

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PSC Training and Development Limited**

25 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

PSC Training and Development Limited is a privately owned company which provides work-based training for young people and adults. At the time of the inspection there were 374 trainees, of whom 231 were on youth training programmes and 143 were on adult training programmes. Forty-two were advanced modern apprentices, and 82 were foundation modern apprentices. The remainder were on other work-based training programmes for young people. Of these, 47 were following programmes in business administration, 38 in construction, 57 in engineering and 15 in retailing and customer service. There were six health care and two hospitality trainees. Training programmes in health care and hospitality were not inspected because of the low number of trainees on them.

### Overall judgement

PSC Training and Development Limited provides good training in retailing and customer service, and satisfactory training in construction. Training in business administration and engineering is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of PSC Training and Development Limited are unsatisfactory. The overall quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of trainees.

### Work-based learning for young people

Staff have appropriate occupational experience. Trainees receive good support. On-the-job training in retailing and customer service is well-structured. Construction trainees work through a well-planned off-the-job training programme. The training timetable is arranged flexibly to meet trainees' needs. Retention rates are good on construction and retail and customer service programmes. Most portfolios of evidence are of a high standard. Retail and customer service trainees achieve additional qualifications to obtain more skills and improve their employability. There are good resources for training in welding. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. Achievement rates are low in engineering and business administration. Trainees' key skills are insufficiently developed. Trainees' progress reviews are not effective. The staff carrying out the reviews do not help the trainees identify what they need to do in order to make more progress towards achieving their qualification.

### Leadership and management

PSC Training and Development Limited does not manage all of the activities involved in the training of young people effectively. Feedback from trainees, staff and employers is acted upon. There are well-developed staff training arrangements.

There are good service level agreements with subcontractors. However, training is often unstructured. Employers are not sufficiently involved in training and assessment. Although PSC Training and Development Limited has been in operation since 1994, many of its policies, systems and procedures are still being developed. PSC Training and Development Limited has appropriate equal opportunities policies and procedures but does not adequately monitor the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. Arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of training are underdeveloped. Recently, the company has introduced quality assurance procedures which are set out clearly in writing but some of these are not implemented effectively. Staff have a poor understanding of quality assurance requirements. Internal verification is not planned effectively. Assessment practices are often weak. The management information is adequate but insufficient use is made of data collected. Good practice is not systematically shared between staff or across different programmes. A new management team has been in post since May 2001 and it is starting to identify ways of improving areas of provision.

## GRADES

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

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

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

<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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

## KEY STRENGTHS

- good arrangements for staff training
- good retention rates on construction and in retailing and customer services programmes
- high standard of trainees' portfolios
- opportunities for trainees to gain supplementary qualifications
- good, well-planned on-the-job training in retailing and customer services
- good personal support for trainees
- flexibly arranged training to meet trainees' individual needs

## KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate monitoring of the quality of training
- weak internal verification process
- lack of focus in trainees' progress reviews
- weak assessment practices
- inadequate monitoring of subcontractors' performance
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- low awareness among trainees and employers of the importance of equal opportunities
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- low achievement rates in engineering and business administration
- slow rate of progress by trainees
- inadequate training in key skills
- lack of structure in some workplace training
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further sharing of good practice
- more frequent staff appraisal
- better training resources in construction and motor vehicle
- closer involvement of workplace supervisors in assessment
- better use of data in identifying trends in trainees' performance
- better understanding of key skills among workplace supervisors
- clearer objectives and targets for trainees

## THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. PSC Training and Development Limited (PSC) was established in 1994. The company operates from a training centre in Plympton on the outskirts of Plymouth. PSC offers work-based training for young people and for adults, modern apprenticeships, and prevocational training. The company offers training to local companies in the occupational areas of construction, engineering, business administration, retail and customer service, health care and hospitality. There are 36 employees in the company. In addition to the managing director, there are six managers and 29 full-time employees. All are qualified and are experienced in a range of occupational areas. At the time of the inspection, the company was in the process of restructuring to meet the demands of its contracts. The training centre contains classrooms, workshops, conference rooms, offices and staff rooms. Funding is provided through Devon and Cornwall Learning Skills Council (LSC).

2. In Devon, there are many small businesses. Only 22 per cent of jobs are in enterprises which employ 200 or more employees. Twenty-six per cent of employers in Devon have fewer than 10 employees and there are 3,000 such employers in the county. Plymouth became a unitary authority in April 1998. It was designated a pathfinder authority with action zones in education, employment and health. The city has a population of 255,000. Minority ethnic groups make up approximately 1 per cent of the population. Plymouth is a major manufacturing centre in Devon. The city won substantial funding in the late 1990s, to help it recover from the recession of the early 1990s when cut backs in the defence industry significantly reduced employment opportunities in the area. Tourism is an increasingly important employment sector in Plymouth. In 2000, the unemployment rate in the country was low at 3.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.2 per cent. In some inner wards of the city, however, unemployment rates remain high. In 2000, the proportion of 16-year olds in the county who stayed on in full-time education was high at 83 per cent, compared with 70.7 per cent in the country as a whole. In 2000, the proportion of 16-year olds in the county who obtained five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, was 47 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

## THE INSPECTION

3. PSC's programmes in construction, engineering, business administration and retailing and customer service were inspected in the week beginning 25 June 2001. The inspection team had studied the self-assessment report. The inspection was carried out by seven inspectors over a total of 21 days. They interviewed 43 trainees, conducted 31 interviews with PSC's staff, visited 17 workplaces, and interviewed 20 workplace supervisors. They observed instruction in classrooms, and examined a range of documents including trainees' portfolios of evidence, trainees' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and the reports of awarding bodies.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>



## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	38	3

4. There are 38 trainees on construction training programmes. The trainees work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, and painting and decorating at levels 1,2, and 3. There are currently 22 foundation modern apprentices and four advanced modern apprentices. There are 12 trainees on other work-based training for young people. All trainees are placed with, or employed by small, local employers in the Plympton and Plymouth areas. Fourteen of the trainees are employed. Some trainees attend off-the-job training for one day each week. Other trainees attend off-the-job training on a full-time basis or through block release. All trainees have an initial interview with a member of the training centre's staff to identify any additional learning needs they may have. Fourteen trainees receive help with additional literacy and/or numeracy. Trainees are recruited throughout the year. Flexible attendance arrangements which can be negotiated individually, are particularly valued by employers. The training centre runs an introductory NVQ level 1 course for local schools with the aim of familiarising school pupils with a work-related environment and the training centre. There are five trainer/assessors. They have considerable experience in the construction industry and are all occupationally qualified. Inspectors mainly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and with the grade given by the company.

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)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							18		22	100
Still in training							0	0	22	100
Left without completing the framework							4	22	3	21

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					4				6	100
Still in training					0	0	4	100	4	67
AMA framework completed					0	0	2	100	2	67

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					21		17		19	100
Still in training					0	0	11	65	12	63
Left without completing individual learning plan					9	43	3	18	3	27
NVQ level 1 completed					0	0	3	18	7	64

## STRENGTHS

- good training
- high retention rates for apprentices
- well-presented evidence in trainees' portfolios

## WEAKNESSES

- inadequate process for trainees' progress reviews
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- lack of understanding of NVQ programmes
- little assessment in the workplace for most trainees

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better resources for off-the-job training
- more frequent sharing of good practice among staff

5. Off-the-job training is good. It is well planned and ably managed. It takes place in a well-ordered, disciplined environment. Trainers are aware of trainees' training needs and these have been identified through initial assessment. Off-the job assessment is carefully scheduled. Trainees are well motivated. Adequate practical resources are available to trainees, although at times, text books and tools for carpentry and joinery are in short

supply. Much of the accommodation is in poor condition and has not been subject to routine maintenance.

6. Most portfolios of evidence are good. The evidence in them is well presented and gives a clear indication of trainees' progress towards their NVQ. Evidence used includes witness statements, trainees' own accounts of their activities and a range of training and assessment materials. The evidence in most portfolios is clearly cross-referenced to units of the NVQ. Assessment documents are detailed, clearly designed and meet the requirements of the awarding body. There are sound procedures for internal verification which are followed methodically. Training staff on construction programmes do not identify and share good practice systematically.

7. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. There are no procedures for ensuring that on-the-job training relates to off-the-job training or the requirements of the NVQ. On-the-job training is neither planned carefully nor structured well. Employers help the trainees by providing them with a range of occupational experience. Trainees work alongside experienced and qualified workers to learn the practical skills associated with their craft areas. Most work on a range of jobs within their skills area and obtain a good mixture of practical skills and experience. The content of on-the-job training, however, is usually determined by the needs of the employer rather than those of the trainee. In some instances, these needs happen to be the same. In other instances, however, trainees are not able to develop the competences they need in order to obtain their NVQ. Employers are not always familiar with the requirements of the NVQ or the assessment standards. Most workplace supervisors are unaware of the modern apprenticeship framework and of the content of the off-the-job training. Although many trainees develop useful skills in the workplace, workplace supervisors do not encourage them to record evidence of these.

8. There are some weak assessment practices. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. A disproportionate amount of assessment takes place during off-the-job training when trainees carry out exercises under simulated workplace conditions. Trainees do not gather evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences and key skills through their everyday work. Off-the job training is rarely made specifically relevant to trainees' experience in the workplace. Trainees do not gather evidence of their acquisition of key skills through their everyday work. Trainees receive frequent reviews of their progress both on and off the job. Reviews carried out off the job, however, do not focus sufficiently on trainees' progress towards achieving their NVQ. Records of progress reviews are not detailed enough. For example, they do not include specific reference to health and safety. During their reviews, the trainees are not set demanding targets which they have to achieve by the time of the next review.

9. Retention rates on construction programmes are good. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices for the past three years has been 100 per cent. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices in 1999-2000 and 2000-01 was 80 per cent. The retention rate for trainees on other work-based programmes has risen from 57 per cent in 1998-99, to 72 per cent in 2000-01. Trainees' achievement rates in this

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occupational area have been mainly satisfactory. On average, one third of PSC's annual intake of trainees have additional learning needs. In 1998-99, 18 per cent of trainees on other work-based training for young people achieved NVQ level 1 and 41 per cent achieved an NVQ at level 2. In 1999-2000 64 per cent achieved an NVQ at level 1. Four of the eight trainees who started their modern apprentice programmes in 1999-2000 and 2000-01, have achieved a full NVQ. The remainder are still in training. It is too early to determine an achievement rate for foundation apprentices, half of whom have additional learning needs.

### Poor Practice

*Workplace supervisors are not rigorous in ensuring that trainees observe health and safety regulations. For example, trainees were allowed to wear inappropriate shoes.*

## Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing

## Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	57	4

10. There are 57 trainees on engineering programmes leading towards NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in electrical installation, motor vehicle (mechanics and body) and welding. Twenty-three trainees are foundation modern apprentices, 21 are advanced modern apprentices and 13 are working towards NVQs at level 1. The electrical installation training is subcontracted to the local further education college. Electrical installation trainees usually attend the college one or two days each week for training and assessment. Motor vehicle and welding trainees spend one day on off-the-job training at PSC's training centre. On the remaining three or four days of the week, trainees receive on-the-job training in the workplace. School leavers attend the training centre for two days each week for a starter course in engineering. They also have a work placement on one day each week. Inspectors did not agree with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and they found additional weaknesses. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

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)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					6		15		28
Still in training					5	83	13	87	28	100
FMA framework completed					1	17	0	0	1	5
NVQ level 2 completed					2	33	0	0	1	5
Left without completing the framework					1	17	2	13	4	19

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					6		8		31
Still in training					5	83	5	62	21	68
AMA framework completed					0	0	2	25	3	20
NVQ level 2 completed					1	17	2	25	1	7
NVQ level 3 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					1	17	3	38	4	27

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					25		21		20
Still in training					19	76	11	52	13	65
Individual learning plan completed					1	4	0	0	1	4
Left without completing individual learning plan					5	20	10	48	7	30
NVQ level 1 completed					3	12	11	52	3	13
NVQ level 2 completed					3	12	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed					2	8	0	0	1	4
NVQ level 4 completed					0	0	1	5	0	0

## STRENGTHS

- good training resources for welding
- high standard of portfolios

## WEAKNESSES

- inadequate process for reviews of trainees' progress
- poor work-based assessment and internal verification practices
- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications by trainees
- poor resources for motor vehicle engineering
- failure to make key skills training integral to vocational training
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider range of training and learning activities

11. Trainees gain experience from working with enthusiastic, experienced and occupationally well-qualified instructors who aim to provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to increase their employability. All trainees undergo an initial assessment process. Those identified as needing additional learning support receive this. The staff who carry out the learning support sessions are suitably experienced and occupationally qualified. Trainees have access to good fabrication and welding resources at the training centre. The well-equipped workshops contain a range of up-to-date fabrication and welding machines. The off-the-job training programme is well planned. Training on test pieces is often followed by work on real products. Trainees

have designed and fabricated gates, manufactured complex agricultural equipment, serviced and repaired PSC's own vehicles, and renovated a vintage car. Trainees develop skills that are highly valued by their workplace supervisors. Training resources for motor vehicle engineering, however, are poor. The motor vehicle workshop is not well equipped. Much of the motor vehicle equipment is reaching the end of its useful life. Some motor vehicle training sessions were poorly managed. Instructors failed to ensure that all trainees were fully involved in the training activity.

12. Key skills training is not an integral part of training programmes. Some trainees have made little or no progress in developing progress on key skills. The staff who carry out the learning support sessions are suitably experienced and occupationally qualified. Trainees do not gather evidence of their acquisition of key skills through their everyday work. Employers and workplace supervisors have little understanding of the key skills requirements in the training programmes. Trainees collect evidence relating to key skills during their off-the-job training activities. Key skills training is only introduced at a late stage in trainees' programmes. Many trainees who are well into their training programme have yet to gather any evidence of their acquisition of key skills. Most key skills assessment takes place at the end of the trainees' programme.

13. Off- and on-the-job training are not co-ordinated effectively. The off-the-job training which trainees receive at college is not always relevant to the jobs they carry out in the workplace. The on-the-job training some trainees receive does not meet their needs. Trainees' workplace activities are determined by production requirements and do not necessarily enable the trainees to develop the range of competences they need in order to obtain their NVQ. Most workplace supervisors have little understanding of what trainees have to do in order to obtain their qualifications. Some do not know what tasks trainees undertake when they are at the training centre. Very little assessment is carried out in the workplace. Trainees gather most of their evidence through work under simulated conditions in the off-the-job training workshops. Some assessment practices are poor. Trainees have completed assessment records without supplying sufficient evidence of competence in some skills. Trainees have little understanding of how to cross-reference their evidence to NVQ units, elements and performance criteria. Assessment records do not clearly show assessment decisions, the outcomes of appeals procedures or the trainees' responses to assessors' verbal questions on theory. The internal verification process is not planned adequately. It does not ensure all assessors are provided with feedback on their performance.

14. Trainees' progress reviews are ineffective. Although trainees receive frequent reviews of their progress, the review process is not structured. Reviews are of a pastoral nature, and do not focus sufficiently on trainees' progress towards achieving their NVQ. There is little detailed discussion of trainees' work between training staff, the workplace supervisors and trainees. Trainees are not set specific targets relating to their performance at the training centre or in the workplace. There is little mention of health and safety or equal opportunities issues during the reviews. In many instances, the workplace supervisors are not involved in the reviews of trainees' progress.

15. The retention rate for engineering trainees is good. Over the past four years, of the 140 trainees who began training between 1998 and 2001, 72 per cent have either completed, or are still in, training. Only seven of the 42 foundation modern apprentices who began training between 1998 and 2001 left their programmes early. Trainees' portfolios are good. They contain well-presented documentary evidence. This includes photographs and drawings of components worked on and written descriptions of tasks trainees have undertaken at work. Achievement rates, however, are low. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their NVQ. Little effort is made to plan ways of accelerating trainees' progress. Some of the trainees have been on the programme since 1995. Only five of the 10 advanced modern apprentices who started in 1997-98 have completed their apprenticeship framework. Over the past three years, only two of the 42 foundation modern apprentices have achieved their main qualification.

**Poor Practice**

*Instructors do not always ensure that trainees use the correct equipment to enable them to work safely in workshops.*



**Business administration, management & professional****Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	48	4

16. There are 48 trainees on programmes in this occupational area. Training programmes lead to an NVQ in the use of information technology at level 2 and to NVQs in administration at levels 2 and 3. There are 31 foundation modern apprentices. Of these, 26 are working towards an NVQ in business administration at level 2 and five are working towards an NVQ in using information technology at level 2. Sixteen trainees on advanced modern apprenticeships are working towards an NVQ in business administration at level 3. Some trainees are employed when they start their programme. Employers range from small local firms to large regional organisations. The largest employer, a local hospital, has 28 trainees. Most trainees attend the training centre for one day each week for portfolio-building and assessment sessions. Trainees are visited by a trainer/assessor, who provides mentoring and carries out assessment. All training and assessment of administration and information technology trainees is carried out by staff from PSC. All training staff are occupationally experienced and have assessor qualifications. Inspectors did not agree with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, and they found additional weaknesses. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

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

<b>Work-based learning for young people</b>										
<b>Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)</b>	<b>1996-97</b>		<b>1997-98</b>		<b>1998-99</b>		<b>1999-2000</b>		<b>2000-01</b>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					14		37		40
Still in training					0	0	3	8	27	68
FMA framework completed					6	43	14	38	2	5
NVQ level 2 completed					9	64	16	43	4	10
Left without completing the framework					8	57	20	54	11	28

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					19		18		22
Still in training					0	0	2	11	16	73
AMA framework completed					9	47	5	28	1	5
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed					9	47	5	28	1	5
Left without completing the framework					10	53	11	61	5	23

  

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					37		13		4
Still in training					0	0	2	15	1	25
Left without completing individual learning plan					28	76	8	62	1	25
NVQ level 1 completed					1	3	2	15	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					5	14	1	8	2	50
NVQ level 3 completed					1	3	0	0	0	0

**STRENGTHS**

- trainees' success in gaining additional qualifications
- good portfolios of evidence for level 2 NVQ

**WEAKNESSES**

- no planned or structured on-the-job training
- failure to make key skills training and integral part of programmes
- low achievement rates
- little structured theory training

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better target-setting during trainees' progress reviews
- faster progress by trainees through their programme

17. On-the-job training is not well managed. There is poor management and co-

ordination of on-the-job training. It is not carefully planned or structured. The content of on-the-job training is dictated by the nature of the job trainees have to carry out. The training is not planned to enable trainees to develop the requisite NVQ competences and key skills. Employers are given insufficient guidance on what to include in on-the-job training. They have little or no awareness of the theoretical knowledge trainees need to gain to achieve their NVQs and complete their modern apprenticeships. Although trainees receive one-to-one coaching when they are in difficulty or have a problem, and help with their portfolios of evidence, they receive very little structured teaching of occupational skills and knowledge.

18. Training in key skills is not an effective and integral part of trainees' programmes. Most employers do not fully understand what key skills are. Workplace supervisors do not help trainees to develop key skills through their everyday work. Trainees see key skills training as separate from, rather than an integral part of, their vocational training. Trainees are not assessed in key skills until late in their programmes. Trainees are set targets for the completion of NVQ units but not for the acquisition of key skills. Trainees do not cross-reference evidence of NVQ competences to key skills units.

19. Trainees are assessed by through a range of methods, including observation of workplace activities, verbal and written questioning and examination of portfolio evidence. Trainees attend the training centre for one day a week. Experienced training staff give them individual guidance on ways of collecting evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences. The trainees receive little off-the-job training related to theory work. PSC staff are under the impression that trainees receive all necessary training in the workplace. Internal verification practices and records are satisfactory. Internal verification is carried out on a monthly basis. Observation of assessors takes place twice a year.

20. Trainees' NVQ level 2 portfolios are of a good standard. They are well maintained and all the evidence is filed neatly. Work-based evidence is used appropriately. In their portfolios, trainees include a broad range of documents providing evidence of their competences, including summaries describing how they have completed the unit, and witness testimonies with descriptions of the trainees' performance at work. Their knowledge is tested through written and verbal questioning. Advice given by PSC trainer/assessors is well-informed and comprehensive, and helps trainees to complete their NVQ portfolios successfully. The company's staff take a close interest in the welfare of trainees. Trainees value the guidance and support they receive from them.

21. A range of courses leading to additional qualifications, is available to trainees. These include courses related to business administration, such as word and text processing, computing, and the use of various software programmes, first aid, basic health and safety, and patient information management systems. Achievement rates are low. Of the advanced modern apprentices who started in 1998-99 and 1999-2000, only 47 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, completed their apprenticeship framework. Of the foundation modern apprentices, only 43 per cent of those who started in 1998-99 and 38 per cent of those who started in 1999-2000 have completed the framework or

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converted to advanced modern apprenticeships. Retention rates are improving. Fifty-seven per cent of the foundation modern apprentices who started in 1998-99 left early, compared with 28 per cent in 2000-01. Fifty-three per cent of the 1998-99 intake of advanced modern apprentices left early. Twenty-three per cent of the 22 advanced modern apprentices who started in 2000-01 are still in training. Trainees make progress towards achieving their qualifications. Trainees are not set demanding targets. Some trainees are set inappropriate targets which fail to take account of their ability and job roles. There is no systematic procedure for accrediting trainees' prior skills and experience and for ensuring that trainees do not have to undergo training unnecessarily to develop skills they already possess.

## Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation

## Grade 2

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

22. There are 15 trainees in this occupational area. Six are foundation modern apprentices, five of whom are employed. There is one advanced modern apprentice. PSC introduced the foundation and the advanced modern apprenticeship programmes in 1999-2000 and 2000-01, respectively. Trainees are working towards NVQs in customer service, retail operations, distribution and warehousing. Eight trainees are on other work-based training programmes for young people. They are all working towards a NVQ in plant and machinery operation at level 2 and it is intended they should complete work for this within 12 months. Trainees do all their training on the job. Training and assessment of the plant and machinery operation programme are subcontracted to another training provider. Initial assessment is carried out by staff at the training centre. Individual training plans are prepared and these take into account trainees' prior achievements. Trainer/assessors make frequent visits to employers' premises to assess trainees at their work. Trainees have access to additional learning support and guidance if they need it. Trainees can work towards additional qualifications in information technology, health and safety and first aid. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and with the grade given by the company.

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)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started							1		6
Still in training							1	100	6	100
NVQ level 2 completed							0	0	3	50

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started									1
Still in training									1	100

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NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					15		5		10	100
Still in training					14	93	2	40	8	80
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	4	80	8	73

**STRENGTHS**

- high retention rates for modern apprentices
- success of trainees in achieving additional qualifications
- good fork truck training
- high standard of portfolios
- effective assessment in the workplace

**WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate reviews of trainees' progress
- weak links between trainees' theory work and practical activities

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more thorough internal verification
- fuller integration of key skills training with vocational training
- more effective communication between employers and training providers

23. On-the-job training is good. It is well structured and suitably varied. The training is carried out well by qualified and experienced staff. Workplace supervisors and trainer/assessors give trainees well-informed and comprehensive advice. Trainees benefit from good equipment and relevant training materials. The plant and machinery operation training, including fork truck operation, is provided by another training provider. Trainees are encouraged to learn and develop their skills quickly. Employers give trainees a wide range of tasks which enable them to gather evidence of their NVQ competences from various sources. Trainees can be assessed towards their NVQ through their normal, day-to-day activities. Trainees are made aware of the importance of health and safety. Workplace supervisors and trainer/advisors ensure that working practices conform to health and safety regulations. All trainees are motivated. They are enthusiastic about their training programmes and value their practical training highly. Theory work is not always well planned. Trainees do not always have a clear understanding of the complementary relationship between theory and practice. Trainees

do not receive any structured teaching of theory to complement their instruction in practical skills.

24. Assessors carry out assessment of trainees by observing their performance of everyday tasks in the workplace. All assessments are conducted in the workplace. Assessors make frequent visits to trainees in the workplace. During these they aim to monitor trainees' progress, provide support for trainees and monitor the activities of the subcontractor. Additional visits are arranged if necessary. Assessors are occupationally qualified and have a good understanding of required standards. Various assessment methods are used, including observation, questioning and evaluating evidence in the trainees' portfolio. Assessment is planned effectively and recorded clearly. Observation of trainees' performance is carefully recorded. Key skills training is not made a full and integral part of the training programme. Trainees do not have a good understanding of key skills. They do not cross-reference evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences to the key skills units. Most trainees are making slow progress towards the completion of key skills units.

25. PSC carries out an assessment of trainees' basic and key skills at the start of the training programme. The assessment results are used to identify any additional training that trainees may require and they are taken into account when drawing up individual training plans. Staff respond well to trainees' needs for individual support. Employers give good support to their trainees. Most trainees are allowed time during working hours to work on their portfolios. Trainees' progress reviews are ineffective. The reviews are mainly concerned with trainees' attendance, punctuality and general welfare rather than trainees' progress towards achieving the NVQ. Employers are not always involved in the reviews. During the reviews, there is little discussion of trainees' work between PSC staff, the employer, the workplace supervisor and the trainees themselves. The records of reviews contain few specific recommendations or action points. Internal verification is not rigorous. Internal verification is mainly carried out at the end of the training programme. Many trainees are unaware who their internal verifier is.

26. Targets set for the achievement of NVQ units, full NVQs and the completion of the modern apprenticeship framework are often demanding. Account is taken of individual trainees' occupational abilities and prior experience when preparing individual training plans. Target dates are agreed and recorded on the assessment form. Trainer/assessors review progress made towards reaching the targets with the trainees. Trainees have a good understanding of what they have to do and by when they must do it. Employers and training staff encourage trainees to gain additional qualifications to extend their range of skills and improve their employability. Trainees have completed additional training courses in first aid, health and safety, information technology and business administration. Most trainees express satisfaction with their achievement and progress.

27. Portfolios are well presented, carefully organised and contain work of a high standard. They relate closely to the activities in the workplace. Trainees take great pride in their portfolios. They are urged to be as thorough and rigorous as possible in collating their evidence. They are clear about how the evidence must relate to specific criteria

required for each element of the qualification. Retention rates are good. All the foundation and advanced modern apprentices have remained on their programmes. Retention rates for trainees on other work-based training programmes have improved from 40 per cent in 1999-2000 to 82 per cent in 2000-01. In 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, the proportions of trainees who achieved their NVQs were 80 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively.

**Good Practice**

*On starting their fork truck training, trainees work in small groups of three with one instructor and one truck. Trainees benefit from close supervision. They receive intensive and expert one-to-one tuition and quickly learn the skills necessary for safe operation of the truck.*



**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT****Grade 4**

28. PSC has a managing director who has overall responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the company. There are six managers reporting to the managing director. They are responsible for the training co-ordinators, trainer/assessors, administration, finance, NVQ training and adult training, respectively. A total of 29 staff carry out training at the centre, in the workplace and at subcontracted training providers' premises. The company has a policy on equal opportunities. New procedures for quality assurance have been introduced. During 2001, the company was reaccredited as an Investor in People. It has obtained the national quality assurance standard ISO 90001. The company is reviewing its management structure. Inspectors did not agree with some of the strengths in leadership and management identified in the self-assessment report and they found some additional weaknesses. The awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

**STRENGTHS**

- responsiveness of the company to the needs of disabled persons
- effective use of feedback from trainees and employers
- prompt and effective action on complaints
- numerous initiatives to promote equality of opportunity
- comprehensive service level agreements with subcontractors
- good staff training

**WEAKNESSES**

- few links between on- and off-the-job training
- lack of focus in staff appraisal process on staff performance
- fragmented and insufficiently comprehensive quality assurance system
- little understanding of equal opportunities among some employers
- insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace
- lack of understanding of equal opportunities among many trainees
- no systematic identification and sharing of good practice

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more effective analysis of equal opportunities data
- better use of data in identifying trends in trainees' performance

29. Each department manager is required to prepare a detailed annual business plan. The plan includes targets for trainees' recruitment, retention, training and achievements, the estimated projected income during the year, and staff development. There are comprehensive service level agreements with subcontractors. The company maintains a

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database on trainees' personal details, the qualifications trainees aim to achieve, and trainees' achievements. It also collects data on the gender, disabilities and ethnicity of trainees. These data are taken into account in management decisions. Internal communications are good. Regular meetings take place at different levels within the organisation. Informative newsletters are distributed to staff and employers. The company places much value on staff development and provides a good training programme for staff. Staff training is effectively organised and evaluated. Most trainers hold assessor and verifier qualifications and some have a certificate in education. PSC has established effective liaison with a range of external bodies. Staff meet with other local employers, training providers, schools and the FE college on a regular basis.

30. Some key activities are not effectively managed. The training process is not co-ordinated well. There are few links between on-and off-the job training. Many workplace supervisors know little about content of training programmes. They do not ensure that on-the-job training helps trainees to develop the requisite NVQ competences. Some workplace supervisors do not contribute enough to trainees' progress reviews. Few workplace supervisors understand and promote the development of key skills. The monitoring of subcontractors' performance is not systematic. Little use has been made of data to identify trends in achievement rates. In some occupational areas, there has not been enough appropriate action to try and improve trainees' low achievement rates. The staff appraisal system is behind schedule and does not focus sufficiently on performance.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 4**

31. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is updated at six-monthly intervals. Overall responsibility for the promotion of equal opportunities lies with the equal opportunities co-ordinator. There have been a number of initiatives undertaken to promote equal opportunities. PSC staff have received some equal opportunities training. Twenty per cent of trainees and several members of staff have disabilities. The training centre is easily accessible to persons with problems of mobility. PSC uses the equal opportunities data it holds on trainees to plan ways of encouraging applications from persons in groups under-represented on training programmes. Two recently recruited welding trainees are women. Care is taken to ensure that marketing material does not contain photographs presenting stereotypical images of male and female roles in the workplace. The material contains positive images of people with disabilities. The company newsletter regularly contains articles demonstrating its commitment to upholding equality of opportunity. Trainees receive information about the equal opportunities policy during their induction. There is an effective and clearly defined complaints procedure. Detailed records of complaints are kept. Complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively.

32. Monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace is inadequate. The company does not take sufficient action to ensure that all employers and trainees understand and promote equal opportunities. Employers' promotion of equal opportunities arrangements is not monitored systematically. Most workplace supervisors lack awareness of the importance of equal opportunities. After the trainees' induction, staff makes little reference to equal opportunities. Issues related to equal opportunities are not discussed during the training programme or trainees' progress reviews. Training sessions on equal opportunities are provided for staff but are not compulsory. Data on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disabilities are collected and analysed. Targets are not set for proportions of trainees from under-represented groups on programmes. There is inadequate representation of male trainees on some programmes and of female trainees on others. For example, there are no female trainees in construction.

**Quality assurance**

**Contributory grade 4**

33. The company's quality assurance arrangements are very new and they are not applied with consistent thoroughness. The recently appointed quality assurance manager has produced written procedures for quality assurance but these have not yet proved effective. The quality assurance system is fragmented. It does not cover all aspects of the company's work. Few staff understand their own role in quality assurance and how it fits into the quality assurance system as a whole. The company produced its third self-assessment report in February 2001. All staff were involved in its production. The self-assessment report is complemented by a clear action plan. Inspectors considered many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. The company has made progress in rectifying the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. The company systematically collects and analyses the views of trainees, employers and staff. Action is taken on the issues raised.

34. Inconsistencies in the implementation of quality assurance are apparent in all areas. There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of both on- and off-the-job training. The quality assurance process does not cover training, assessment and trainees' progress reviews adequately. In some occupational areas, trainees' progress reviews are not carried out well and assessment practice is poor. There is no evaluative observation of training sessions. The internal verification process is not sufficiently rigorous. Internal verification records are inadequate. No checks are made to find out whether internal verification is carried out with consistent thoroughness. Internal verifiers' feedback usually relates to the range and amount of evidence submitted but not to its quality of trainees' progress. Reviews are not monitored for their effectiveness. PSC does not systematically monitor the quality of training, assessment, verification and review of trainees' progress carried out by subcontractors. Good practice in one area of training is not identified systematically and implemented across all areas.

**Good Practice**

*A disabled trainee who successfully achieved her business administration qualification at the centre is now employed full-time as an administrator in PSC's office.*