

INSPECTION REPORT

Alder Training Limited

23 July 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

Alder Training Limited (Alder Training) is a privately owned training company. It has two training centres, one in Liverpool which is also the administrative centre, and one in Southport. The company offers training to young people in general care and dental care. There are 158 learners, of whom 105 are modern apprentices and 53 are on other work-based learning programmes.

Overall judgement

The work-based training and the leadership and management of Alder Training are satisfactory. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory. Most learners are employed in residential care and nursing homes for the elderly or in dental practices, throughout Liverpool and Southport. The proportion of learners who achieve their modern apprenticeship framework in care is poor. However, most of them achieve a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 or 3. Learners on the dental care programmes benefit from good learning resources in the workplace and in the training centres. Good individual support is available for all learners. The co-ordination of training in the workplace and in the training centre is effective for care learners. Workplace supervisors have a clear understanding of the training needs of learners and offer them a good range of opportunities to develop and demonstrate work-based skills. Learners' portfolios of evidence are organised and well presented. In dental care, learners are not given credit for their previous learning and experience. Assessors rely too heavily on written evidence for assessments, and little use is made of evidence through everyday work. The proportion of modern apprentices remaining on their training programmes has improved over the past three years.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Alder Training are satisfactory. The organisation maintains effective communication with staff in both training centres and with employers. A comprehensive range of information is available for employers through an information pack and regular monthly visits to the workplace by training managers. The company has been successful in recruiting men onto care courses and supporting them through their training. Alder Training seeks and uses the views of learners and employers to improve training programmes, but it does not set

targets to improve its performance as an organisation. Alder Training has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures for quality assurance but these are not always followed consistently across all programmes and both training centres. Employers of dental care learners are not regularly monitored to ensure that they meet contractual obligations. There is no access for learners with restricted mobility at one of the training centres.

GRADES

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective internal and external communications
- good staff training
- effective co-ordination of training in the workplace and the training centre
- effective individual support for learners
- good use of feedback and evaluations to improve training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rate for the modern apprenticeship frameworks
- inadequate target-setting
- inconsistency in the application of procedures
- insufficient monitoring of employers' contracts in dental care
- no access for learners with restricted mobility in one training centre

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider involvement in the self-assessment process
- more staff for internal verification
- better awareness of equality of opportunity

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Alder Training Limited (Alder Training) is a privately owned training organisation which offers government-funded training for 158 learners in care. It has two training centres, one in Liverpool which is the administrative centre, and the other in Southport. One hundred and five learners have their theory training at the Liverpool training centre and 38 at the Southport training centre. There are two directors, nine training managers, one internal verifier, three administrative staff and a maintenance manager. Most learners are employed as care workers or dental nurses in Liverpool and Southport.

2. Modern apprenticeships and work-based training are funded through a contract with the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Before March 2001, Alder Training held a contract with the Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and was asked to take over a contract to train 53 dental nurses, which was previously held by another company. In May 2001, unemployment rates in Liverpool were 7.1 per cent compared with 3 per cent nationally. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Liverpool achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 35.3 per cent, compared with 49.2 per cent in England as a whole. Only 63 per cent of school leavers continue in further education or training, compared with a national average of 69 per cent. Over 80 per cent of young people entering training have fewer than five GCSEs at grade C or above. The 1991 census states that 3.8 per cent of the population in Liverpool are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 17 days at Alder Training in June 2001. They interviewed 36 learners, conducted interviews with 15 of Alder Training's staff, visited 24 employers, and interviewed 19 workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded 18 training sessions. They examined a range of documents including portfolios of evidence, apprentices' records, Alder Training's strategic and operational plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. Inspectors studied Alder Training's self-assessment report which had been prepared in May 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	4	7	7	0	0	0	18
Total	0	4	7	7	0	0	0	18

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	158	3

4. Alder Training has 158 learners on care programmes. One hundred and five are working towards NVQs in care at levels 2 and 3, 51 are working towards the oral healthcare NVQ at level 3, and two are working towards a national qualification for dental nurses which is equivalent to a level 2 NVQ. Alder Training has managed the contract for dental care training since March 2001, when it was transferred from another local training provider. Three staff transferred with the training programme and continue to be responsible for its management and development. Alder Training works with 58 care homes in Merseyside and 28 general dental practices, one sedation practice and an orthodontist. Nine training managers are responsible for the support, training and assessment of learners. All staff are occupationally competent and qualified. Learners are referred to Alder Training by the careers partnership, schools, or employers. Staff promote the training at careers fairs and open days. Young people can enrol on the training programmes throughout the year. All learners are assessed to identify their individual training needs. All learners have the opportunity to attend planned training sessions at the training centre for at least half a day each month. Training managers arrange one-to-one tutorials for learners who are unable to attend the planned training sessions. Visiting assessors from Alder Training undertake assessment in the workplace. At the time of inspection it was too early to judge the impact of some of the training procedures on the learners. Inspectors agreed with three of the six weaknesses which were identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and gave the same grade as that identified in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates 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			26		28		60		0
Still in training			0	0	3	11	31	52	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			13	50	19	68	4	7	0	0
Left without completing the framework			20	77	21	75	27	45	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	83		46		67		72		20
Still in training	0	0	0	0	9	13	42	58	20	100
AMA framework completed	37	45	19	41	11	16	2	3	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	38	46	19	41	23	34	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	31	37	22	48	25	37	28	39	0	0
Left without completing the framework	46	55	27	59	45	67	28	39	0	0

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive induction programme
- good individual support for learners
- effective co-ordination of training in the workplace and the training centre
- well-organised, comprehensive portfolios of evidence

WEAKNESSES

- lack of accreditation of prior learning in dental care
- too much reliance on written evidence in dental care
- insufficient individual target-setting
- poor achievement rate for the modern apprenticeship frameworks

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better integration of key skills with vocational training
- further sharing of good practice

5. Induction programmes for care learners are comprehensive and well structured. They are carried out over two days. A computer software package is used to illustrate the key points and all learners receive a detailed information pack which reinforces the topics which are covered. Each learner is allocated a training manager who visits them in the workplace to give feedback on the initial assessment of basic and key skills. Workplace supervisors attend the feedback session and take part in developing and agreeing an action plan to meet the learners' training needs. The second induction day is used to ensure that learners understand the training programme, equality of opportunity and health and safety. All learners remember their induction and are able to recall the information given to them.

6. Learners are given good individual support. Training managers establish a close working relationship with learners, and build detailed knowledge of their occupational and personal development needs. Support needs are identified through initial assessment and the monthly monitoring process. Extra help with occupational training is given on an individual basis and in small group training sessions, which are held at Alder Training and in the workplace. Additional support for basic skills is offered at the most appropriate location for each learner. Feedback from learners indicates that they consider they receive good or excellent support. As a result of extensive support during training, a learner who has dyslexia has progressed to nurse training. All learners are given a list of local and national support agencies during induction. Personal counselling is arranged when necessary and many learners have received extensive personal support which has enabled them to remain on their training course.

7. The co-ordination of theory and practical care training is effective. Occupationally competent and professionally experienced staff skilfully relate the theory elements to current workplace practices. Workplace supervisors understand the training requirements of foundation and advanced modern apprentices and ensure that appropriate practical experience is available for them to develop and demonstrate their skills. Employers and learners receive a copy of the training programme which Alder Training offers. Learners are given many additional training opportunities at work. These include learning clinical procedures such as wound care, or monitoring and recording blood pressure.

8. Portfolios of evidence are organised and presented well. Learners produce a high standard of work and are aware of their achievements. The portfolios of evidence of care learners contain a wide range of evidence including care plans, diagrams, intake and output charts, records of observations, reflective accounts, witness testimonies, written questions and photographic evidence. All evidence is signed by employers or training managers. Learners are given constructive verbal and written feedback on the work they have produced, which helps them to improve the quality of their work. There is not enough use of direct observation as a method of assessment in dental care. Learners are required to produce large amounts of written evidence for each part of their qualifications and little use is made of witness testimony. There is no accreditation of prior experience or learning in dental care. Many of the learners have worked as unqualified dental nurses for up to four years and have developed a range of skills, knowledge and understanding during this time.

9. Trainers do not set enough short-term targets to help learners plan their work in achievable stages. Targets are set as part of assessment planning but not for theory and occupational skills or for the development of personal skills, such as improving punctuality and attendance.

10. Achievements in care are poor. Only 13 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices and 15 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices achieved all the targets on their learning plans in 1999-2000. However, in the same period, 52 per cent of foundation apprentices and 63 per cent of advanced apprentices achieved NVQs at

levels 2 and 3 respectively. Most learners who finish their training programme achieve an NVQ. Retention rates on foundation modern apprenticeships have improved from 23 per cent in 1998-99 to 52 per cent in 2000-01. Advanced modern apprenticeship retention rates have improved from 30 per cent in 1999-2000 to 63 per cent in 2000-01. Alder Training identified poor retention rates as a problem and it has worked on strategies for improvement. These include a detailed analysis of early leavers and the use of its own assessors as well as work-based assessors to carry out work-based assessment. At the time of inspection it was too early to make a judgement on achievements in dental care.

Good Practice

One learner who was hospitalised during her training programme received theory training at home.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

11. Alder Training is a company owned by two directors, of whom one is responsible for the management and co-ordination of training and one controls the legal and financial aspects of the business. The latter also has responsibility for equality of opportunity. In addition to the directors, there are nine training staff, one internal verifier, three administrators and a maintenance manager. The company has an equal opportunities policy and plan, and a policy and procedures for quality assurance. The self-assessment report was produced in May 2001. Alder Training was accredited with the Investors in People standard in 1997 and gained reaccreditation in 2000.

STRENGTHS

- effective internal and external communications
- comprehensive information for employers
- good staff training
- good use of feedback and evaluations to improve training
- effective recruitment of men onto care courses

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate target-setting
- insufficient monitoring of employer contracts in dental care
- no access for learners with restricted mobility in one training centre
- inconsistency in the application of procedures

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better equal opportunities awareness
- more frequent standardisation meetings
- more staff for internal verification
- wider involvement in the self-assessment process

12. Alder Training communicates well with its own staff and with external agencies, a strength which the company recognises in its self-assessment report. The directors clearly set out the organisation's commitment to quality assurance and to improving the training. Staff have copies of the company's business plan and are familiar with the aims and objectives of the company. Staff meetings are held each month and are used to give information about developments within the company and to discuss learners' progress. Meetings are minuted and copies of the minutes are circulated to all staff. Staff feel confident that they can speak openly to the directors and senior managers ensure that they are available to discuss problems. Other meetings are held to keep staff up to date on the progress made with action plans. Managers act promptly to develop new strategies which deal with problems as they arise. Strategies which were introduced

to improve the retention rates have had a positive effect on the number of learners who stay in training. There are good links with external organisations, including providers of specialised support for those with personal problems. Senior managers attend meetings with a local group of training companies which meet to discuss problems with retention on training programmes in the Liverpool area and an organisation which supplies information on equality of opportunity.

13. Alder Training has excellent relationships with most employers. It has an agreement which clearly sets out the employers' responsibilities. Employers are also given an information pack, which includes copies of Alder Training's policies, a copy of each learner's individual learning plan, copies of any certificates they obtain and space for correspondence. The company communicates effectively with work-placement providers. Training managers visit work placements at least once a month and pass information to employers or workplace supervisors. Once a year, Alder Training asks for written feedback from employers on the quality of training it offers at the training centre.

14. Staff training is given high priority at Alder Training and each member of staff has a personal training plan. Training needs are assessed during annual appraisal meetings and staff can also ask for other training courses during the year. Staff who are trained nurses attend clinical training sessions to update their skills. Staff have gained assessors' qualifications and all training staff have received training in key skills. One member of staff who is responsible for additional learning and support needs has taken an NVQ in guidance and had training in basic skills and in problems of social exclusion. The company's training policy requires staff to tell their colleagues about any training they have attended and to circulate useful information. Staff training is a regular agenda item at staff meetings and in workshops. The self-assessment report identified this strength.

15. Target-setting is inadequate at an organisational level. The company collects data and uses them to make judgements on the quality of training each year. However, staff do not analyse data to identify trends in retention and achievement over specific periods of time. Targets for improvement in retention rates have been agreed, but staff have not been given responsibility for specific actions within specified timescales. No targets have been set to improve the quality of training sessions. Alder Training recognised these weaknesses in target-setting in its self-assessment report.

16. Monitoring of employers' compliance with the terms of their training agreement is poor in dental care. The contract requires employers to release learners from the workplace to attend off-the-job training, but some are not released and have to attend in their spare time. Health and safety in dental practices is not adequately monitored. One learner has suffered two injuries from needles in two months and Alder Training's staff are not aware of this. In other practices, learners are not aware of fire precautions. The company has identified that systems in dental care are not as well established as those in care.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

17. Alder Training has an equal opportunities policy which was revised four months before inspection. Learners and staff have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities issues and are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The company has a comprehensive range of associated policies and procedures, which cover appeals, grievances, complaints, harassment and bullying. Alder Training effectively manages and records complaints, which are responded to, and resolved, quickly. Alder Training does not use positive visual images or other materials to actively promote equality of opportunity. The company regularly monitors how work-placement providers promote equality of opportunity in the workplace. Training managers check on employers' equal opportunities policies and practices during their monthly visits. They monitor learners' understanding of equal opportunities issues during the regular progress reviews.

18. The company has been active and successful in its attempts to encourage men into care. There are currently 21 male learners in care. To tackle the lack of men in dental care, an advertisement was recently placed in local newspapers, letters were sent to local boys schools and visits to local careers offices were made to raise the profile of dental nursing. This has resulted in the successful recruitment of one man onto the dental training programme. Two of the dental care practices have no policy to ensure equality of opportunity. There is no access to the training facilities in the Southport training centre for those with restricted mobility.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

19. Alder Training has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures covering all aspects of training, but some are not thoroughly applied by all members of staff. Training managers monitor the quality of training in the workplace during their monthly visits to carry out progress reviews. Some training managers are not following the procedure for progress reviews. They are not including employers in the review process or setting clear short-term goals for learners. Some progress reviews do not include specific short-term targets for learners to achieve. Some assessment planning sessions include workplace supervisors in the planning process, but others do not.

20. Alder Training effectively seeks and uses the views of others to improve its training. Learners carry out an evaluation after induction, during the training programme and at the end of their training. In 2000-01, all learners identified the quality of training as good or excellent. The use of visiting assessors has prevented delays in work-based assessment, and revised work-based assessment procedures have resulted in less written evidence for assessments in care. Learners also evaluate each training support session, and as a result the training managers have reduced the length of each them and offer them on more than one occasion. All aspects of the training process are observed and staff receive constructive feedback which helps them to improve each aspect of training. Training resources are satisfactory in care, and good in dental care. Most accommodation is good.

21. Internal verification is satisfactory. All learners, assessors and units are included in the sampling of assessments being verified. However, there is only one internal verifier for care. Alder Training recognises the need to train additional internal verifiers and has started to take action. Standardisation workshops have been introduced for training managers from the Southport and Liverpool training centres. They use these workshops to identify common aims and objectives for training sessions and to share ideas, activities and resources. However, meetings which are held specifically to standardise assessment practices between Southport and Liverpool assessors are not frequent enough.

22. In preparation for inspection, Alder Training produced its second self-assessment report. The self-assessment process is thorough and involves all training staff, across both training centres. Staff are involved in regular self-assessment meetings which are held twice each month and are used to identify problems with quality assurance and to agree actions for improvements. Reports on observations of the training process, evaluations of the quality of training and external verifiers' reports were used as evidence on which judgements were based. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Good Practice

All Alder Training staff are working towards key skills awards and they have also held sessions with employers to explain the key skills.

Poor Practice

A learner who was interviewed in a dental practice during the inspection did not know the emergency evacuation procedure.