

# INSPECTION REPORT

## A & R Training Services Ltd

28 August 2001



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

## **Inadequate provision**

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

## **SUMMARY**

### **The provider**

A & R Training Services Ltd is a private training company based in Huddersfield and Bradford. It offers training for young people and adults in Life Skills, foundation for work, care, animal care, hospitality and retailing and customer service.

### **Overall judgement**

The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of work-based learning is good in foundation for work, satisfactory in care and hospitality and unsatisfactory in retailing and customer service. The leadership and management of A & R Training Services Ltd are satisfactory.

### **Work-based learning for young people**

A & R Training Services Ltd offers training in care for 93 modern apprentices and 72 other work-based learners. It also trains seven modern apprentices and 31 other work-based learners in retailing and customer service and 11 learners and three work-based learners in hospitality. In addition, there are 20 learners on foundation for work courses. Forty-seven per cent of learners who are in training with A & R Training Services Ltd have additional needs. Most learners are employed or in work placements in businesses throughout the Calderdale, Kirklees and Bradford areas. A high proportion of learners, 72 per cent, on foundation for work programmes in 2000-01 achieve all the training objectives set out in their individual learning plans. The proportion of modern apprentices and work-based learners in care, hospitality and retailing and customer services who achieve their training objectives is low. However, the achievement rates of these learners are beginning to improve and they are making good progress towards achieving their qualifications within the agreed timescales. Retention rates on the foundation for work programme are good, but on most other training programmes they are poor. Training in all occupational areas is planned to meet the needs of individual learners and employers. All learners benefit from good personal support.

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of A & R Training Services Ltd are satisfactory. There is a clear business plan, which sets out the training objectives for the year. There is effective communication with staff, which involves them in the planning process and makes sure that all staff are aware of and understand the company's objectives. Arrangements for staff development are effective. A & R Training Services Ltd has a comprehensive system for assuring the quality of training and effective arrangements for monitoring the implementation of its equal opportunities policy. Learners' understanding of equal opportunities is too narrow. A & R Training

Services Ltd has no strategy for improving retention and achievement rates for each group of learners.

## GRADES

<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

<b>Hospitality, sport, leisure &amp; travel</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

<b>Foundation programmes</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2
Life Skills	2

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	2

## KEY STRENGTHS

- good strategic planning
- good internal communications
- well-planned staff development
- effective implementation of equal opportunities policy
- effective quality assurance procedures

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- poor management of key skills training
- no strategy to improve retention and achievement rates
- poor understanding of equal opportunities by learners

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- further involvement of employers in training
- better conclusions in departmental reports

## THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. A & R Training Services Ltd (A & R) was established in 1992. Since then, it has gradually increased the range of occupational training it offers to include training for young people and adults in childcare, community care, retailing, customer service, warehousing, hospitality, catering and animal care. Training in animal care is subcontracted to a local, privately owned boarding kennels. A & R has premises in Bradford and in Huddersfield, which is its main administrative centre. It has 23 staff and 242 learners. Most learners are employed by companies in the Huddersfield and Bradford areas. Most of their training takes place on the job, with off-the-job training given by A & R.

2. Modern apprenticeships and other work-based learning are funded through a contract with the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 4.6 per cent in Calderdale and 15.6 per cent in Bradford, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In June 2001, the unemployment rate in Calderdale was 4 per cent and Bradford had an unemployment rate of 4.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Calderdale achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 44 per cent and in Bradford the proportion was only 34 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. Sixty-six per cent of school leavers stay on in full-time education, or enter training, compared with 69 per cent nationally.

## THE INSPECTION

3. A team of seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days at A & R during August 2001. They interviewed 53 learners, conducted 36 interviews with A & R's staff, visited 32 employers, and interviewed 26 work-based supervisors. Inspectors observed 20 training and assessment sessions. They examined a range of documents including portfolios of evidence, learners' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. Inspectors studied A & R's self-assessment report which was produced in March 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	5
Health, social care & public services	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
Foundation programmes	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>



## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	38	4

4. A & R offers work-based learning for 38 learners in retailing, warehousing and customer service. There is one foundation modern apprentice, 29 advanced modern apprentices and eight other work-based learners. Sixty-three per cent of the learners are employed and the others are in work placements in retail outlets, customer service departments and warehousing in the Calderdale, Kirklees and Bradford areas. A & R places learners who have been identified as needing additional support, in sheltered employment and visits them each week. Assessment takes place every four to six weeks. Learners are referred to A & R from the careers service, employers and from schools. All learners are given an induction which takes place in the training centre for non-employed learners and in the workplace for those who are employed. The induction lasts for half a day and includes training in health and safety at work, equal opportunities and employment roles and responsibilities, as well as an overview of the training programme. Learners receive key skills training and assessment as part of their NVQ training. A & R's assessors conduct progress reviews and assessments at learners' workplaces. They also carry out off-the-job training in the workplaces. Inspectors identified some of the strengths and weaknesses which were identified in the self-assessment report, but found additional significant weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that 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)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			14		1		1		0	
Still in training			0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0
FMA framework completed			4	29	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			6	43	0	0	1	100	0	0
Left without completing the framework			9	64	1	100	1	100	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			10		27		56		0
Still in training			1	10	4	15	24	43	0	0
AMA framework completed			0	0	3	11	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			5	50	11	41	8	14	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	10	3	11	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			9	90	20	74	32	57	0	0

  

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			19		33		33		0
Still in training			0	0	1	3	7	21	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			3	16	1	3	1	3	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			10	53	25	76	20	61	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	11	1	3	1	3	0	0

## STRENGTHS

- flexible training arrangements
- good support for individual learners
- good training resources
- excellent opportunities for progression

## WEAKNESSES

- inadequate initial assessment
- inadequate assessment practices
- weak internal verification process
- poor achievement and retention rates

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed recording of support given to learners

5. The training arrangements are flexible enough to meet the needs of learners and employers. Learners attend planned training sessions in the evenings. A & R gives a timetable with details of this training to learners and employers. Assessors carry out training sessions and assessments during the weekends and early in the morning if necessary to fit in with learners' shift patterns. A & R identified these strengths in their self-assessment report. Employers' involvement in the training is satisfactory.

6. A & R's staff give good individual support to learners. They visit learners in the workplace regularly, sometimes every week, when the learner lacks confidence and motivation. Many learners become more confident and are offered permanent employment. Learners have progress reviews every four to six weeks and include reviews of learners' personal development. A & R uses a number of charity shops as sheltered work placements where learners can experience retailing work in a supported environment. A & R's staff offer support to meet learners' urgent needs, such as money to reimburse learners' expenses to learners' homes. A & R has effective links with specialist external agencies, including those for emergency accommodation and counselling. Learners' progress reviews often involve their employer. The learner and employer each receive a copy of the progress review record. However, A & R's staff do not record the support given to learners in sufficient detail.

7. A & R has produced good resources for the training. Its question papers help the learners to demonstrate their understanding of topics such as data protection, legislation and health and safety. Assessors are given examples of correct answers to identify acceptable responses. Training in theory is well planned with lesson plans, presentation material and written notes. Staff set assignments to link the theory with the workplace training. Trainers use the same materials to give training at work for those who are unable to attend the training centre. Staff have qualifications in key skills training.

8. Learners have excellent opportunities for progression. Some take part in 'taster' programmes and if they wish to continue with their training they are offered a work placement where they are paid. Most learners are successful in finding full-time employment that includes training towards a qualification. Many are promoted into management positions. Some learners have achieved additional national vocational qualifications (NVQs) up to level 3.

9. Initial assessment is inadequate. It does not include the assessment of learners' occupational experience or achievements in key skills. A & R does not analyse the results or use them to plan individual learning programmes and does not give learners the results of their initial assessment. A & R does not always tailor training to meet the needs of individuals and often does not give additional support early enough. Learners self-assess their key skills when they enter training, but this is not effective in diagnosing

any support needs they might have.

10. Assessment practices are inadequate. A & R has recently started planning assessment systematically, but this is not yet fully established. The assessment plans are not always signed by the learner and assessor. The assessment plan documents do not contain signatures showing agreement between the learner and assessor. A & R assesses learners by observing them in the workplace, but does not record the results effectively. Learners do not know what they have already achieved or what they still have to do to achieve their qualifications. Assessors do not sign witness testimonies to ensure that the assessments are being carried out properly. Assessors give verbal feedback to learners, but they do not always give written feedback. Progress review forms are often used wrongly to record the results of assessment and learners are confused about whether the form records the results of an assessment or a progress review. Learners keep the only record of their assessments so A & R has no records of what each learner has achieved. There is not enough assessment of key skills as part of learners' everyday work. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

11. The internal verification process is weak. Verification sampling is inadequate. It should include all assessors, learners, units and methods of assessment, but there is insufficient evidence to show that this is happening. Verifiers have observed assessors in the workplace, monitored assessment records, and held standardisation meetings but this has not happened recently. The self-assessment report did not identify the inconsistent assessment practices in this occupational area.

12. Achievement and retention rates are poor. Only 11 per cent of advanced modern apprentices, none of the foundation modern apprentices and 3 per cent of work-based learners, achieved their training objectives in 1999-2000. Retention rates have been unsatisfactory on most of the training programmes for several years, but among NVQ learners who have started recently, there have been signs of improvement. Retention has increased from 21 per cent to 60 per cent in the past year. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices was 50 per cent in 2000-01, and this now stands at 100 per cent.

#### Poor Practice

*Staff who interview learners do not take account of their prior experience in retailing as part of initial assessment.*

**Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	14	3

13. A & R has 13 foundation modern apprenticeships and one NVQ learner in hospitality. Ten of them are training in quick service hospitality, two are in bar service, one is in food and drink service and one is a chef. Learners are referred to A & R by the careers service, schools and employers. Learners can join the training programme at any time of the year. Most of their training and assessment takes place in the workplace, but some learners attend additional training organised by A & R. The training includes subjects such as food hygiene, customer care and health and safety. A & R carries out all the assessment and internal verification and helps learners to build their portfolios of evidence. Learners also receive training in key skills. The assessors visit most of their learners at least every two weeks to review progress and to carry out assessments.

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>1997-98</b>		<b>1998-99</b>		<b>1999-2000</b>		<b>2000-01</b>		<b>2001-02</b>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			1		13		4		9
Still in training			0	0	1	8	3	75	9	100
FMA framework completed			0	0	2	15	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	2	15	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100	10	77	0	0	0	0

  

<b>NVQ Training</b>										
<b>NVQ Training</b>	<b>1997-98</b>		<b>1998-99</b>		<b>1999-2000</b>		<b>2000-01</b>		<b>2001-02</b>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			3		11		4		0
Still in training			0	0	0	0	1	25	0	0
Individual learning plan completed			0	0	3	27	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			3	100	7	64	3	75	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	3	27	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## **STRENGTHS**

- highly motivating training
- very useful support for learners
- good identification of individual learning needs

## **WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate initial guidance for potential learners
- poor achievement rates

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better planning for alternative training venues

14. A & R's training sessions are particularly good and motivate learners. Learners speak well of the training sessions and attendance is good. Theory sessions are well planned and taught. A & R uses computer presentations in these training sessions, which makes the training interesting for the learners. Good use is made of visual aids in the hygiene courses. Assessors carry out a thorough induction in either the training centre or the workplace with each learner. Learners' understanding of health and safety is good. A & R offers additional training for individual learners if they are unable to attend the planned training sessions. Food hygiene and health and safety courses are available to all learners. Assessments are thorough and well recorded and good use is made of observation evidence and oral questioning. On-the-job training is satisfactory. Employers have a satisfactory level of involvement.

15. Support for individual learners is good. They all undergo an initial assessment of their basic skills at the start of their training and they are interviewed to assess their training and personal support needs. A & R records their additional needs on individual learning plans and uses them as a basis for the development of individual action plans. A & R's tutors give useful help to learners looking for suitable employment. They purchased clothing for one learner for an interview and he gained the job. A & R's support for learners with additional learning needs includes tuition in numeracy and English, referral to specialised advice and the services of an interpreter. A & R gives workplace supervisors information to ensure that they understand the general support learners need. All learners have regular progress reviews and their workplace supervisors are fully involved in the process. Learners are happy with the support they receive from their assessors and workplace supervisors. Individual learning plans do not include the full requirements of the foundation modern apprenticeship. Health and safety and customer care training courses are a requirement of these modern

apprenticeships but they have not yet taken place. A & R is planning to provide this training. These qualifications are not recorded as an expected outcome on the individual learning plans.

16. Guidance for potential learners is inadequate. Learners are referred to A & R by the careers service and employers, but A & R gives them no information about the training before interviewing them. Although A & R interviews each applicant, it does not offer them sufficient guidance on the range of careers available. A & R does not consider whether this training programme is suitable for individual learners. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

17. Achievement and retention rates are poor. Between 1998 and 2001, 36 learners started on hospitality training, but only five have achieved the objectives in their individual learning plans. Retention rates have been poor in recent years, although there has been some sign of improvement this year, with 78 per cent of starters still in training compared with four out of eight learners in 2000-01. The self-assessment report did not sufficiently identify the lack of achievements.

18. Off-the-job training usually takes place in A & R's own training room, but when it is unavailable, alternative arrangements are made. However, the facilities are not checked in advance and some of them are not suitable.

#### Good Practice

*Assessors visit learners on late night shifts and at weekends to assess their performance in the workplace.*

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	165	3

19. A & R offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in early years care and in care. There are 165 learners, of whom 59 are advanced modern apprentices, 34 are foundation modern apprentices and 72 are working towards level 2 NVQs. There are 124 employed learners and 41 are paid a training allowance. A & R advertises its training programmes locally and interviews all applicants. Employers refer most learners to A & R and there are start dates for care training each month. Applicants' basic skills are assessed before they start and their previous qualifications and experience are also assessed. Learners with very little experience in either care or early years care and education spend one day each week in a work placement as part of a foundation for work course and they start at level 2 of the NVQ. During induction, members of staff explain the NVQ process and health and safety information to new learners. On-the-job training takes place in a range of schools, nurseries, residential and nursing homes. There are four qualified assessors who visit learners in their workplaces and three of the training centre's staff are working towards an assessor qualification. Three internal verifiers check the work of the assessor teams. Most training takes place at work. Off-the-job training takes place for two or three hours each week in both Bradford and Huddersfield. The development and assessment of key skills has recently become an integral part of the vocational training. Staff have a range of relevant experience and they carry out progress reviews every three months.

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

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			4		3		17		27
Still in training			0	0	0	0	10	59	24	89
FMA framework completed			0	0	1	33	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	1	33	1	6	0	0
Left without completing the framework			4	100	2	67	7	41	0	0



Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			64		74		66		33	
Still in training			2	3	11	15	27	41	19	58
AMA framework completed			3	5	3	4	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			15	23	26	35	9	14	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			59	92	60	81	39	59	0	0

  

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			22		12		55		54	
Still in training			1	5	1	8	29	53	41	76
Individual learning plan completed			9	41	4	33	8	15	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			12	55	7	58	18	33	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			5	23	2	17	2	4	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			5	23	4	33	11	20	0	0

## STRENGTHS

- flexible training arrangements
- good training resources

## WEAKNESSES

- delayed assessment of childcare learners
- poor retention and achievement rates

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective use of records of observation

20. Arrangements for the recruitment and selection of learners are satisfactory. There

## A & R TRAINING SERVICES LTD

are frequent opportunities for learners to join training programmes and induction takes place once a month. A & R Training has an effective, flexible approach to its training. It runs theory training sessions at its two training centres and in the workplace. Trainers visit learners at work to give training to individuals and small groups. This training is available during the mornings, early evenings and at weekends to suit learners' varying shift patterns. Staff are flexible in planning assessments and progress reviews to fit in with the needs of learners and workplace supervisors. They agree appointments for these in advance to allow for busy schedules. Staff from A & R and work-based supervisors respond effectively to learners who want to discuss any aspect of their training. Staff offer good occupational and pastoral support to learners. A & R has effective links with the careers service and gives appropriate guidance to learners to help them make choices about the next stage in their training. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report.

21. Training resources are good. Trainers give learners a good range of written notes and learning materials. They also provide sets of questions and assignments for each NVQ unit, to help learners to produce evidence. There is a well-planned programme of off-the-job training sessions. Well-designed training packs are used during training sessions. These include case studies, topics for group discussion and questions to prompt the learners. Good use is made of staff in the training sessions. One trainer leads the session and other trainers support the learners during the activities. Trainers have recorded the content of off-the-job training sessions onto audio tape for learners who are unable to attend the training sessions and staff are available to give individual help or advice. Learners have a good understanding of assessment methods and the evidence they need to collect. Staff give clear information to workplace supervisors about learners' training needs and they send a list of units and a description of their content to all workplaces. Workplace supervisors give relevant on-the-job training to learners.

22. The achievement rates among modern apprentices are unsatisfactory. For example, of the 66 advanced modern apprentices who started their training in 2000-01, only 27 remain and 12 changed to other training programmes. Half of the learners who left early did not achieve any qualification. Achievement of the training objectives on the individual learning plans, including key skills, is poor for all modern apprentices. However, staff have now dealt with two of the main problems connected with poor achievement. Key skills training is now an integral part of the vocational training and the use of additional assessors to support work-based assessors has helped to clear the backlog of work-based assessments. Current learners have been successful in achieving units of their NVQ and are on target to achieve their awards within the agreed timescales. Retention rates have been poor, although have improved in the most recent contract year.

23. Assessment of childcare learners is delayed. Assessors do not assess the learners in the workplace until the learners have produced written evidence for at least four of the NVQ units. A & R does not sufficiently link the theory training to what learners do at work. Learners demonstrate their workplace skills and their achievements are recorded

on progress review forms, but these are not used as evidence for the NVQs. Assessors write notes during an observation, but they are not given to the learners to use as evidence. After the observation, learners are asked to write up an account of the observation against the standards of the NVQ, but not all learners complete their accounts. A & R has recently improved its internal verification process. However, verifiers have not observed assessors carrying out assessment by observation.

#### Good Practice

*Learners have opportunity to attend study days and short courses on topics which include diabetes, risk assessment and dental hygiene. This enhances their training, increases their background knowledge and provides valuable evidence for their NVQ.*

## Foundation programmes

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	9	2
Life Skills	11	2

24. A & R has 20 learners in foundation for work training. Nine are taking part in the preparation programme which allows learners to train for a maximum of eight weeks. Eleven learners are doing Life Skills training, which is initially for 20 weeks. They attend the training centre on three days each week for a total of 21 hours. Learners are mainly referred from the careers service and an initial interview is carried out which forms part of the initial assessment process. All interviewees take a basic skills test to identify their additional support needs in reading and numeracy. The results of the tests are used to develop individual learning plans and are also communicated to the careers officer for endorsement of the learners' training needs. Learners receive an induction on their first day of training and work through an induction booklet, which sets out what they can expect and what is expected of them during their training. Training takes place in the Huddersfield training centre where learners use a large training room which has an adjoining computer workshop. Some learners are involved in work experience with local employers for two days each week and attend the training centre on one day. Foundation for work learners are not working towards qualifications, but key skills in communication, application of number and information technology are offered at level 1. A member of staff who has qualifications and experience in basic skills support is available to those who have additional needs.

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

Foundation Programmes										
Foundation Programmes	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			57		42		43		23
Still in training			0	0	0	0	0	0	20	87
Gained job with training/progressed to further training and/or planned learning completed			19	33	25	60	35	81	0	0
Left without either			23	40	7	17	12	28	0	0
Gained job with training			4	7	6	14	5	12	0	0
Progressed to further training			15	26	19	45	20	47	0	0
Planned learning completed			33	58	35	83	31	72	0	0

## STRENGTHS

- well-planned training sessions
- high ratio of staff to learners
- effective individual support for learners
- good achievement and progression by learners

## WEAKNESSES

- lack of clarity about learning goals

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed recording of additional support
- greater involvement of learners in progress reviews

25. Training sessions are well planned and structured. Session plans clearly state the objectives and methods of each learning activity and are cross-referenced to the requirements of the key skills qualifications. Learners begin to gather evidence of their key skills early in their training. The ratio of staff to learners is good. The staff are skilful in encouraging and motivating learners to take part in the planned activities to help them develop and demonstrate their abilities. The activities are carefully designed to challenge each individual learner and staff give high levels of individual support. Individual progress is recognised and additional learning needs are identified. A & R identified these strengths in its self-assessment report.

26. Support for individual learners is good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. A & R gives additional training and personal support on an individual basis to help learners either to continue with their training, to progress to another training programme, or to move into employment. For example, one learner who is in a work placement in an office was given shirts and ties to allow him to dress appropriately for the workplace. Another learner was shortlisted for a job and was supplied with a new shirt, tie and shoes to help him make a good impression at the interview. A third learner who was sent to prison before finishing his training was helped to achieve his training objectives by trainers visiting him in prison to assess his skills. A & R also buys uniforms for learners working in residential care homes and has subsidised wages for a learner who was not being paid any salary for the first month.

27. Achievement rates are good. Last year 72 per cent of learners achieved the targets on their individual learning plans. The proportion of learners who progress into full-time employment with training or other training programmes is high. In 2000-01, 58 per cent

of the learners progressed on to higher level training programmes or employment.

28. Learners are confused about whether they are working towards basic skills qualifications, parts of these qualifications, or key skills units. At their interview and as part of initial assessment, potential learners are asked to carry out a basic skills test in communications and numeracy, but some learners are unaware of the results. The careers officer uses the results of initial assessment to identify which learners have additional training needs. Learners then begin foundation training where they work towards key skills units in communication, application of number and information technology. There are currently no foundation learners working towards basic skills or key skills qualifications. Additional needs are not always recorded on individual learning plans and learners have little or no knowledge of either the basic skills or key skills requirements. They gather evidence for their communications and application of number key skills but the work is not accredited or certificated.

29. There are regular reviews of learners' progress. The process includes a review of the progress the learner has made in achieving training and personal development objectives and in carefully setting targets for the next stage of training and development. However, there is no requirement for learners to have any direct input to their own progress reviews. A & R does not routinely record all additional support given to individual learners. There is therefore no formal evaluation of how this support affects learners' progress.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 3

30. A & R is a private training company which is owned by two directors. One director is responsible for the training and the other for general management, administration and quality assurance. Since its formation in 1992, A & R has grown steadily and now employs 23 staff. The director responsible for training manages five training managers, one in each occupational area. Off-the-job training is given at the company's training centres in Huddersfield and Bradford. There is one subcontractor, who offers training in small animal care. A & R has policies and procedures for equality of opportunity and quality assurance. A & R was accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national quality assurance standard, in November 2000. The self-assessment report which was used for the inspection was the third produced by A & R and was completed in March 2001.

### STRENGTHS

- good strategic planning
- good internal communications
- well-planned staff development
- effective implementation of equal opportunities policy
- effective quality assurance procedures

### WEAKNESSES

- poor management of key skills training
- no strategy to improve retention and achievement rates
- poor understanding of equal opportunities by learners

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better conclusions in departmental reports

31. A & R has well established and effective procedures for the development of its business plan. Accurate data on performance is collected and analysed to provide information used for planning. A & R produces a business plan each year, following a process which combines analysis of company performance with a detailed report on market conditions in each of the vocational areas. This enables managers to set clear goals over one and three-year timescales. A & R has planned and achieved successful growth over a number of years. Its marketing plans and staff development plans are also produced with reference to the business plan. The plan is shared with all staff.

32. Communication within A & R is good. Regular staff meetings and strong informal contacts ensure that staff are well informed about the company's progress and feel able to contribute ideas and suggestions. This open management style was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. There is a well-established appraisal system, under

## A & R TRAINING SERVICES LTD

which staff are set clear targets to meet company objectives and their own professional development needs. The development plan involves all staff members in training which is clearly linked to A & R's business plan. Induction of new staff is well planned. Following a structured induction, new staff work with a mentor for three-months.

33. The management of key skills training is poor. A senior manager was given overall responsibility for key skills training in March 2001 but prior to that key skills training was not an integral part of the vocational training and did not have enough resources. Many learners achieved their NVQs before making any real progress with their key skills. A new policy for key skills was produced in June 2001, which deals with the major problems in this area, but this has not yet affected the achievements of learners.

34. Managers do not put enough emphasis on improving retention and achievement rates. The rates are poor in some occupational areas, but A & R does not concentrate enough on this in the measures of performance in its statistical reports. There is a good management information system for monitoring the progress of learners and the performance of the company. Managers agree targets with each department and regularly monitor their achievement. However, they do not put enough emphasis on learners achieving the goals on their individual learning plans. A & R recruits a high proportion of learners with additional needs. While there are many examples of good practice in supporting and encouraging individuals to stay on the training programmes, there has not been company-wide recognition of the problem of poor retention and achievement rates, or adequate action to resolve it.



**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 3**

35. A & R has a comprehensive policy on equal opportunities and an effective system in place to monitor its implementation. The directors, together with the training managers, form the equal opportunities steering group. This group meets every three months to monitor the implementation of the policy and to plan and monitor the actions which have been taken to make improvements. The group receives regular reports on learners' understanding of equal opportunities, tested through questionnaires which are completed as part of the progress review process. Information from the reports has been used to change and improve the learners' induction programme. The effectiveness of the changed induction was measured by comparing learners who were given the previous induction and those who had taken part in the amended one. A dramatic improvement in their understanding was noted. The steering group also evaluates promotional literature and considers analyses of the gender, age and ethnic backgrounds of the workforce and each group of learners recruited. This information is used to target the promotion of training to under-represented groups. Recently, A & R has revised its promotional literature to ensure that positive images of under-represented groups are included in leaflets. The proportion of learners recruited from minority ethnic groups has increased from 6 per cent in 1999-2000 to 23 per cent in 2000-01. The steering group reports back to all staff on the effectiveness of the company's equal opportunities policy. Learners with mobility problems are able to enter both of the training centres and appropriate work placements are used to ensure that they have access to all aspects of practical skills training. The complaints procedure is satisfactory. The equal opportunities steering group records and carefully monitors all complaints.

36. Learners do not fully understand equal opportunities. Most learners are not able to explain their own rights and responsibilities in the workplace and many describe equal opportunities simply as treating everyone the same. A & R identified this weakness through its policy evaluation arrangements and is currently taking action to deal with it. A & R has found that equal opportunities is not effectively promoted in some work placements. It is dealing with this by providing training for workplace supervisors. All A & R staff have had training to improve their understanding of equality of opportunity.

**Quality assurance**

**Contributory grade 2**

37. A & R has well-established and effective procedures for most of its operational areas. Procedures are clear and specify who is responsible for each action point, but some are out of date, for example the initial assessment of learners. They have been informally amended pending a full review of procedures planned for the autumn, in order to meet the new requirements of the LSC. The manager who is responsible for quality assurance carries out regular internal auditing of the procedures. The audits are thorough and result in detailed reports, with action points, which are distributed to all staff. The result is thorough compliance with procedures and frequent improvements in practice. For example, improvements to the planning of learners' inductions have been made following a recent internal audit report. In addition to the audit process, each team is required to identify areas for improvement in its own operations and report to the directors. The reports often contain feedback from learners, but do not always give an adequate conclusion. For example, a review of a training session in which five of the seven participants had criticised the amount of information covered, concluded that no action was required. Quality assurance is an integral part of the self-assessment process. The quality assurance audits and reports are used in the production of the self-assessment report. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and receive a copy of the report. The report contains detailed action points for the strengths and weaknesses identified, and progress in dealing with them is regularly monitored by the quality assurance manager. The views of learners and employers are included through questionnaires, but the scope is not wide enough. For example, only 10 per cent of learners and employers are given questionnaires and, in the case of employers, the response rate is poor. In 2000, there were no responses from employers outside the care sector.

38. A & R has one subcontractor. Its monitoring of the performance of this subcontractor is good. The subcontractor's staff participate in all quality assurance processes and receive the same information as A & R's own staff. In addition, there is a twice-yearly review of the work of the subcontractor, which is included in the self-assessment report. A & R's staff offer a high level of support and guidance to the subcontractor.

39. Procedures for internal verification of assessments are satisfactory. The system is audited as part of the company's quality assurance procedure and verification is carried out by three senior managers. The system used for checking a proportion of learners' work and the activities of assessors is sound, ensuring that all types of assessment activity are verified. Recent improvements to this system have not yet been implemented in all vocational areas. Assessors receive clear feedback from verifiers and meet regularly with them to ensure standardisation of assessment practice.

### Good Practice

*Two files are maintained in the company's offices so that staff can note any problems for managers. One file is for equal opportunities and the other is for training. They are used for suggestions from staff members, or to record comments from employers or learners which would not be picked up by the formal feedback systems. The files are regularly referred to by managers and are used in the self-assessment process.*