

INSPECTION REPORT

Training for Today

11 February 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

TRAINING FOR TODAY

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 **learndirect** 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

Training for Today is a trading name of Michaeljohn Training Ltd. It has a training centre at its head office in Bolton and a smaller training centre in Prestwich. It currently provides work-based learning for 227 learners in hairdressing, care, customer service and business administration. It also runs a Life Skills foundation programme.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning is good in foundation programmes, satisfactory in customer service and unsatisfactory in hairdressing, care and business administration. Training for Today's leadership and management are unsatisfactory, as are its approach to equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

GRADES

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

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

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

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

TRAINING FOR TODAY

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- good staff training and development
- very good informal communications
- good written information
- excellent retention and achievement rates on customer service NVQs
- good support for learners

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor management of key skills training
- incomplete quality assurance procedures
- inadequate monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- some poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient involvement of employers in training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic use of data to improve learning
- more learning resources
- more work-based assessment

THE INSPECTION

1. Seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days with Training for Today in February 2002. They met 105 learners and conducted 47 interviews with staff. They visited 33 employers' premises, where 27 workplace supervisors were interviewed. Inspectors observed reviews of learners' progress, and observed and graded 13 training sessions. They examined a range of documents including learners' portfolios, personal files and individual learning plans, Training for Today's plans, policies and procedures, management information and reports from awarding bodies. Inspectors studied Training for Today's self-assessment report, which was written in July 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	7
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Foundation programmes	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Total	0	0	5	5	3	0	0	13

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Training for Today was established in 1986 as Michaeljohn Training Ltd. In 2000, the trading name was changed to Training for Today. It operates from two training centres, at its head office in Bolton and a smaller centre which was opened in Prestwich in October 2000. It provides work-based learning in hairdressing, care of the elderly, customer service and business administration. It also provides a Life Skills programme, which is part of the Learning Gateway for young people. Training for Today is accredited with the Investors in People Standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. There are three directors, 25 staff and 227 learners. Work-based learning is funded through a contract with the Greater Manchester local Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

3. Bolton is situated on the edge of the West Pennine Moors, 11 miles from the centre of Manchester. Employment is provided by the traditional manufacturing and industrial sectors and newer businesses in the retailing, tourism and leisure industries.

4. Bolton's population was 267,600 in 2000, of whom 8.3 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. In September 2001, the unemployment rate for Bolton was 3.5 per cent, compared with an average of 3.6 per cent for the Northwest and 2.9 per cent for England. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 45 per cent in Bolton, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Retention and achievement rates on customer service NVQ programmes are excellent, but they are poor on customer service modern apprenticeship programmes. In hairdressing, care and business administration, retention and achievement rates are poor, and in care and hairdressing the rates are declining.

6. Learners who attend off-the-job training benefit from a good training environment, particularly in hairdressing. Training for Today provides good support for learners in all occupational areas. Internal verification in business administration is poor. Assessment is generally satisfactory, but there is insufficient work-based assessment in business administration and hairdressing. Some learners make slow progress. Although initial assessment does take place in some occupational areas, there is no formal procedure for this. There are no procedures to ensure that the results of initial assessment are used to plan training. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Informal communication with employers is good, but formal communication is poor. Employers are not always aware of their training responsibilities or of the details of the qualification their learners are working towards. Some employers only get to know about the areas covered in off-the-job training by asking learners. Overall arrangements for the management of key skills training are poor. In all areas except hairdressing, key skills training is not integrated with vocational training, and starts late in the programme. Many staff are not confident about introducing training in key skills. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities, but Training for Today does not check that employers' equal opportunities policies are put into practice in the workplace.

Life Skills

7. The retention rate on the Life Skills programme is good, and improving. In 1999-2000, the retention rate was 62 per cent and in 2000-01 it was 90 per cent. Learners make good progress, either gaining a job or moving into mainstream training.

8. Three learning sessions were observed and all were satisfactory or better. Learners on the Life Skills programme benefit from a good training environment and good personal support. Effective use is made of information technology (IT) to support learning. Learners state that their confidence and motivation improves as a result of attending the programme. Learners benefit from the good links their tutors have with specialist services. Individual development plans lack details of learners' progress and are not regularly updated. Training in basic skills is not sufficiently integrated with Life Skills activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

9. Responsibility for the management of training lies with the quality assurance manager. The company employs 25 staff and three directors. Five staff are internal verifiers and eleven work as tutors/assessors. All staff divide their time between the Bolton and Prestwich training sites. The directors link the different areas of learning. In 1994, the company achieved the Investor in People award and it has been reaccredited twice since then. Staff meetings are held monthly and team meetings each week. Management meetings are also held monthly. There is an equal opportunities officer, one of the tutors, who reports to the managing director. The company has an equal opportunities policy and guidelines for staff. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the quality assurance manager. The quality assurance system is audited at least once each year. The self-assessment report was compiled by the quality assurance manager and the development manager in July 2001, after extensive consultation with staff. This is the third annual self-assessment report that the company has produced.

STRENGTHS

- good staff training and development
- very good informal communications
- good written information
- particularly clear, well written and comprehensive equal opportunities policy
- effective self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate procedures for management of training processes
- poor management of key skills training
- no targets to increase participation in training by under-represented groups
- inadequate monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- incomplete quality assurance procedures
- lack of formal opportunities to share good practice

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic use of data to improve training
- more detailed minuting of management decisions

10. Training for Today has an annual appraisal procedure through which staff training needs are identified. In addition, staff and managers identify other training opportunities throughout the year. Training for Today's staff recruitment procedures are satisfactory. All training staff who do not have training or teaching qualifications are expected to achieve them as soon as possible after joining the company. Staff are also offered

professional updating, and a chance to train for assessor and key skills qualifications. The company operates an employee development scheme, designed to encourage lifelong learning for all staff. Staff development was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report.

11. All the training staff work in an open-plan office and share information effectively but informally. Staff have a good understanding of the company's aims and objectives and of new developments. Managers are approachable and very supportive. They take note of staff comments and suggestions. Informal links with employers are also very good. Employers describe Training for Today's staff as supportive and responsive to their concerns or difficulties. The self-assessment report identified a strength in internal communications, but failed to acknowledge that communications are informal.

12. The company holds regular staff meetings, both for the whole staff team and for individual occupational teams. The meetings are briefly minuted. Staff who are unable to attend meetings rely on colleagues to inform them of decisions made. Training for Today has produced a good range of written information for its own staff, for learners and for employers. It is all written in plain language and is easy to understand. Staff are given a handbook when they join the company. Assessors have an additional handbook, giving details of the assessment, verification and review processes. The learners' handbook and booklet on equal opportunities are particularly comprehensive and do not use jargon. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities. The employers' handbook, which has been produced more recently, sets out the responsibilities of employers and the training provider for each stage of the learner's training. However, some employers have not yet received a copy of the handbook, or do not recall having received it. Learners and staff find the handbooks useful, but it is too soon to judge the impact of the employers' handbook. The staff handbooks were recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report.

13. There is insufficient guidance for staff on aspects of the training process, other than those covered in the assessors' handbook. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Employers do not receive information about what has been covered in off-the-job training, unless they ask the learner. They do not have sufficient information to ensure that the tasks the learner carries out in the workplace link background knowledge with practice. Training for Today has no system to ensure that it receives information about training sessions provided by the employer. Training for learners taking level 3 national vocational qualifications (NVQs) is mainly provided off the job. Training for Today does not check the resources that employers have for training in background knowledge. Although learners in some occupational areas are given initial assessments, there are no procedures to ensure that the results are used in devising training programmes. Learners are not given certificates for the NVQ units as they achieve them.

14. The introduction of key skills training and assessment has been poorly managed. Staff have now received training in key skills, but are not yet confident in their understanding. Some staff were not aware that some key skills are now tested

TRAINING FOR TODAY

externally. In all occupational areas, the introduction of key skills training has been delayed. In hairdressing, key skills training has been incorporated into NVQ training. This has not yet happened in other occupational areas. This weakness was acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

15. Data are collected and analysed to measure progress against contractual targets. The staff bonus system is linked to these targets. Staff understand the company's aims, objectives and overall targets. Data are also used to identify trends in achievement and retention. Staff are aware of trends and have used this information when making some management decisions. Training for Today does not make enough use of data to understand performance and improve its training provision.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 4**

16. Training for Today has a well-written, comprehensive equal opportunities policy, which is regularly updated. The policy is displayed on notice boards and in teaching rooms at the training centres. The policy mentions all the relevant legislation and also refers to bullying and harassment. There is an equal opportunities code of behaviour which provides guidance on how to behave, and describes what constitutes harassment. Both these documents were updated in May 2001. More recently, work has started on an equal opportunities strategy. This contains targets for staff training in diversity awareness, and monitoring recruitment by gender, ethnicity and disability, to be achieved by the end of 2002. There is a procedure for appeals against assessment decisions, but there have been no appeals.

17. A member of the training staff acts as the equal opportunities officer. This role was created in August 2001 and is still developing. Training for Today's development plan includes a section on equality of opportunity, from which some actions have been completed. Fifty per cent of the training staff and management attended diversity training between December 2001 to February 2002. It is planned that the remaining staff will do so by May 2002. Equal opportunities has been a regular agenda item at staff meetings since November 2001. This encourages the discussion of equal opportunities issues. Equal opportunities is promoted in teaching and tutorial sessions. Learning materials are not screened effectively to ensure that they are free from bias.

18. Learners are given a copy of the equal opportunities policy and a well-written equal opportunities booklet at induction. The booklet contains information about discrimination, harassment, relevant legislation, complaints and appeals and the name of the equal opportunities officer. Learners and staff have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities. A questionnaire has recently been introduced to assess and reinforce learners' understanding of equal opportunities. The questionnaire has been issued once, in December 2001. The results provided useful data on areas for development, some of which have already been acted on. Training for Today plans to measure improvements by issuing the questionnaire four times each year. Recently, some contacts have been made with external bodies working in the field of equal opportunities to explore new developments in this area.

19. Training for Today collects data on learners' gender, age and ethnic origin but does not use them to target recruitment of under-represented groups. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Four per cent of the learners are from a minority ethnic background, although minority ethnic groups make up 8.3 per cent of Bolton's population. Access to both the training centres is poor for people with restricted mobility.

20. Equality of opportunity is not ensured in the workplace. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Training for Today checks whether employers have an equal opportunities policy. Those who do not, adopt Training for Today's policy. Training for Today does not check how the employer puts the policy into

TRAINING FOR TODAY

practice. There is a question on the learners' progress review sheet about discrimination and bullying but it does not encourage discussion or a considered response. Employers do not contribute to the review at the same time as the learners. There is no dialogue between learners and their employer about equal opportunities.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

21. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the quality assurance manager, who is one of the company's directors. The company has a limited quality assurance system. Learners complete evaluations of their training every three months. Any concerns are fed back to the tutor concerned. Internal verifiers observe assessment and training sessions and give feedback. An additional check on training sessions by managers has recently been introduced. Assessment and verification are satisfactory in most occupational areas. However, there are delays in assessing learners' work and there is no overall procedure for internal verification. The company keeps a register of complaints received. There have been very few complaints and all those received have been dealt with satisfactorily.

22. Training for Today has produced three annual self-assessment reports. All staff contributed to the most recent report. A staff training day was used to explain the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Staff then identified strengths and weaknesses in their own occupational area. After the results had been collated by managers, staff had an opportunity to review their suggestions. A copy of the final report was given to each team. A development plan was produced to accompany the self-assessment report. It has been carefully monitored by staff in each occupational area and by managers, and progress has been made against most of the action points identified. Staff understand the purpose of self-assessment and the contribution which it makes to continuous improvement. This strength was not identified through the self-assessment process.

23. Training for Today has, in the past, used an externally accredited quality assurance system. It is now developing its own system, based on the self-assessment model. Few procedures have yet been amended. The old procedures concentrate on document control and compliance. They provide little guidance for staff on ensuring the quality of their work or on consistency between different occupational areas. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. A new, part-time post has been created with responsibility for introducing new procedures and auditing their effectiveness.

24. Staff share good practice on an informal basis, both in the office and in meetings. Good practice is not shared at formal meetings of assessors or internal verifiers. Assessors from the different occupational areas do not meet to standardise their assessment practice. There are no meetings for work-based assessors. Internal verifiers have not met formally for seven months. This weakness was not identified through self-assessment.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	7	4

25. Training for Today currently trains seven foundation modern apprentices in business administration, all of whom are employed. Some learners were transferred, at the request of the Bolton and Bury Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise, from another provider. Some learners are recruited from employers. Others are interviewed by Training for Today, which arranges job interviews with potential employers. Learners find out about Training for Today from a number of sources, including personal recommendation, schools, and attendance at local careers events. The learning is work based, with a tutor visiting the learner in the workplace every two weeks to give an individual tutorial. Key skills training is given at the end of the programme, when the NVQ has been completed.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			2													
Retained			0	0													
Successfully completed			0	0													
Still in learning			0	0													

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		11													
Retained	0		8	73													
Successfully completed	0		1	9													
Still in learning	1		6	55													

TRAINING FOR TODAY

STRENGTHS

- good short-term action-planning
- good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor understanding of modern apprenticeship frameworks by employers
- ineffective internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more frequent work-based assessment
- more training materials for learners

26. There is good short-term action-planning. All learning takes place on the job, and learners are visited in their workplace by a tutor/assessor every two weeks. At each visit, the learners' progress is reviewed and a detailed assessment plan is devised. The tutor discusses with the learner what kind of evidence will be needed for the next assessment and how it can be obtained. This is clearly recorded on the assessment plan. Learners understand exactly what they are expected to do and by when, and are thoroughly prepared for their assessments. Assessment does not take place at every visit. Learners commented that they would like assessment to take place more frequently.

27. There is good support for learners from their tutor/assessor. Learners know that they can contact their tutor at any time. Learners have a good relationship with their tutors, and are confident about asking for further guidance and support when they feel it is necessary. Pastoral support is good. Learners value the time they spend with their tutors and the individual support they receive, and they are encouraged and motivated by it.

28. Learners are selected by interview. A job analysis is completed which indicates the level of NVQ and the optional units which will be most appropriate for the learner. There is no formal initial assessment. Induction is satisfactory. It is given on a one-to-one basis and covers equal opportunities, health and safety and the modern apprenticeship programme. Most learners can recall their induction to the programme.

29. Although all training takes place on the job, employers are not sufficiently involved, and they have a poor understanding of modern apprenticeship frameworks. They are particularly unclear about key skills. Training for Today does not give employers enough

guidance. There is too little formal communication and employers are not always sure about their learner's progress. There is a handbook for employers, but not all workplace supervisors have a copy. Employers are supportive of their learners.

30. Internal verification is ineffective. There is no internal verification sampling plan, and there is little evidence of internal verification taking place at all in the programme. Progress reviews should be carried out every 12 weeks, but this is not happening for all learners. Often, learners are not given a copy of the review documents. All learners have individual learning plans but some of these are incomplete and they are not kept up-to-date. NVQ units are not certificated as they are achieved. Key skills materials have not been fully developed. Key skills training is not integrated with the vocational training, but completed at the end of the learning programme.

31. Training for Today started to offer foundation modern apprenticeships in 2000-01. The retention rate in 2000-01 was 73 per cent. Nine per cent of learners have successfully completed the apprenticeship framework and 55 per cent of learners are still in learning.

32. Learners are given handouts and question and answer sheets which cover the knowledge required for their training programme, but there are no published learning materials available for learners to use.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 3

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

33. Training for Today provides work-based learning in customer service for 19 young people. Three learners are advanced and five are foundation modern apprentices. There are 11 learners on NVQ programmes at level 2. All the learners have previously gained NVQs in hairdressing and or care through Training for Today. Only one learner is not employed. The planned duration of the NVQ programme is nine months. Training and assessment take place on the job. Learners can, however, attend one of the training centres for tutorials if necessary. Modern apprentices can use the computers at the training centres to work towards the key skill of using information technology. Most learners have already completed key skills qualifications as part of their hairdressing or care programmes. The remainder are acquiring key skills by completing assignments or projects.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts			1		3										
Retained			0	0	2	67										
Successfully completed			0	0	1	33										
Still in learning			1	100	2	67										

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	4		14		11										
Retained	0		9	64	9	82										
Successfully completed	0		3	21	1	9										
Still in learning	3		2	14	0	0										

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	15		13		13		17		34						
Retained	13		13	100	12	92	16	94	25	74						
Successfully completed	2		13	100	12	92	16	94	25	74						
Still in learning	11		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						

STRENGTHS

- excellent achievement rates on NVQ programme
- excellent retention rates on NVQ programme
- good support for individual learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rate of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient involvement of employers in training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed recording and updating of individual learning plans
- better resource materials

34. There are excellent rates of achievement and retention on the NVQ programme, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. In 2000-01, the achievement rate for customer care NVQ learners was 100 per cent, in 1999-2000 it was 92 per cent and in 1998-99, 94 per cent. The retention rate has risen from 74 per cent in 1997-98 to 100 per cent in 2000-01.

35. Learners are well supported by their assessor, who visits them frequently in the workplace. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. The learners have confidence in their assessor and can ask for additional visits if they need to. At each visit, the learner and the assessor discuss how to gather evidence for the next assessment. Short-term targets are set and these are followed up at the next visit. Learners interviewed said that the one-to-one meetings were helpful, particularly in the

TRAINING FOR TODAY

absence of off-the-job training, and that they were encouraged and motivated by them. Assessors helped learners to understand exactly what they needed to do to make progress.

36. The induction and initial assessment processes are satisfactory. As most learners join the customer service programme from other occupational areas, they are not given the full introduction to the organisation, but they do have an induction to the NVQ. Initial assessment will already have been carried out and learners given appropriate support. If that support is still needed, it is given by the assessor during one-to-one sessions either in the workplace or at the training centre. Progress reviews are satisfactory and are carried out at 12-weekly intervals by someone other than the assessor. Details are recorded and copies given to learners.

37. NVQ assessment is satisfactory and is carried out continuously using a variety of methods. Portfolios are internally verified regularly. The process is satisfactory. All learners have individual learning plans, but some of these do not include details of prior learning, although other documents show that learners have completed other NVQs. Some plans have not been updated to include the optional unit selected.

38. The achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Of the four advanced modern apprentices who started their programmes between 1999 and 2001, one has completed the requirements of the framework and one is still in learning. No learners started advanced modern apprenticeship programmes in 2001-02. Of the learners who started in 1999-2000, 67 per cent were retained for the planned duration of the programme.

39. Of the 11 foundation modern apprentices who started their programmes in 1999-2000, only nine per cent completed the apprenticeship framework. In 2000-01 the proportion was 21 per cent. The proportion of learners remaining on their programme for its planned duration was 82 per cent in 1999-2000 and 64 per cent in 2000-01. Of the learners who started their programme in 2001-02, 75 per cent are still in training.

40. Key skills training materials are inadequate. There has been little progress in integrating key skills training with customer service NVQs. Training for Today identified its handling of key skills as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

41. Employers are not sufficiently involved in the training. All training takes place in the workplace, but Training for Today does not agree structured training plans with the employers when learners start their customer service NVQ. A job analysis is not carried out to identify what training can be done in the workplace. Employers are shown information about the NVQ units but are not fully aware of what the learner needs to do or the required standards. Some employers are not involved in the selection of the optional NVQ unit taken by their learners. Some have produced witness testimonies for learners. Most are unaware of which units their learners have achieved or what still needs to be done. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness.

42. Learners interviewed said that they have adequate resource materials from their employers or from their previous NVQs. Training for Today provides some additional materials covering legislation and topics such as body language. These are not always well presented.

Poor Practice

The assessor cross-references all the learners' evidence to the NVQ performance criteria for them. This is discussed with the learners so that they understand how they have met the criteria. However, the learners' role is too passive. It is the assessor who completes the sheets and writes the reference numbers on the pieces of evidence.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	114	4

43. Training for Today provides hairdressing training for 114 learners. Thirty-one are advanced modern apprentices, 33 are foundation modern apprentices and 50 learners are working towards NVQs at levels 1 and 2. Some learners are recruited by Training for Today by direct marketing to school leavers, some are referred by the careers service and some are referred by their employers. Eighty-three learners are employed and the remainder are in work placements. The company has two modern, fully equipped hairdressing training salons, one in Prestwich and one in Bolton. Most level 1 NVQ learners work in Training for Today's own training salons. Learners working for NVQs at levels 1 and 2 are given one day of off-the-job training each week at Training for Today's salons. Practical training for level 3 NVQ learners is given in the workplace and background knowledge sessions are held at the training centres. The foundation modern apprenticeship programme is planned to take two years, and the advanced modern apprenticeship programme, three years. The level 1 NVQ programme is planned to take less than one year and the level 2 programme, two years. Key skills training is integrated with vocational training.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	5		31		26		11		12						
Retained	0		17	55	12	46	6	55	4	33						
Successfully completed	0		0	0	4	15	4	36	3	25						
Still in learning	5		17	55	8	31	0	0	1	8						

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	27		43		32		34								
Retained	1		21	49	14	44	21	62								
Successfully completed	1		7	16	11	34	17	50								
Still in learning	20		13	30	0	0	0	0								

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	45		55		45		50		116						
Retained	33		38	69	30	67	31	62	54	47						
Successfully completed	1		19	35	29	64	28	56	53	46						
Still in learning	32		16	29	1	2	1	2	0	0						

STRENGTHS

- well-equipped salons for off-the-job training
- effective support for individual learners
- some good learning materials

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates for modern apprentices
- insufficient opportunities for NVQ assessment
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better access to progress review documents for learners
- more work-based assessors
- more demanding medium-term targets

TRAINING FOR TODAY

44. Training for Today has two modern, well-equipped hairdressing training salons which are located in Bolton and Prestwich. Both are realistic working environments and they are ideally suited for NVQ assessments. They offer a good working environment. Learners use good-quality hair products and are able to work to high standards. Computers are used in the reception area at both centres and these are used for clients' records, stock control and to help with the collection of evidence for key skills.

45. Training for Today selects learners by interview. As part of the interview process they are given an initial assessment, the results of which are used to plan appropriate training and support. Learners have a good recollection of their induction. The induction includes comprehensive information about equal opportunities, health and safety and the NVQ programme.

46. Learners and employers have good access to support. They can contact the trainers by telephone outside office hours. This is formally recorded in the employer's communication record, which ensures open communication and allows the action taken to be monitored. All learners have a progress review every 12 weeks. Records are kept by Training for Today and the employer, but some learners do not get to see these records. Level 3 learners have one-to-one support for portfolio-building and assignments. All level 1 learners have additional tuition by a qualified basic skills tutor. During these sessions, the tutor effectively relates the basic skills tuition to practical hairdressing situations.

47. Training for Today has recently introduced some good-quality learning materials. These include a document that gives the learner clear guidance on which activities in the hairdressing programme will provide evidence for key skills. A hairdressing induction pack is given to learners. The pack is easy to read and covers all aspects of induction including equal opportunities, health and safety, NVQs and key skills, the programme of work, salon rules and routine, and a resource list. The pack also covers possible career progression opportunities. All learners interviewed by inspectors remembered their induction and referred to the pack. Handouts used for background knowledge sessions were of good quality and useful both during the session and for revision.

48. Most learners enjoy their training and are satisfied with its quality. The learning sessions observed in the training centre were good or satisfactory. Employers are supportive of learners but Training for Today does not give them enough guidance on their roles and responsibilities. There are good opportunities for learners to gain craft skills in the workplace. The programme is flexible and learners can start at any time.

49. The retention rate on modern apprenticeship programmes is poor. For the advanced modern apprenticeship, the retention rate in 1998-99 was 55 per cent and in 1999-2000, it declined to 46 per cent. For the foundation modern apprenticeship, the retention rate in 1998-99 was 62 per cent and in 1999-2000, it was 44 per cent. Achievement is poor on modern apprenticeship programmes and shows a declining trend. For the advanced modern apprenticeships, in 1998-99 the achievement rate was

36 per cent, but in 1999-2000 this fell to 15 per cent. For the foundation modern apprenticeship, in 1998-99 the achievement rate was 50 per cent and in 1999-2000 it dropped to 34 per cent.

50. There are insufficient assessment opportunities for learners. There is a shortage of clients in the training salons where most assessment takes place. Assessments are not planned. They depend on the availability of suitable clients for learners to work on. Internal verification forms show a slow rate of achievement of practical hairdressing units. Little use is made of witness testimony. Training for Today has links with approximately 100 salons but very few assessments are carried out in the workplace. There are only five work-based assessors. This was identified as a weakness in Training for Today's self-assessment report.

51. The co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Communication between staff at the training centres and work-based assessors is informal. Some training does take place on the job, but it is not formally linked to the off-the-job training. Internal verification in the training centres is satisfactory. However, there are no formal meetings for work-based assessors to share good practice and ensure standardisation across the provision.

Good Practice

Training for Today took eight learners to Le Mans in France to take part in an international hairdressing competition. An exchange visit was organised and French students attended Training for Today and worked in local salons. A similar visit is planned for this year. This event increased learners' motivation, broadened their personal experience and increased their enthusiasm for hairdressing.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	65	4

52. Training for Today provides training in the care of older people for foundation and advanced modern apprentices, and learners on NVQ programmes. Learners are recruited following referrals from the careers service, or directly from employers. There are 13 advanced modern apprentices, 41 foundation modern apprentices and 11 learners on NVQ training programmes. All learners are either in work placements or employed in nursing and residential homes in Bolton and the surrounding area. Most training is carried out in the workplace. Learners with additional learning needs attend workshops at one of the two training centres every week. The other learners receive monthly one-to-one tutorials in the workplace. Background knowledge for the NVQ comes from a workbook. Key skills training is started towards the end of the learners' programme.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	8		14		9		2		3						
Retained	0		5	36	4	44	0	0	2	67						
Successfully completed	0		1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Still in learning	7		4	29	2	22	0	0	0	0						

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	34		38		47		16								
Retained	0		21	55	21	45	8	50								
Successfully completed	0		2	5	8	17	4	25								
Still in learning	26		12	32	3	6	0	0								

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	11		27		16		10		24						
Retained	8		9	33	6	38	2	20	9	38						
Successfully completed	0		6	22	6	38	2	20	9	38						
Still in learning	8		3	11	0	0	0	0	0	0						

STRENGTHS

- good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress by learners
- poor achievement rate of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor retention rates for most programmes
- inflexible NVQ training programme

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective use of individual learning plans
- more structured off-the-job training

53. Learners are given good support throughout their training, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Training for Today's staff have a detailed knowledge and understanding of learners' personal circumstances. Learners with additional learning needs attend one of the training centres weekly, where they receive effective one-to-one support with their assignments and written questions. Learners keep the telephone number of the training centre in their portfolios and staff are readily available to speak to them. Learners know that they can contact Training for Today and a member of staff will arrange extra visits.

54. Many learners make slow progress. Most are required to complete a significant number of written assignments from the workbook before they are assessed in the workplace. Learners are not set NVQ targets early enough. Some learners are set

TRAINING FOR TODAY

targets to achieve their first NVQ unit six months or more into the training programme. Recently, some learners have been assessed early in their programme. Their targets are set for a more appropriate timescale. Assessment is carried out in the workplace. Some of the work placements have qualified work-based assessors but most assessments are still carried out by assessors from Training for Today. Learners are assessed regularly and to a satisfactory standard.

55. Few learners achieve all the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. This was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. On foundation modern apprenticeship programmes, the achievement rate was 25 per cent in 1998-99 and 17 per cent in 1999-2000. Only one learner has completed an advanced modern apprenticeship since 1997. Key skills training is not carried out from the beginning as an integral part of the apprenticeship programme. The key skills requirements are not fully understood by some of the staff. Employers are aware of key skills but have little understanding of the requirements. Some learners have now started collecting evidence for key skills awards early in the programme. There is no formal key skills training for learners although some now receive one-to-one tuition when they attend the centre.

56. Retention rates for the advanced modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes are unsatisfactory. On foundation modern apprenticeships, the retention rate has improved from 50 per cent in 1998-99 to 55 per cent in 2000-01. The retention rate has declined on advanced modern apprenticeships from 67 per cent in 1997-98 to 36 per cent in 2000-01. This weakness was partly identified in the self-assessment report. Learners leaving the programme early are visited by the internal verifier. Their reasons for leaving early are discussed, and recorded in great detail.

57. Training for Today tells learners which NVQ units they will be taking. Learners are not able to choose the most appropriate NVQ units for their own particular workplace. However, following recent discussions with employers, more suitable units will be offered to learners in the future.

58. A detailed job analysis is completed during recruitment. This identifies the appropriate NVQ level for the learner, based on their current job role. The learners' needs for training in health and safety, moving and handling and first aid are identified. This is discussed with the employer. The training is well co-ordinated. Learners are made aware of their aims, objectives and progress through tutorials and reviews. There is insufficient recording of how training is to be provided. Training for Today does not always discuss and agree with employers what their respective responsibilities are to meet learners' training needs. Employers are not aware of the areas covered during off-the-job training unless they ask the learner.

59. When learners attend weekly training workshops, they are given one-to-one support and detailed feedback on their progress and achievement by tutors. The workshop sessions are not well structured. The concentration of the group can be lost while one-to-one teaching takes place, and some learners waste time. There are plenty of written

resources available for learners to use.

Good Practice

A learner who has recently found out that she is pregnant has been encouraged to remain on the programme. She is receiving additional visits to help her to make quicker progress and achieve more NVQ units before going on maternity leave.

Poor Practice

Advanced modern apprentices are collecting evidence for a unit that is not related to their work environment. They will not be able to demonstrate competence in this activity.

Foundation programmes

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	22	2

60. There are 22 learners attending the Life Skills training programme. Life Skills training is provided at both training centres. Learners are referred by a personal adviser from the local careers service. They take part in activities which are intended to increase their motivation and employability, and further their personal development. The training lasts for 15 weeks but can be extended. Several learners have remained on the programme for up to 18 weeks. Twenty hours a week is spent on Life Skills training. The programme also includes training in literacy, numeracy, confidence building, jobsearch and information technology (IT). After four weeks in training, one day each week can be spent at a work placement. This is intended to increase the young person's understanding of the world of work and to develop their employability skills.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Life Skills	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	62		51		8										
Retained	53		46	90	5	62										
Successfully completed	31		46	90	5	62										
Still in learning	22		0	0	0	0										

STRENGTHS

- good personal development for learners
- good use of IT to assist learning
- good practical support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate individual development plans
- insufficient integration of basic skills training with Life Skills

61. Learners are interviewed by Life Skills tutors from Training for Today after being referred by a personal adviser from the careers service. The personal adviser is responsible for the initial assessment and the Learning Gateway individual development plan. Learners receive a thorough introduction to the programme, which is carried out on a one-to-one basis. They have a good understanding of Training for Today's procedures, which are explained carefully to them. They have a clear understanding of the complaints procedure and know to whom they should speak if they are dissatisfied.

62. Learners are given many good opportunities for personal development. They plan and organise outings to local places of interest, and fund them by selling a magazine they have produced themselves. These activities help learners to develop their communication and listening skills, and increase their confidence and motivation. Learners acquire essential skills such as reliability, timekeeping, and working with others. Most learners complete their planned learning and there is a good rate of progress into employment or further training. Between September 2001 and January 2002, 35 per cent of learners who completed the programme moved on to mainstream training. Of these, 72 per cent went on to NVQ programmes with Training for Today.

63. There is good use of IT in the learning programme. Learners are expected to research a project using the Internet. They choose topics such as child development, equal opportunities or the misuse of drugs. There are sufficient computers available at both training centres. The machines are well maintained and have Internet access. There is appropriate software for basic skills learning. The training rooms can be used for whole-group computer training sessions, or by individuals.

64. Good practical support is given to learners throughout the Life Skills programme. Poor attendance at a work placement or training centre is quickly followed up by telephone, letters and contact with the personal adviser. The retention rate on the Life Skills programme has improved from 62 per cent in 1999-2000, to 90 per cent in 2001-02. Between September 2001 and January 2002, the retention rate was 85 per cent. There is a weekly meeting of Life Skills tutors and their line manager at which learners' attendance is monitored and any problems with attendance, timekeeping or behaviour are discussed. Training for Today gives a certificate to learners with good attendance records. Tutors have good links with specialist services such as a pregnancy support worker, housing associations for young people and careers advisers. The Life Skills staff have access to a named careers adviser as well as the learner's personal adviser, so that issues can be dealt with quickly.

TRAINING FOR TODAY

65. Training for Today's individual development plans do not identify specific learning goals or set targets and timescales for their achievement. The plans contain only general headings to identify learning goals. The information from the initial assessment of basic skills carried out by Training for Today is not reflected in the individual development plan. Learners are not told the results of the assessments. Learners' progress is not recorded on the plan. The plan is not kept up to date and information is not recorded about the learning that has occurred during the Life Skills activities. Learners speak in general terms of having gained confidence from the activities, but tutors do not record how the activities have assisted specifically in building up confidence so that further steps can be identified. The progress reviews carried out by the personal adviser from the careers service are discussed with the Life Skills tutor. Learners' attainments while on the Life Skills programme do not form part of these progress reviews.

66. Basic skills training is not integrated with Life Skills activities. Staff are unclear about how to help learners improve their basic skills. There are few attempts to use the national basic skills curriculum. Individual learning plans do not include the progress and achievements in basic skills made by learners on the Life Skills programme.

Good Practice

A magazine is produced by the learners on Life Skills programmes. It contains news and articles produced by learners using computer skills in word processing and graphics. The magazine features articles, character drawings, questionnaires, jokes, recipes, a puzzle page, music top 10, sports stars and articles on 'the best day of my life.' The magazine is sold for 20p to 50p and contributes towards the cost of external visits.