage the trainees to telephone them if they need help between visits.

9. Portfolios are well presented and carefully organised. They contain evidence from a wide range of sources and this includes written evidence, manufacturers' information, engineering drawings and specifications, and photographs. Trainees obtain witness testimony of their competences in the workplace from appropriate employees. All the company's training advisers are qualified assessors. In some instances, they assess trainees through observation of their performance in the workplace. In general, however, there is insufficient use of this assessment method. Assessment records are not always authenticated by a workplace supervisor or a BTAL training adviser at the time the trainee is assessed. Many trainees make slow progress towards completion of their apprenticeship framework. Some trainees in their third or fourth year of training have made slow progress in achieving key skills certification. A high proportion of trainees complete their initial training and achieve an NVQ at level 2 but very few complete their advanced modern apprenticeship in less than the four years normally allowed. Trainees' retention and achievement rates, however, have recently improved.

#### Good Practice

*Many trainees receive additional support. A number of trainees with dyslexia, who had problems completing written evidence for their portfolios, received support and guidance which also involved their parents. Some of these trainees are now working towards level 4 qualifications with the support of their employer. One such trainee has progressed particularly well and has received the annual apprentice of the year award from BTAL.*

*Two trainees, who had been made redundant, received extra support at the training centre and in the workplace. One was found alternative employment and given additional support to move smoothly into this. The other, who had nearly completed the apprenticeship framework, received extensive additional support from the training adviser to help him to complete it early. He was also given help to find a new job.*

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

10. BTAL is a limited company with a board comprising representatives from member companies. It has 11 full-time staff, including the chief executive, a senior training adviser, a business development adviser, a sales and client services adviser, five training advisers and two support staff. It has an equal opportunities policy. The quality assurance policies and procedures are internally and externally audited and accredited to meet ISO 9001 criteria. BTAL is also accredited as an Investor in People. BTAL completed its first self-assessment report in 1997. The latest self-assessment report was produced in February 2001.

### STRENGTHS

- close involvement of staff in business planning and financial reviews
- effective use of resources
- many initiatives to recruit trainees from under-represented groups
- regular and effective audits of quality assurance
- systematic reviews of the effectiveness of policies

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently demanding targets for trainees' retention and achievement rates
- insufficient use of performance data in management decisions

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of trainees' progress by managers
- updating for staff awareness on equal opportunities legislation
- more rigorous self-assessment
- more analysis of employers' views
- better monitoring of subcontractors

11. BTAL's annual business plan is agreed by the board and clearly sets out the company's strategic direction and budgetary requirements for the coming year. Staff are fully involved in drawing up the plan and contribute ideas at regular meetings. Staff are well informed about BTAL's financial performance. Targets for trainees' recruitment, retention and achievements, are agreed with the West Yorkshire LSC for each year. Although BTAL staff are told what these targets are, they in turn are not set sufficiently demanding targets to help the company improve trainees' retention and achievement rates. The initial off-the-job training leading to the level 2 NVQ is well planned and trainees are set demanding targets. Insufficiently demanding targets, however, are set for trainees' achievement of NVQ level 3 and key skills certification.

12. The company makes good use of its resources. Its premises are booked regularly

for training courses and conferences. Accommodation is particularly good. Staff take on many roles to support the company in its commercial ventures. Many of the training advisers have provided commercial training and acted as consultants for the companies where their trainees are employed.

13. There is insufficient use of performance data as a basis for management decisions. Data are not routinely collected on, for example, the length of time trainees take to achieve their qualifications. Managers are unable to identify common factors affecting trainees' performance. Information on individual trainees' progress towards achieving their NVQ and key skills certification is kept in trainees' files but is not collated centrally. Managers have no means of obtaining an overall view of the extent of trainees' progress.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

14. BTAL has a well written-equal opportunities policy which is explained and given to all trainees at their induction. BTAL also requires its member employers to have a policy stating their commitment to equality of opportunity. The equal opportunities policy is formally reviewed each year at a quality assurance management review meeting, where managers examine all BTAL's policies for content and to ensure they are up-to-date. The senior adviser is responsible for ensuring that BTAL puts the policy into practice and the chief executive signs and dates the policy to show that senior management takes overall responsibility for it. Staff have not received any recent training to update them on equal opportunities matters and recent legislation. BTAL gives trainees copies of the assessment appeals procedure and makes them aware of the company complaints procedure during their induction. There have been no recorded complaints or appeals against assessment decisions in the past.

15. BTAL has undertaken many initiatives to recruit more people from under-represented groups on training programmes. These include working with schools with a large proportion of Asian pupils, projects to attract women into engineering and advertising in local newspapers. Promotional materials carry pictures of female trainees and people from different ethnic origins. All rooms at BTAL are easily accessible to wheelchair users. The company collects and analyses data on the gender, ethnicity and disabilities of applicants and trainees. Analysis of these data shows that profile of trainees, in terms of gender, ethnicity and disabilities, does not reflect that of the local community. Only 3 per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups, 1 per cent are women and no trainee is registered as having a disability. The company has recently increased its efforts to attract more applications from women, people from minority ethnic groups and those with a disability, and there are early indications that these are proving successful.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 2

16. Quality assurance systems at BTAL are well established and improvements have been regularly made to them since 1992. As part of the process of ensuring the company retains ISO 9001 accreditation, the quality assurance team continuously monitors the effectiveness of the quality assurance manual, which is issued to all staff. There is a system for ensuring that new documents are effective and are used correctly. There are four trained auditors, two of whom conduct most of the audits. Internal auditing is particularly thorough with approximately 16 audits completed each year. This process is effective and has led to many improvements in BTAL's quality assurance system, paperwork and the quality of training.

17. BTAL did not take a sufficiently objective approach to self-assessment. Many strengths were overstated and inspectors found several weaknesses which were not identified in the self-assessment report. Some of the action to rectify weaknesses identified in previous self-assessment reports has not yet been fully implemented. Records are not kept of who is responsible for seeing that further action identified at management and quality assurance meetings is carried out.

18. Staff understand their responsibility for the continuous improvement of training. Quality assurance is a standard agenda item at meetings of management and advisers. There is insufficient assessment by direct observation of trainees in the workplace. Some assessments are not recorded properly. The training advisers meet to agree and record verification practices and make recommendations to improve the verification process. Internal verifiers meet with assessors every month to discuss assessment decisions with them. Accurate records are kept of all aspects of internal verification to meet awarding body requirements. The performance of all assessors is monitored regularly.

19. The company seeks the views of trainees and employers through questionnaires. BTAL staff have observed some training by subcontractors but have not evaluated this systematically. Records of the monitoring of subcontractors' performance are not thorough enough. There is insufficient evaluation of off-the-job training.

### Good Practice

*In addition to their key roles of helping trainees and liaising with employers, BTAL training advisers take on other roles. These include providing management training, training on health and safety and advice on quality assurance. The training advisers welcome these additional roles and feel that through them, they broaden their experience, gain additional skills and knowledge and become more proficient in their job.*