

INSPECTION REPORT

Temp Dent Dental Agency Limited

18 December 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 **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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

Inadequate provision

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

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

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

SUMMARY

The provider

Temp Dent Dental Agency Limited is a private limited company, based in North Finchley, north London. It was originally founded to supply temporary and permanent dental nurses to dentists, in and around greater London. It has provided training for dental nurses since 1999, publicly funded since September 2000. There are 15 work-based learners following the national vocational qualification (NVQ) in oral health care at level 3. They are all employed in London dental practices, and they receive weekly off-the-job training at the company's offices.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of work-based learning in health, social care and public services (dental nursing) is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory, but quality assurance is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- clear aims, objectives and values
- good internal communications
- effective partnerships with dental practices
- good awareness of equality of opportunity by staff and learners
- good practical training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient formal procedures for quality assurance
- no achievement of the national certificate in dental nursing
- inadequate monitoring of the implementation of equality of opportunity
- poor understanding of the NVQ
- rigid approach to workplace assessment
- inadequate progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer action points in minutes of meetings
- inclusion of equality of opportunity in promotional materials
- separate training sessions for NVQ learners

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of two inspectors spent a total of six days at Temp Dent Dental Agency Limited (Temp Dent) during December 2001. They interviewed 13 learners, and held seven individual meetings with Temp Dent staff. They visited four employers' practices, and interviewed four workplace supervisors and employers. Inspectors observed and graded two training sessions. They examined a range of documents, including seven learners' portfolios of evidence, 15 individual learning plans, learners' records, Temp Dent policies and procedures manuals, internal and external verification documents and promotional literature. Temp Dent's self-assessment report and action plan of February 2001, and the update of December 2001, were reviewed.

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	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Total	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Temp Dent was incorporated in 1996. The company, which is based in North Finchley, north London, was founded to supply temporary and permanent dental nurses to dentists in and around greater London. This continues to be an important part of its work. Its training in dental nursing began in 1999, with a privately funded course. Publicly funded training in dental nursing started in September 2000. For its own work-based learning scheme, the company introduced the new national vocational qualification (NVQ), in oral healthcare at level 3 in September 2001. The company's other training in dental nursing, carried out on behalf of a local college of further education, was not inspected.

3. The executive director heads a staff team of 10 employees, eight of whom are permanent. All are based at the company's sole offices in north London, which are also the venue for off-the-job training. On its own scheme, the company currently provides work-based learning for 15 learners, all of whom are employed by London dentists. This training is funded through a contract with the London North Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

4. Temp Dent draws its learners from across inner and outer London, but relatively few from its immediate environs of North Finchley. In September 2001, unemployment in London was 3.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.9 per cent. However, there are wide variations in the rate of unemployment across the London boroughs from which Temp Dent recruits. For example, unemployment is 7.3 per cent in Hackney, although only 3.1 per cent in Barnet. The educational performance of school leavers also varies considerably across the London boroughs from which Temp Dent recruits. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving more than five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades C and above was 33.5 per cent in Hackney, and 55.8 per cent in Barnet. Around 20 per cent of the population of London are from minority ethnic groups. A significantly higher proportion of Temp Dent's learners are from minority ethnic groups.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Current learners are working towards the NVQ in oral healthcare introduced in September 2001, and none has yet achieved the qualification. In 1999-2000, 67 per cent of the learners, who were privately funded, achieved the national certificate in dental nursing. In 2000-01, no publicly funded work-based learners achieved this certificate. Learners develop good practical skills, especially through their training with employers.

6. The recruitment, guidance and counselling of learners is satisfactory. They receive good personal support from well-qualified staff. Learners benefit from the particularly good working relationships between Temp Dent and its partners in training, especially employers. Temp Dent has well established working arrangements with local dental practices, and learners are taught their practical skills well. Knowledge acquired at work is reinforced during weekly off-the-job training sessions. In the learning sessions observed by inspectors, good links were made by tutors to learners' practical activities at work. However, learners are poorly equipped by staff to exploit their learning opportunities to the full. They and their tutors/assessors have insufficient understanding of NVQ arrangements and structures. This has delayed their progress with, for example, the preparation of their portfolios of evidence. Assessment and progress reviews are unsatisfactorily managed. Assessment plans are too rigid. Assessment on specific dates often means that learners do not understand that assessment should relate to their particular stage of progress with their work. Written feedback following assessment does not clearly indicate whether or not the learner is considered to be competent in the skill which has been assessed. Learners are not set quantifiable targets and do not know what they have achieved. Satisfactory procedures for internal verification have been introduced. Progress reviews are inadequate. They are often concerned only with whether homework has been completed or not, and clear targets for learners to work towards are not set.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

7. Temp Dent was incorporated in 1996 as a private limited company, with three founding directors. One of these, the current executive director, became the only shareholder in 2000. The company was founded to supply temporary and permanent dental nurses to dentists in and around greater London. Training for dental nurses began in 1999, with a privately funded course. Publicly funded training started in September 2000. The executive director manages the company with a team of 10 employees, eight of whom are permanent. Four staff, including the executive director, work across the range of the company's activities. Three tutor/assessors, two tutors, an assessor and an internal verifier work exclusively on training. Their work is guided by a procedures manual and by manuals for tutors and assessors. There are policies for equal opportunities and for health and safety. The company first undertook self-assessment in February 2001. In preparation for the inspection, an update to the self-assessment report was produced, together with an action plan to tackle the weaknesses identified.

STRENGTHS

- clear aims, objectives and values
- good internal communications
- effective partnerships with dental practices
- good awareness of equality of opportunity by staff and learners

WEAKNESSES

- unsatisfactory management of some aspects of the NVQ programme
- insufficient formal arrangements for quality assurance
- no achievement of the national certificate in dental nursing
- inadequate monitoring of the implementation of equality of opportunity

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer action points in minutes of meetings
- inclusion of equality of opportunity in promotional materials

8. Training is highly valued by managers and staff within Temp Dent and is regarded as an important part of the company's work. There is a clearly expressed vision and development strategy for the training activities of the company, including responding to gaps in the provision of training for dental nurses and for employees working in related areas.

9. Inspectors agreed with the strengths given in the self-assessment report relating to communications and openness. The small team of training staff work well together and

foster good working relationships with learners and employers. Communications between staff are good, helped by staff's clear understanding of their own responsibilities and those of others. The executive director encourages debate and open discussion. Weekly staff meetings are held, covering a wide range of operational matters. Their minutes record frank and constructive debate.

10. Management has not yet successfully tackled weaknesses in the NVQ training. Staff and learners have insufficient understanding of NVQ structures, and workplace assessment and progress reviews are not working effectively. Most meetings are minuted. Inspectors identified the need for more systematic use of minutes and action points, including timed actions, to enable progress to be monitored.

11. The self-assessment report recognises that the lack of learners' achievements of the national certificate is a weakness. Temp Dent replaced the national certificate with the NVQ qualification, which it considered to be more appropriate for its learners.

12. The continuing professional development of staff is taken seriously. At the time of the inspection there was no staff development plan. However, staff appraisal is to be introduced early in 2002 and it is planned to address individual and corporate development needs.

13. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are strong, well-established partnerships between the company and London dental practices, enabling them to work together for the benefit of learners. This is facilitated by Temp Dent's work as a staff agency for independent and corporate practices. Staff have a wide range of contacts within this specialised field of work and use them to benefit learners. The company is developing a working partnership with another training provider to widen the range of provision it can offer to prospective learners. It has a successful dental nursing course jointly run with a local further education college. Tutor/assessors work closely with employers to ensure that learners have opportunities to gain evidence for all aspects of their qualification.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

14. Temp Dent staff are determined to promote equality of opportunity. The self-assessment report identified a significant number of actions to improve arrangements for ensuring the equality of opportunity. Most of these had been implemented by the time of the inspection.

15. Equal opportunity procedures satisfy legal requirements. A recently revised policy statement for equality of opportunity describes the company's commitment to eliminating unfair discrimination and promoting a positive attitude towards particular groups of learners. There are no separate policies for bullying or harassment. The policy statement clearly defines the company's undertakings to learners. The implementation of the policy is supported by suitable references during the training, in the written procedures for staff, and in the terms and conditions for learners in dental nursing. Learners are well aware of Temp Dent's policies and of how to complain, should the need arise. However, there is no systematic monitoring of the implementation of the policy and its various procedures. Learners are not routinely asked for feedback during their progress reviews or in the training evaluation questionnaires.

16. Temp Dent checks that learners' employers have equal opportunities policies, and provides a model policy if one is needed. However, there are no procedures for checking the employers' implementation of policy commitments.

17. Temp Dent is well informed about the employment structure of its industry and the current gender imbalance towards women dental nurses. The company monitors its own intake of learners, but does not set targets for widening participation. The company responds to the needs of particular groups of learners. For example, there is training at weekends and in the evenings for those who need it. There are plans to provide training for an NVQ at level 2 in partnership with another provider for learners who are not catered for by the existing level 3 qualification. Temp Dent has arranged for a local college to provide help for those with learning difficulties. Learners with weaknesses in English are considered for training, once these have been remedied. The self-assessment report recognises that promotional materials used by Temp Dent contain no statements about their commitment to equality of opportunity and nothing to encourage applications from under-represented sections of the community.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

18. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the company has too few formal quality assurance procedures. However, some progress has been made since the report was written in February 2001, and Temp Dent has an action plan to improve its quality assurance arrangements, extending to September 2002. The plan recognises the need for comprehensive written procedures for the evaluation of training, which take account of learners' achievements and are fully understood and used by staff.

19. The company has designed surveys to cover all phases of training. The first survey, on induction, was conducted in September 2001. The results have been analysed and discussed. Various on-course and exit surveys had just been completed at the time of the inspection, but their results were yet to be analysed. Some observations of training and learning are now being carried out, but not yet to a planned programme. There are some useful discussions of quality issues at staff meetings, although not as part of a planned and coherent quality assurance cycle linked to self-assessment. Action taken as a result of issues discussed has resulted in improvement. For example, the decision to introduce the level 3 NVQ in oral health care was partly taken in recognition of the poor learners' achievements and the comments of learners and tutors about the national certificate for dental nurses. The NVQ is proving to be more suitable for most learners. The retention rate is significantly higher than it was at the same stage of the previous course.

20. The self-assessment report is the company's first. A valuable update and action plan was prepared for the inspection. The report was written mainly by the executive director, but other staff contributed. The report is frank about the difficulties there were in producing a thorough self-assessment, because of the limited availability of objective evidence. It contains many judgements with which inspectors agreed, but they also identified additional weaknesses and one additional strength.

21. Internal verification has been well planned and all necessary procedures are supported by detailed paperwork. However, at the time of the inspection, the process had not been tested, as no assessments had come forward for internal verification.

Good Practice

Temp Dent is making good use of its work with a local college of further education, in its efforts to improve its own quality assurance arrangements. It has undertaken self-assessment to a model required by the college and has successfully adopted some of these good practices in producing its own self-assessment update.

Poor Practice

There was little external validation of Temp Dent's self-assessment report and training partners were insufficiently involved in its preparation.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	4

22. Temp Dent has offered publicly funded dental nurse training since September 2000. In the first year, all training was related to the syllabus for the national certificate in dental nursing. In September 2001, training for the newly introduced level 3 NVQ in oral health care was started, replacing the previous scheme for Temp Dent's own work-based learners. Temp Dent also manages the on- and off-the-job training of learners enrolled at a local college of further education. They continue to study for the national certificate. There are 15 learners on Temp Dent's own scheme. They were either already employed and then referred to Temp Dent by their employers for training, or they responded to advertisements placed by Temp Dent in a national evening newspaper or the professional journal. All applicants for training are interviewed and tested for numeracy and literacy skills by Temp Dent staff. Learners join the programme in March or September of each year. All learners are employed in local dental practices, either on their own initiative or through the efforts of Temp Dent. Learners are inducted onto the programme. The induction covers health and safety and equality of opportunity as well as other topics. All workplaces are checked for safety by Temp Dent staff. Every learner attends off-the-job training in Temp Dent's training room, at its offices, for one day each week. At the time of the inspection, learners were in mixed groups, with the learners from the local college, but from early in 2002 will be in separate groups. During off-the-job training sessions learners, receive the background knowledge they require. Assessment and progress reviews take place according to a published schedule. There are seven members of staff directly supporting learners as tutors, assessors and internal verifiers. Five staff are qualified to assess and two are working towards assessor qualifications. One member of staff is qualified as an internal verifier. As there is currently no apprenticeship framework for the new NVQ, learners do not receive formal training in key skills. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report, but found further weaknesses and an additional strength.

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

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started									16
Still in training									15	94
Individual learning plan completed									0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan									1	6
NVQ level 1 completed									0	0
NVQ level 2 completed									0	0

STRENGTHS

- particularly good partnerships
- good practical training

WEAKNESSES

- no achievement of the national certificate in dental nursing
- poor understanding of the NVQ
- rigid approach to workplace assessment
- inadequate progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- separate training sessions for NVQ learners

23. Temp Dent has particularly good working relationships with its partners in training, especially so with employers. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Temp Dent has well established working arrangements with local dental practices, carefully nurtured from its employment agency work which began in 1996. Temp Dent has successfully built on these relationships in its training provision. It has the confidence of local dentists as a provider of training for their staff, and is able to use this to obtain employment for learners who make direct contact with Temp Dent. Temp Dent is often the first point of contact for local dentists when they wish to employ learners in dental nursing or receive general advice about training in the profession. A

productive network of existing and former Temp Dent learners is developing. Temp Dent also works closely with a local college of further education to provide on- and off-the-job training for college students.

24. Learners are taught their practical skills well. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. In their workplaces, learners begin their training by working alongside a qualified and experienced nurse. Dentists are prepared to explain to the learner what is required and learners are encouraged to ask questions to seek clarification. Knowledge acquired at work is reinforced during weekly training sessions at the Temp Dent offices. During these sessions learners are introduced to the surgical equipment used in the workplace. There are weekly tests of the learners' capacity to choose the correct piece of equipment. Learners have made good progress. The tests also prepare learners for the independent assessment, a mandatory part of the qualification framework. In the learning sessions observed, tutors made good links to learners' practical activities at work. Temp Dent has recognised that the mixed teaching of NVQ and national certificate learners inhibits the most effective learning and intends to create separate teaching groups early in 2002.

25. The very recent introduction of the level 3 NVQ means that no learners have yet achieved the qualification. None of the intake of work-based learners in 2000-01 achieved the national certificate. In 1999-2000, Temp Dent ran a national certificate courses for privately funded learners and they achieved a 67 per cent pass rate. In response to the poor achievements in 2000-01, Temp Dent introduced the level 3 NVQ in oral health care. The company plans to offer the level 2 NVQ in January 2002.

26. Assessors and tutors have a poor understanding of NVQ requirements. Although they have an impressively wide range of occupational experience and qualifications, and are all qualified to teach or are working towards qualifications for teaching adults, their inadequate understanding of the NVQ has affected the progress of learners. None of the staff have previous experience of NVQs, with the exception of the internal verifier. Staff have worked hard to understand the structures and demands of this new NVQ, but are unable to advise learners appropriately. For example, learners who are three months into the course have little understanding of what should be included in their portfolios. At present, the portfolios include, for example, lesson notes, essays written for homework and results from spotter tests. Staff and learners do not understand the range of evidence which should be used towards their assessments. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

27. Assessment plans are too rigid. Efforts to work to an assessment schedule have led to little allowance being made for individual rates of progress. Assessment on specific dates often means that learners do not understand that assessment should relate to their particular stage of progress with their work. Sometimes learners do not understand that their portfolios are a record of their work and progress, which they can use to support requests for assessment. Written feedback following assessment is often insufficient with no clear indication as to whether the learner is considered to be competent in the skill which has been assessed. Learners are not set quantifiable targets and do not know

what they have achieved. Satisfactory procedures and records for internal verification have been introduced. No internal verification has yet been carried out as there had been no unit achievement to date by the time of the inspection.

28. Progress reviews are insufficiently focused on key issues. They are often only related to whether or not homework has been completed and there are no clear targets for learners to work towards. Equality of opportunity is insufficiently reinforced and aspects of health and safety are inadequately monitored during review.

Good Practice

Learners' opinions on their course are regularly collected through a sequence of questionnaires. Learners' responses are carefully analysed and used in discussions with them to try to make improvements.