

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **GHQ Training**

**24 September 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

GHQ Training was established in 1992. It provides work-based learning for young people in hairdressing, management, administration, early years care and education, customer services and retailing. The company is also a subcontractor for a further education college, providing hairdressing training for older single parents. This training was outside the scope of the inspection. Currently, there are 108 modern apprentices, of whom 13 are in management and administration, 75 in hairdressing, 15 in early years care and education, and five in retailing and customer services. Numbers in retailing and customer services were too low to be within the scope of the inspection. All learners are either employed or in work placements. All off-the-job training is carried out at GHQ Training's premises.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning in management and administration and in hairdressing is unsatisfactory, as are the leadership and management of GHQ Training.

### Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning is satisfactory in early years care and education. It is unsatisfactory in management and administration and in hairdressing. The retention rate on the foundation modern apprenticeship in hairdressing has improved from 38 per cent, in 1999-2000 to 96 per cent, in 2001-02. Few learners in this area have completed the full modern apprenticeship framework. Only 23 per cent of advanced modern apprentices did so in 1999-2000 and for 2000-01, so far, the proportion is 9 per cent. Of the foundation modern apprentices who started in 1999-2000, only 17 per cent have achieved the full framework and none of those who started later has done so. Retention and achievement are poor on the advanced modern apprenticeship in administration, although numbers are very low. No management learners have left early, but there have been no achievements yet, although some learners started the programme in 2000. All the early years care and education learners have stayed in training, but as the programme is new there have been no achievements yet. Learners are given good support. Learning environments and resources are generally good. Off-the-job training is often good. Key skills training is well integrated with vocational programmes. There are some weak assessment practices. Progress towards achieving NVQs is slow. Initial assessment is ineffective and there are poor links between on- and off-the-job training. There is insufficient assessment of learners in the workplace, and some ineffective quarterly progress reviews.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of GHQ Training are unsatisfactory. Internal, informal communication is good. Learners receive a thorough induction and equality of opportunity is effectively promoted. However, there is a lack of specific target-setting and poor collection, recording and use of data. Internal verification is weak and there is insufficient formal monitoring of the quality of training. The self-assessment process is insufficiently thorough. There is no system for monitoring equal opportunities in the workplace.

## GRADES

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

<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- good support for learners
- good working and training environments for hairdressers
- good internal communications
- effective promotion of equal opportunities

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- weak assessment practices
- slow progress towards NVQs
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training
- poor achievement rates in hairdressing and administration
- insufficient assessment in the workplace
- lack of specific target-setting
- weak internal verification
- little formal monitoring of the quality of training

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better monitoring of key skills achievement
- more accurate individual learning plans
- better management and organisation of portfolios by learners
- closer monitoring of health and safety in the workplace
- recording of staff meetings

## THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. GHQ Training was established in 1992. It offers training in hairdressing, management, administration, early years care and education, customer services and retailing. Most learners are in hairdressing, 75 out of 108. There are 15 learners in early years, 10 in management and three in administration. GHQ Training is run by two partners and has two other full-time and nine part-time staff with responsibilities for training. In addition, two people are employed in an administrative capacity. There are several work-based assessors in hairdressing, usually the owners or managers of salons, who are not employed by GHQ Training. Off-the-job training is carried out on GHQ Training's premises. It moved to new premises in the centre of Plymouth in June 2001. This created more space and enabled two modern hairdressing salons to be built for training purposes. Funding of work-based learning is through the Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. In Plymouth in 2000, 47.5 per cent of school leavers achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the average for England of 49.2 per cent. An average of 4.3 per cent of young people in Plymouth achieved no GCSEs, compared with an average of 5.6 per cent in England. In June 2001, unemployment in southwest England averaged 2 per cent, compared with 3 per cent for all of England. The minority ethnic population of the south west of England is 1.4 per cent compared with the average in England of 6.2 per cent.



## THE INSPECTION

3. A team of four inspectors spent 16 days at GHQ Training in September 2001. They observed and interviewed 51 learners, and carried out 17 interviews with employers and supervisors and 21 interviews with staff. They visited 14 work placements. They examined a range of documents including learners' portfolios of evidence, policies and procedures, awarding body reports, minutes of meetings, internal verifiers' files and other management papers. Inspectors studied GHQ Training's self-assessment report, which was produced in October 2000.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	13	4

4. GHQ Training offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in administration leading to NVQs at levels 2 or 3, and advanced modern apprenticeships in management leading to NVQs at levels 3 or 4. There are 13 modern apprentices. Ten are advanced modern apprentices in management, of whom nine are working towards an NVQ at level 3 and one at level 4. In administration, two foundation modern apprentices are working towards a level 2 NVQ and one advanced modern apprentice towards a level 3 NVQ. Most learners are referred by the careers service or apply to GHQ Training in response to its marketing activities. Some are referred by employers. Learners recruited by GHQ Training are interviewed and placed with suitable employers. All learners are in full-time employment and work for many different employers, such as high-street retailers, an insurance company, a car showroom, and local government offices. All learners receive an induction from GHQ Training as well as that given in their workplace. Off-the-job training and key skills training is provided at GHQ Training's premises. Assessments are carried out at GHQ Training and at employers' premises by GHQ Training's staff. One part-time member of staff assesses administration. One of the partners and a part-time member of staff assess management.

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			1		1		3			
Still in training			0	0	0	0	2	67		
FMA framework completed			0	0	0	0	0	0		
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0		
Left without completing the framework			1	100	1	100	1	33		

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			3		2		12		5	
Still in training			0	0	0	0	7	58	4	80
AMA framework completed			3	100	1	50	1	8	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	1	50	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			0	0	0	0	3	25	1	20

## STRENGTHS

- particularly flexible and constructive off-the-job training
- good support for learners

## WEAKNESSES

- weak assessment practices
- ineffective initial assessment
- slow progress towards NVQs
- poor achievement in administration
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of key skills achievement
- more accurate individual learning plans
- closer monitoring of attendance

5. Learners attend GHQ Training regularly for off-the-job training. Management learners attend one evening every two weeks and administration learners attend one day a week from a choice of two. Alterations to the attendance pattern for off-the-job training are made to accommodate work requirements. For example, administration learners who cannot attend on the nominated day can join a similar group on the other day. Special arrangements were made for a management learner to attend one full day instead of four evenings when this learner took on a new job role. Off-the-job training helps learners to achieve their qualification. They are given guidance on how to put together a portfolio of evidence and on how to match evidence they have collected in the workplace to their NVQ units and elements. This is often done on a one-to-one basis. Short-term action-planning is effective. Each week, trainers and learners devise an action

## GHQ TRAINING

plan for the following week. Targets are set for completion of particular units and elements. Learners are usually given a photocopy of the action plan, but it is not given to employers. The teaching of background knowledge is good. Training staff are well qualified and the premises are modern and well resourced.

6. There is good support for learners from employers and GHQ Training. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. One foundation modern apprentice in administration, made redundant when the employer closed down, was employed by GHQ Training while looking for another job. Trainers are sympathetic to learners with personal or work difficulties and refer them for professional advice if needed. The learners value this. Supportive employers help learners to collect evidence for their NVQ. When a learner is recruited by GHQ Training, great care is taken to ensure the work placement is suitable both for the employer and for the learner. Many employers offer learners a taster period to ensure both are making the right decision.

7. Assessment practice is weak. The primary source of evidence for NVQs in administration is written statements by the learner. In many cases these are not authenticated by the supervisor or other workplace representative, nor are they countersigned by the assessor. Few assessment observations have been carried out in the workplace. Observations tend to take place only quarterly, at the same time as a progress review. One foundation modern apprentice in administration has only been assessed twice in the workplace since starting training in January 2001. Some NVQ units have been incorrectly signed off as completed by assessors. One such unit had also been internally verified and the omission was not picked up. There is no written evidence of administration learners' knowledge and understanding. The external verifier highlighted some of these issues in April 2001, but no action has been taken so far. In management training, there is an emphasis on assignments as evidence. So far, little use has been made of direct work-based evidence. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. Emphasis on achieving key skills has improved with the appointment of a key skills specialist, but there is still a significant delay between learners completing their key skills evidence and it being cross-referenced and recorded against the NVQ units and elements.

8. Learners are screened for additional literacy and numeracy support needs. The tests used are multiple choice, and are ineffective in determining basic skills levels. There is no reference on individual learning plans to learners' basic skills levels. From the week of inspection a basic skills tutor will start attending GHQ Training for a morning and an afternoon each week, to help learners who need additional support.

9. Most learners are making slow progress towards completing their NVQs. Some learners in administration have been on the modern apprenticeship programme for over a year but have only completed parts of a few units. In management, although assignments have been completed, these have not been matched to the units and elements of the NVQ. Many of these learners have not completed any units despite having started the programme in August 2000. Individual learning plans are not being updated to reflect learners' progress, or amended when changes are made to the choice

of optional units.

10. The advanced modern apprenticeship table shows the combined retention and achievement rates for management and administration. When separated out, retention and achievement are poor in administration. Both have fallen from 100 per cent in 1998-99 to 20 per cent in 2000-01. Retention rates have improved so far in 2001-02.

Numbers are small in administration. The poor achievement rates were not identified in the self-assessment report. In management, the retention rate is 100 per cent. There are no achievements yet although some learners have been on the course for a year.

11. Employers are not made aware by GHQ Training of the content of off-the-job training. They rely on learners informing them after the event. Assessors are not always aware of the in-house training carried out by employers although many companies plan this well in advance. Difficulties arise in trying to relate evidence from employers' training to the NVQ, using learners' recollections alone. Employers are informed by telephone if a learner does not attend an off-the-job training session, but this monitoring of attendance is too informal.

#### **Good Practice**

*One of the management assessors is part-time but is readily available to learners by mobile phone or e-mail. Any queries raised by students are dealt with promptly and effectively. Learners value the fact that they do not have to wait until the next training session before their query is answered.*

**Hairdressing & beauty therapy****Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	75	4

12. GHQ Training offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in hairdressing, leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Learners may join the programme at any time of the year, but most start in the summer. The training is planned to enable most learners to complete the foundation apprenticeship in two years and the advanced apprenticeship in three years. There are 16 advanced modern apprentices, working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. The 59 foundation modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 2. Most learners are employed. There are 20 workplaces, which are located across the Plymouth area and range from small to medium-sized businesses. GHQ Training takes an active role in job fairs and has links with a local training provider's network.

13. Both GHQ Training and employers carry out recruitment. Some learners are referred through the careers service. For the learners it recruits, GHQ Training organises interviews with prospective employers and trial periods to ensure that both the employer and the learner are satisfied. Full-day inductions are held in September, covering the course requirements, appeals procedure, health and safety and equal opportunities, NVQs and key skills. Other inductions are arranged as required throughout the year. Initial assessment of learners is carried out, although it does not clearly identify their support needs. When needs are identified, they are not always shown on individual learning plans. Most learners working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3, attend GHQ Training's centre in Plymouth for six hours, one day a week. During this time, they receive training in background knowledge and portfolio-building, practical training and assessment. GHQ Training has recently started to carry out key skills training every two weeks. All GHQ's staff have, or are working towards, appropriate training and assessment qualifications. GHQ Training supports employers' in-house training and the use of work-based assessors.

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					29		40		25	
Still in training					11	38	24	60	24	96
FMA framework completed					5	17	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					7	24	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					9	31	16	40	1	4

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			15		13		11		4	
Still in training			1	7	4	31	7	64	4	100
AMA framework completed			5	33	3	23	1	9	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			4	27	1	8	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			5	33	3	23	1	9	0	0
Left without completing the framework			8	53	6	46	3	27	0	0

## STRENGTHS

- good salon and off-the-job training environments
- good range of learning resources
- particularly enthusiastic and motivated learners
- significantly improved retention rate for foundation modern apprentices

## WEAKNESSES

- ineffective quarterly reviews of learners' progress
- slow achievement of NVQ and key skills units
- disjointed recording of assessment decisions
- insufficient assessment of learners in the workplace
- poor achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better employer knowledge of the content of off-the-job lesson plans

14. Hairdressing facilities in the salons and at GHQ Training are modern, well equipped, smartly decorated and contain a good range of hairdressing products. Learners can use a wide range of hairdressing equipment. Most learners work in salons which promote high standards of professionalism and technical skill. Most salons offer training sessions where learners can work on clients and models while being supervised by experienced staff. This enhances the training they receive at GHQ Training.

15. There is a good range of learning resources at GHQ Training including a well-equipped computer suite. This has helped learners to produce evidence for their key skills, such as posters, client questionnaires and charts. There are more computers in the theory room, where learners can finish work started in their key skills session or catch up on work they have missed. Learners have access to videos, textbooks and other written materials to help them develop their background knowledge on their own. The salons provide additional learning materials and set up seminars and workshops from leading manufacturers, from which learners gain specialist product knowledge. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

16. Learners are particularly enthusiastic and motivated. This is helped by the good ratio of trainers to learners during off-the-job training at GHQ Training. Learners receive individual attention during their practical training and assessment, and have one-to-one tuition or work in small groups for background knowledge. This has helped learners to produce comprehensive written work to show their background knowledge. A weekly action plan and monthly progress review help each learner focus on the work they need to complete, both theory and practical. They also indicate progress with NVQ units. GHQ Training is open three days a week for training and assessment, allowing learners and their employers to choose suitable times for attendance. Most learners have supportive employers and attendance is high. Some learners have work-based assessors who give them additional support in the workplace.

17. Since 1999, the retention rate on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme has increased. For learners who started in 1999-2000, the retention rate was 38 per cent, increasing to 60 per cent in 2000-01. So far in 2001-02, it is at 96 per cent. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

18. The quarterly reviews of learners' progress are ineffective. They are used to set few realistic targets. The impact of any additional support is not evaluated. The reviews do not give learners or employers a clear understanding of what the learner is working towards or has achieved. Most review documents do not contain the employers' comments on the learners' progress, or identify training opportunities in the workplace. Few indicate the content of salon training sessions. Consequently it is difficult to link on-



and off-the-job training to the benefit of the learner. Most employers know what the off-the-job training has covered only through informal discussions with their learners.

19. Learners make slow progress in achieving NVQ and key skills units. Some learners have only achieved one or two units in shampooing and conditioning from the level 2 NVQ, one year after starting it. Some learners have sufficient prior experience to be moved more quickly through their training. For example, one learner has two years' experience of working in a salon as a colour technician and 12 months as a Saturday worker. Assessments for this learner could be planned sooner. Assessments tend to concentrate on learners' performance of technical services on paying clients. Skills such as reception, teamwork and observance of health and safety have not been observed. The evidence collected for key skills units is not cross-referenced into learners' log books until the unit is completed, with the result that some learners have to collate large amounts of evidence long after the assessment has taken place.

20. There is a long delay between learners' completing oral and written questions and assignments and their being recorded in the logbook. The assessment process is then disjointed, because learners have forgotten which units evidence relates to, and are unclear about which units are completed. Some assignments are completed before practical assessments, resulting in units remaining incomplete for long periods of time.

21. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Most assessments at level 2 take place at GHQ Training's centre. Some salons have work-based assessors to carry out observations of learners within the salons' own training sessions and during the normal working day. The learners without work-based assessors are mainly assessed at the training centre during their practical sessions. Visits by GHQ Training assessors to observe directly these learners in the workplace, are infrequent. Some learners are not aware that GHQ Training assessors will assess them in the workplace. The lack of observations means that evidence towards key skills that occurs in everyday work is missed. Learners then find it difficult see how key skills are normally employed in the workplace.

22. Few learners are completing the full modern apprenticeship frameworks. The achievement rate for advanced modern apprentices has been declining. At the time of the inspection, 33 per cent of advanced modern apprentices who started between April 1998 and March 1999 had completed their frameworks. The completion rate for 1999-2000 starters has fallen to 23 per cent. The completion rate for foundation modern apprenticeships started in 1999-2000 is 17 per cent, and no late starters have completed the framework.

**Good Practice**

*Learners take part in an annual competition and a fashion show held by the local art and design college. These events allow learners to demonstrate the skills that they have acquired during their training and gather a range of evidence towards their NVQs.*

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	3

23. There are 15 modern apprentices in early years care and education, all of whom are in full-time placements in three nurseries, all owned by the same company. All five advanced modern apprentices and two of the 10 foundation modern apprentices are employed. Learners are recruited through the nurseries. Assessment is carried out in the nurseries by two of the nursery managers who are qualified assessors. All learners attend a weekly training session at GHQ Training, in the evening, after work. This covers key skills, portfolio-building and some background knowledge. One of the nursery managers, who gives off-the-job training, reviews learners' progress fortnightly at the evening sessions. Assessed units are signed off and verified as they are completed. One of GHQ Training's partners carries out internal verification and holds quarterly reviews to check on learners' welfare and progress. The self-assessment report used for this inspection does not refer to the early years programme. The programme was introduced in September 2000, one month before the self-assessment report was produced and GHQ Training felt it was too soon to make any judgements on its strengths and weaknesses.

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							5		5
Still in training							5	100	5	100
FMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							1	20	0	0
Left without completing the framework							0	0	0	0

<b>Work-based learning for young people</b>											
<b>Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)</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		2		
Still in training							3	100	2	100	
AMA framework completed							0	0	0	0	
NVQ level 2 completed							0	0	0	0	
NVQ level 3 completed							0	0	0	0	
Left without completing the framework							0	0	0	0	

## **STRENGTHS**

- good integration of key skills with NVQ training
- high level of support for learners
- good use of NVQ unit certification

## **WEAKNESSES**

- ineffective action-planning
- poor monitoring of learners' progress
- unstructured approach to providing background knowledge

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more learning resources
- better management and organisation of portfolios by learners

24. Key skills are introduced at the start of both modern apprenticeship programmes. The acquisition of key skills is portrayed positively as a means of enhancing learners' experience in the workplace and of helping with their NVQ. The recently appointed key skills tutor attends the off-the-job training session to permit better integration of key skills training with the NVQs. Key skills assignments are tailored to situations in the nursery and to working with young children, and can sometimes be used as evidence for NVQ units. Learners have good access to computers during their off-the-job training session in the GHQ Training computer suite. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.

25. Learners are well supported and appreciate the friendliness and approachability of the GHQ Training team. Any help they need is readily provided. Learners are also helped by the friendly and supportive atmosphere in the nurseries. Staff at the nurseries who have gained NVQs are happy to pass on their experience to learners. This is in

addition to the support provided by the assessors.

26. Completed NVQ units are signed off by assessors as soon as they are finished and passed to the internal verifier for verification. This prompt assessment increases learners' confidence and motivation. GHQ Training celebrates these successes and recognises the achievement of NVQ units and of full awards with certificates and awards ceremonies.

27. Action-planning is ineffective. Many action plans lack detail and some are not dated. Some learners are confused about which units they should do next and when they are expected to complete them. Planned actions are not always carried out by the learners or followed up by the assessor. For example, one learner was asked over a period of three months to update the portfolio but the work had still not been done at the time of inspection. Portfolios contain many incomplete pieces of work, with no plans for their completion.

28. Although some monitoring of learners' progress takes place during off-the-job training, and although some units are identified as completed and then signed off, overall monitoring of progress is poor. Neither portfolios nor the individual learning plans give a clear indication of units achieved. Individual learning plans do not show learners' basic skills levels. Many are not updated to show progress and achievements. Little use is made of the learners' logbooks to record progress. Learners are unclear about their optional units and the content of off-the-job training. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

29. Off-the-job training sessions focus on discussion and portfolio-building and there is little structured teaching of background knowledge. Covering background knowledge in these sessions is difficult because modern apprentices on both frameworks attend the same session. They are working at different speeds, on different units and at different levels of the NVQ. The trainer is a competent and experienced nursery manager who works with great enthusiasm to cover the background knowledge individually with learners, but has no support from early years specialists.

30. There are no resources such as videos, magazines or photocopied articles from newspapers, either in the off-the-job training sessions or in the nurseries, to stimulate and inspire learners. Learners rely on, and get, good advice and guidance from the trainers and other nursery staff. More learning resources are needed, especially for learners working towards a level 3 NVQ. The only books available are textbooks and workbooks.

31. Learners are not given sufficiently clear advice on how to organise the work in their portfolios, cross-reference units and check their own progress. For example, portfolios do not have a contents page or a list of numbered evidence sheets.

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### **Good Practice**

*An information technology training session has been organised for a learner on maternity leave to ensure that her key skills development continues. Additional individual support with portfolio-building is also available.*

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 4

32. Two partners manage GHQ Training. One has specific responsibility for the management and quality of the learners' experience and the other for management information and health and safety. There are two full-time and nine part-time members of staff, who have responsibilities across training, verification, assessment and co-ordination. One has specific responsibility for quality assurance. In addition, two people are employed as administrators. There are several work-based assessors in hairdressing, usually the owners or managers of salons, who are not employed by GHQ Training. All learners are either employed or are in work placements. A quality assurance manual was introduced in 1995 and updated in 1997. There is a separate procedures file. There is an equal opportunities policy, the detail of which is included in the learners' induction pack. The annual staff appraisal is supplemented by a quarterly review, at which staff's progress and training needs are reviewed. There are two development days for all staff each year. Trainers meet every month, in addition to the weekly staff meetings. The work-based assessors from hairdressing are invited to the trainers' meetings. There are business and development plans. GHQ Training has held the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, since 1998. GHQ Training began self-assessment in 1996, and has produced annual reports and action plans since then. The most recent report was produced in October 2000.

### STRENGTHS

- good internal communications
- thorough induction for learners
- effective promotion of equal opportunities
- good awareness of cultural issues in the workplaces

### WEAKNESSES

- lack of specific target-setting
- poor collection, recording and use of data
- no system for monitoring equal opportunities in the workplace
- little formal monitoring of the quality of training
- weak internal verification
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment process

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- closer monitoring of learners' health and safety in the workplace
- more appropriate language to promote equality of opportunity
- record and distribute minutes of staff meetings
- introduce a complaints log

33. Staff welcome the open management style at GHQ Training. Regular meetings are held to cover issues affecting learners and work placements and other concerns. Communication is effective. Weekly status reports identify and plan for individual learners' needs. For example, the reports highlight learners causing concern, non-attendance including notified absences, leavers and any work-placement vacancies. Memos are used to inform staff, who sign them to confirm understanding. There is effective and frequent informal contact between staff, who work closely together and often have joint responsibilities for the same learners. All staff can attend appropriate training courses and gain relevant qualifications. These include key skills training, and units towards an advice and guidance qualification.

34. All learners attend an induction day at GHQ Training's premises and are given a detailed induction pack containing useful information about their training. There are clear procedures for all aspects of training including assessment, equality of opportunity and progress reviews, as well as an explanation of the various forms which need to be completed. Learners fill out an induction checklist to confirm their understanding and have a good recollection of the information. In addition, there are workplace inductions to ensure understanding of health and safety. Induction was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

35. GHQ Training has produced business and development plans but these lack focus and have few specific aims and objectives. Demanding targets for rates of retention, achievement and employment are not set. A decline in achievement over the past two years has not been identified. There is an emphasis on monitoring performance against contractual compliance. Staff are given targets and objectives at meetings, but these are not recorded and there is no formal procedure for monitoring progress towards achieving them. Action points set by external bodies, such as external verifiers, are not formally reviewed and dealt with by GHQ Training. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

36. GHQ Training has some systems to collect data. There are systems to monitor the completion of progress reviews, the location of portfolios and the drawing-up of individual learning plans. There are, however, significant weaknesses in the collection and use of data. There is no overall system to monitor learners' progress towards their qualification. The forms used to report progress towards units and elements of the NVQs are not always completed properly. Individual learning plans are not kept up to date with learners' progress. Surveys have been used for a few years to acquire information from learners, employers and staff, but there is no evidence of this



information being formally analysed and evaluated. The forms used for quarterly reviews of learners' progress contain little information and have no space for a contribution from the employer other than a signature.

37. Management of training has lacked structure, with learners not always aware of the planned content of their off-the-job training. This has recently improved with the introduction of a timetable and lesson plans. There is no formal co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training activities, although this does happen at some reviews. GHQ Training has in the past had a system to monitor the health and safety of placements on an annual basis. Although there is still a check at the start of the placement, the annual monitoring is no longer carried out.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

38. Equality of opportunity has a high profile at GHQ Training. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. The equal opportunities policy is clearly written and available to staff and learners. Publicity material includes positive images of black learners. Efforts are made to rectify the gender imbalances typical of areas such as hairdressing and childcare. In moving to the new building in June 2001, GHQ Training took great care to make the premises accessible to all. This included ensuring that the premises had a lift, and providing a wide-door toilet. There is equal opportunities training for staff. Part-time staff are paid to attend, and are consulted about convenient dates. Learners are aware of procedures regarding harassment at work, and an equal opportunities question is included in their review sheet. Extra help for learners with additional learning needs is being arranged. GHQ Training works hard to help learners who become pregnant and makes arrangements for their return to the programme.

39. GHQ Training operates in a region where minority ethnic groups form only a very small proportion of the population. Nevertheless learners are made aware of other cultures. For example, hairdressing learners learn about the treatment of African-Caribbean hair although it is not mandatory as part of the NVQ programme. In the nurseries where the childcare learners gain their on-the-job training, lots of different equipment, posters, projects and the celebration of various festivals develop an understanding and awareness of different cultural and ethnic styles.

40. Some employers do not have their own equal opportunities policy nor do they have a copy of GHQ Training's policy. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. There are plans to issue the policy to employers and to ensure that they follow it. Some trainers and managers use language which does not promote respect for learners or the emergence of responsible adulthood. For example, learners are referred to as 'girls' and 'boys' rather than 'men' and 'women' or 'young men and women.'

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 4**

41. GHQ Training has had a quality assurance manual since 1995, with a separate procedures file for the activities that make up the learning programmes. These are updated whenever improvements are made. For example, the procedure for learners' induction has been improved and updated. However, there is no formal monitoring of the quality of training, whether it be off-the-job theory and practical, or that provided on the job by the employer. There is no clear distinction between the monitoring of training quality and the assessment of learners. An internal verification form is the only document used to record comments and provide feedback to trainers and, by its nature, it is focused on assessment activity. Off-the-job training may be observed, but there is no written feedback to the trainer to highlight good practice or plan improvements. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners are not routinely surveyed for feedback on their training.

42. Internal verification has not been thorough enough to identify the weaknesses in assessment found across all the areas of learning inspected. Sampling plans are not kept up to date. Verification of portfolios is normally carried out at the end of the training programme. In some cases, there has been poor support for work-based assessors, some of whom lack understanding of good assessment practice. There is little evidence of standardisation exercises and meetings. When external verifiers have identified action points, these have not always been tackled promptly. Internal verification records sometimes have signatures missing, and they do not confirm whether action required of assessors has been carried out. Some records request action by the learner rather than the assessor. The weak internal verification was not identified in the self-assessment report.

43. Although self-assessment has been established since 1996 it is not a thorough process that leads to improvements. In the reports and plans, many statements are used across all occupational areas, and from year to year. There is a lack of focus on specific strengths and weaknesses, with most of the strengths identified being general statements of normal expectations.

44. Meetings are seen as a valuable resource to discuss issues and share good practice, but they are not minuted. When actions are assigned to specific individuals, the lack of recording makes it difficult to check that such actions are followed through and carried out. There is no central log to monitor and record action taken when complaints have been made by learners.

<b>Good Practice</b>
<i>A male hairdressing learner carried out a demonstration of hairdressing skills at an event. It is hoped this will highlight hairdressing as a suitable occupation for men as well as women.</i>