

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION
REPORT JULY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
OCTOBER 2001

Army Base Repair Organisation Donnington



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Army Base Repair Organisation Donnington was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in a less than satisfactory grade being awarded for quality assurance. This area has been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The section of the original report dealing with quality assurance has been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Army Base Repair Organisation Donnington provides good training in engineering. Resources are excellent. Retention and achievement rates are high and most learners gain employment with the organisation on completing their training. Apprentice masters provide effective work-based training and learners have the opportunity to acquire a wide range of skills. However, inadequate planning of training and assessment in the workplace makes co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training difficult. The organisation promotes equality of opportunity vigorously but there are lapses in monitoring activities in the workplace. The organisation assesses applicants thoroughly to ensure that they are suitable for training. During training, learners benefit from strong support. However, progress reviews are not helping learners to make progress through their training programmes. The management of training is satisfactory and there is an emphasis on staff development. However, managers make little use of data for strategic planning. At the time of the original inspection, quality assurance was less than satisfactory. Although the organisation had a comprehensive set of policies, it had no systems to assure the quality of training. Self-assessment and internal verification were insufficiently thorough. Quality assurance is now good. The organisation uses feedback from learners effectively and is swiftly implementing detailed action plans.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ high retention and achievement rates
- ◆ excellent resources
- ◆ wide range of opportunities for learning in the workplace
- ◆ very effective work-based training
- ◆ strong promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ strong support for learners
- ◆ thorough selection process
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ comprehensive, audited policies for training
- ◆ good use of feedback from learners
- ◆ effective action-planning

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate planning of on-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ underdeveloped progress reviews
- ◆ failure of management to use data effectively

INTRODUCTION

1. Army Base Repair Organisation Donnington (ABRO Donnington) is part of Army Base Repair Organisation (ABRO), which is a national executive agency of the Defence Logistics Organisation. ABRO repairs, maintains and overhauls military equipment for the British Army and the other armed forces. More than 1,000 staff work at ABRO's site at Donnington, which has areas for mechanical and electronic production. A training centre at the site employs eight staff, including a training manager, who has overall responsibility for the training. The organisation recruits between 18 and 35 learners each year. At the time of the original inspection, there were 78 learners. Currently, there are 73 learners, all of whom are following advanced modern apprenticeships in mechanical, electrical or electronic engineering. Training takes place at ABRO's site and at subcontracted local colleges. At the time of the original inspection, the training was funded by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and through Shropshire Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise (CCTE). Shropshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has now replaced Shropshire CCCTE as a source of funding.

2. ABRO Donnington recruits its learners from the local area. In Shropshire, more than 27 per cent of jobs are in manufacturing. In May 2000, the rate of unemployment was 2.5 per cent, compared with a national average of 3.8 per cent. By September 2001, the unemployment rate had fallen to 2.4 per cent in Shropshire, compared with a national average of 2.9 per cent. At the time of the 1991 census, minority ethnic groups made up 1.6 per cent of Shropshire's population. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 55.4 per cent, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, this proportion had risen to 56.4 per cent, compared with a national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The training manager wrote the self-assessment report for the original inspection, with the help of the training supervisors. No other staff were involved in producing the report. The report was well organised and provided useful information about the organisation and its role. However, it contained little information about training and assessment in the workplace or learners' activities away from the workplace. The report was insufficiently evaluative. It identified only two weaknesses and cited no evidence for the strengths. The action plan did not set out how the organisation was going to remedy the weaknesses or build on the strengths. The most recent self-assessment report was written in September 2001. The organisation involved all training staff in producing the report and used information from a recent evaluation of its training programmes. The report follows the format of the *Common Inspection Framework* and identifies strengths and weaknesses for all aspects of training. It gives a lower grade for the reinspected area than that given by inspectors. All the training staff received a copy of the report. The report is accompanied by a development plan. The organisation has also updated the action plan which it prepared after the original inspection. The updated document provided a useful background for the reinspection.

4. For the original inspection, four inspectors spent a total of 16 days with ABRO Donnington during July 2000. They visited two subcontracted local colleges and interviewed four staff. They also interviewed 17 learners and three apprentice masters and carried out 15 interviews with other staff at ABRO Donnington. They examined records of assessments, learners' portfolios of evidence, internal and external verifiers' reports and documents held by the CCTE. They observed one assessment and one progress review.

5. For the reinspection, two inspectors spent a total of six days with ABRO Donnington in October 2001. They visited four areas of ABRO Donnington's site and carried out 14 interviews with staff. They interviewed six learners and observed one progress review and two assessments in the workplace. They examined learners' personal files and portfolios, details of arrangements with subcontractors, documents held by the awarding body and the local LSC and ABRO Donnington's documents and procedures.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 2

6. ABRO Donnington has 78 trainees, all following a modern apprenticeship programme. Trainees are employed by the organisation on a three-year contract. The apprenticeship is divided into three phases each lasting a year. In the first

year, apprentices undertake off-the-job training in the training centre to acquire basic engineering skills and key skills as part of their progress towards NVQs at level 2. Additional evidence for key skills is obtained during the outdoor pursuit course which trainees attend soon after starting their apprenticeship. During the second and third phases, they work in the production workshops under the guidance of apprentice masters maintaining and refurbishing a wide range of military equipment including tanks, armoured personnel carriers, small arms, communications equipment and robotic systems. The apprentices move to a different area of the workshops approximately every eight weeks. They attend college one day a week to study the theory and practice of engineering and to work towards an appropriate academic qualification. Trainees decide from the outset whether to follow an electrical engineering or mechanical engineering programme, but there is some flexibility to transfer during the first year. Some trainees progress to higher national certificate (HNC) or beyond. Assessment for NVQs at level 3 is carried out by training staff using evidence gained in the production workshops. Staff at the training centre have appropriate assessors' qualifications. Regular reviews take place in the training centre or workplace. On completing the apprenticeship, trainees may be offered employment in one of the production areas. The self-assessment report for the occupational area listed many strengths and only one weakness. Inspectors considered most of the strengths to be no more than normal practice or to relate more appropriately to generic areas. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to achieve additional skills and qualifications
- ◆ good resources
- ◆ wide range of opportunities for learning in the workplace
- ◆ highly effective work-based training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of familiarity with NVQ process among some apprentice masters
- ◆ inadequate planning of on-the-job training and assessment

7. Retention and achievement rates are high. The average retention rate over the past four years is 90 per cent. Ninety-five per cent of trainees have achieved an NVQ at level 2 and 80 per cent have completed their modern apprenticeship.

8. Many trainees achieve qualifications in addition to the modern apprenticeship certificate. The organisation encourages trainees to undertake additional professional and management courses as a means of developing their full potential. It also organises training courses to enable trainees to acquire additional skills, for

example, in operating hydraulic systems. Some of these skills may not be required during the apprenticeship, but they help to ensure that trainees are adequately prepared for employment.

9. The training centre is well equipped. There is sufficient equipment in the electronics training area to ensure that trainees do not need to share facilities. The workshops are well organised and clear. On-the-job training takes place in extremely well-resourced workshops supervised by individually assigned apprentice masters.

10. The abundance of tools, equipment and test rigs in the production areas, and the constant dismantling and reassembling of equipment, provide trainees with a range of experience which is more than sufficient to meet the requirements of the NVQ units in mechanical and electrical engineering. Trainees also have ample opportunity to engage in production tasks which enable them to develop their skills and collect evidence of their competencies.

11. In all production areas, trainees work under the supervision of an apprentice master who is a qualified engineer. The apprentice masters provide strong support for trainees, helping them to carry out their production and maintenance tasks and to develop the skills and knowledge required. The roles and responsibilities of the apprentice master are set out clearly in a published handbook. They play a substantial role in witnessing trainees' competencies. However, some know very little about NVQs or the mechanics of gaining an NVQ.

12. There is inadequate planning of on-the-job training and assessment. Trainees' placements are not arranged in advance. During each eight-week placement, training staff identify the next placement on the basis of the work the trainee has already done and the availability of suitable placements and apprentice masters. Because there is no plan of future placements it is not possible to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively.

13. Trainees ask for appointments with the NVQ assessor when they have enough evidence to be assessed. This gives trainees some control of the process, but trainees experiencing difficulties who do not come forward for assessment may not receive the support they need as quickly as they should. Procedures for monitoring trainees' progress towards their NVQ are not rigorous enough.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

14. The MOD has an equal opportunities policy with which all staff are required to comply. A booklet, *Civilian Equal Opportunities in the MOD*, is issued to all staff and trainees when they are first employed at the Donnington site. It explains

in detail the scope of the policy and also provides practical help and information for staff. The Donnington site has a nominated officer responsible for equal opportunities issues, who is required to monitor the implementation of the policy and collect statistical data. The booklet was last updated in 1999 by the MOD's central equal opportunities unit, which is responsible for its revision. The Donnington training centre, work-placement premises and canteen facilities are all accessible to wheelchair users. At the time of inspection, there were no trainees with disabilities, 3.8 per cent of trainees were women and 1.3 per cent came from minority ethnic groups. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective training for all staff
- ◆ positive promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ effective collection and use of data on equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of subcontractors' policy and practice on equal opportunities

15. All staff in the training department have received at least a one-day training course to update them on equal opportunities issues. ABRO's chief executive has issued instructions to provide training for all those employed on the Donnington site by the end of the year.

16. The organisation promotes equality of opportunity in the literature which it publishes. Advertisements for apprenticeships in local newspapers include photographs of female engineering trainees. There is also a written commitment to equal opportunities within the advertisements stating that the organisation welcomes applications from individuals, irrespective of ethnicity, gender or disability. Other promotional materials distributed to local schools and circulated at careers events for parents and pupils include a picture of a woman working on an engine unit. Representatives of the organisation attending recent careers events have included a woman and a training instructor of Asian descent, which has also helped to promote a positive image of equality within ABRO's apprenticeship programmes.

17. The organisation has a nominated person within the personnel department on the Donnington site who is responsible for collecting data relating to equal opportunities. Information on the number of people from under-represented groups applying for apprenticeships, passing selection tests and succeeding at interviews is routinely analysed to try and identify if there are barriers to fair recruitment. Targets have been set for recruitment from under-represented groups and

performance at Donnington is measured against national recruitment from under-represented groups within the organisation. The nominated person for equal opportunities on the Donnington site produces an annual statistical report, which is sent to ABRO's headquarters for further analysis.

18. The report sent to headquarters is used to draw up an improvement plan for the subsequent year. The current improvement plan, for January to December 2000 includes training, updating and distribution of policy booklets to staff. It also specifies arrangements for implementing the plan and monitoring outcomes.

19. There is no day-to-day monitoring of equal opportunities in the production work areas at Donnington. Potentially offensive calendars and posters were being displayed in some work areas. Managers took immediate action to have the material removed after inspectors brought the matter to their attention.

20. There is no monitoring of training subcontractors' policy and practice on equal opportunities. At present, the organisation has no means of assuring itself that subcontractors are protecting ABRO's trainees in line with its own minimum requirements for equality of opportunity.

Trainee support

Grade 2

21. All applicants for apprenticeship training complete an aptitude test to assess their suitability for modern apprenticeship training at ABRO Donnington. Independent MOD assessors from the MOD's policy branch carry out and mark the tests. Candidates who pass the test are then interviewed. Members of the interview panel question candidates on their interests, hobbies, attitudes and achievements, and score their responses. A medical examination is arranged for those who are selected. If the results are satisfactory, they are offered a modern apprenticeship with the company. All trainees receive induction covering the nature and conditions of employment, the modern apprenticeship framework and the qualifications open to them. They are also told about the role of the trade union and encouraged to become members. The trade union is represented on various committees which meet to discuss training issues. A welfare officer is employed on the site to help and advise employees and trainees as required. Trainees receive progress reviews at the end of each training segment. Staff involved in the interviewing, training and assessment of trainees receive training for these roles, and, where necessary, they are qualified to conduct NVQ assessments and verification. The self-assessment report mentioned no weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the report and with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective personal development of trainees

- ◆ strong support systems
- ◆ comprehensive community and school links
- ◆ good incentives and rewards for achievement
- ◆ rigorous selection process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to take account of initial assessment in drawing up training plans
- ◆ no recognition of trainees' previous achievements
- ◆ underdeveloped reviews of progress

22. All trainees attend a one-week residential course in Wales soon after they begin their training programme. Outdoor activities are designed to develop personal skills, including the ability to work effectively with others. Trainees value the course and talked of their increased confidence and tolerance of others, the benefits of working as a member of a team and opportunities to develop key skills.

23. Trainees receive strong support throughout their training programmes. In each work area, they are allocated to an apprentice master who has volunteered for the task of training apprentices and providing them with the support and guidance they require. The apprentice masters are fully briefed about their role and have a guidance handbook. The organisation also has a full-time welfare officer who is introduced to the trainees during induction, and who provides information on the type of help available and a telephone number they can use at any time. The welfare officer's main role is to help employees remain effective in their work. The type of help and advice available to trainees covers sickness, accommodation, substance abuse, finance and debts, pay and bereavement. Trainees are directed to other specialist agencies where this is appropriate. Further support for trainees is provided by the organisation's personnel department and the trade union of which they are members. The subcontracting colleges which provide off-the-job training have comprehensive student support services which are freely available to ABRO Donnington's trainees. Two trainees are currently receiving additional support in mathematics at one of the colleges.

24. Good links have been made with local schools and the community. Pupils who are potential trainees are offered work experience at ABRO Donnington. A member of the training department acts as a mentor for some of these pupils and teaches them how to prepare for an interview. The numerous examples of community links include the local hospital. The hospital benefited when an apprentice manufactured specialist stainless steel hip replacement equipment as an engineering project. The apprentice went on to win the MOD's apprentice-of-the-year award with the project and the hospital gained important equipment free of charge. The handing over of the equipment was featured in local newspapers to promote effective community links.

25. The organisation offers various rewards and incentives to encourage trainees to succeed. There are award ceremonies at which trainees are presented with their certificates. Additional memorial awards and apprentice-of-the-year awards are open to all trainees and the winners attend presentations at prestigious venues where well-known people present the prizes.

26. The inspection team was not given access to the MOD's selection test and is unable to comment on its content and suitability. Information about individuals' training needs obtained from the initial assessment is not entered on training plans and is not used to help shape trainees' development.

27. No account is taken of trainees' previous achievements and there is no initial assessment of trainees' key skills. Although the rate at which trainees acquire skills during the training programme is taken into account by trainers, the absence of a systematic assessment of prior achievement makes it difficult to plan individuals' development effectively.

28. Trainees' progress reviews do not always take place within the contractual timescales required by the CCTE. Reviews are conducted when a trainee has completed a particular training segment and the time spent on these segments varies. The reviews focus on work the trainees have done while completing the training segment only and are not linked to their training plan. Trainees work to targets which are common to all trainees, not to individual targets.

Management of training

Grade 3

29. ABRO Donnington is part of the national ABRO team, which is itself an executive agency of the Defence Logistics Organisation. The ABRO site at Donnington contains two production areas, mechanical and electronic, and the training unit. The training unit has a training manager with overall responsibility for all aspects of training, assisted by two training supervisors, who are both internal verifiers. One supervisor is responsible for the training centre, including all first-phase, off-the-job training and liaison with schools. The other supervisor is the NVQ co-ordinator who also has responsibility for the second and third phases of apprenticeship training. There are four full-time instructors and one visiting assessor. An administrative officer supports the training manager and training supervisors. Staff recruitment and induction procedures are clearly recorded. Staff have job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities in fulfilling the organisation's objectives. There is an annual assessment of staff training needs linked to the business needs of the organisation. The organisation has the Investors in People Standard. Staff on higher grades are subject to performance appraisal in line with MOD's policies. The self-assessment report listed a number of strengths but no weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and identified some weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective communication system
- ◆ good staff development to meet business needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped use of data to influence management decisions
- ◆ lack of formal service level agreements with subcontractors

30. The relatively small number and close proximity of staff within the centre allows training to be managed with a level of informality. Staff work in an open atmosphere where all those involved in training feel able to raise issues and present new ideas. More formal methods of communication include a monthly briefing for all staff. The training manager passes information to senior staff, who pass it to the training staff, who in turn brief the trainees. Notices are displayed on notice boards throughout the organisation and in all training areas. Trainees' progress reviews are used as an opportunity for trainees, apprentice masters and instructors to raise issues about training and progress. Communications with external agencies are effective. Staff from the training centre attend college staff meetings and course reviews. They also sit in on classes. The college supplies copies of trainees' weekly attendance sheets and progress reports twice a year. Staff at the training centre represent ABRO Donnington on national training committees.

31. There are policies for all personnel issues including staff recruitment and induction. There is a strong commitment to staff development. Annually, staff-development needs are determined in line with the aims and objectives of the organisation. The staff-training plans include criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of training. There is an evaluation immediately after the training and again after three months. All staff training is recorded and the records regularly updated. Current priorities for staff development include assessors and verifiers' awards, health and safety, equal opportunities awareness and occupational updating. The staff training plan is displayed openly.

32. Data collected and analysed at various stages in the training process include the number of applications, the number of those successfully completing the aptitude test, the number of trainees achieving places on programmes, and trainees' retention and achievement rates. Early leavers are also followed up to determine their reasons for leaving and their destinations. There is little use of data for strategic planning. Management is reactive. One example of the constructive use of data relates to marketing. As a result of asking all trainees where they had seen the advertisement for apprenticeships when they were applying, the organisation has altered its pattern of advertising. Trainees' recruitment is based on the needs of the workforce. The organisation does not have a target-setting

culture.

33. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to two colleges of further education. Relationships between them and the training centre are good. But there are no contracts or service level agreements identifying standards and expectations against which the organisation can make judgements about the colleges' performance.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

34. ABRO Donnington's training policies and procedures are set by the MOD. The organisation has been accredited with ISO 9002, an international standard for quality assurance. The training manager is a member of the MOD's national apprentice management committee and one of the training supervisors represents ABRO Donnington on the MOD's national apprentice training and apprentice competitions committees. The training manager, the training supervisors, the personnel manager, the two workshop managers and trade union representatives serve on ABRO Donnington's apprentice board. This board meets every two months, or more frequently if required, and reports to ABRO's national committees.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no detailed arrangements to assure quality of training
- ◆ lack of rigour in self-assessment
- ◆ inadequate action-planning
- ◆ inadequacies in the internal verification procedures

35. After the original inspection, ABRO Donnington produced a comprehensive action plan to rectify the weaknesses. The plan sets out who is responsible for each action and the deadline for performing it. At the reinspection, inspectors found that ABRO Donnington had made good progress towards rectifying the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. There are now various systems for assuring the quality of training and internal verification is more systematic. Inspectors awarded a higher grade for quality assurance than that given in the self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive, audited policies for training
- ◆ ongoing improvements in training
- ◆ good use of feedback from learners
- ◆ effective action-planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no recording of assessors and internal verifiers' meetings

36. ABRO Donnington has comprehensive policies for its training, which are set by the MOD. ABRO Donnington publicises its aims and values on posters throughout the training centre. The MOD regularly audits the organisation's compliance with the policies and its use of a training package. Until it was reorganised in April 2000, ABRO Donnington's own quality assurance department carried out frequent internal audits. At the time of the original inspection, the document setting out ABRO Donnington's policies was difficult to follow and it did not specify any arrangements for applying the policies. For example, there was a policy to review learners' progress but the document did not specify the frequency or format or purpose of the reviews. Since the original inspection, the MOD has issued a draft set of procedures for all its apprenticeships and a procedural manual for NVQ training. These supplement existing instructions and guidance. All staff at ABRO Donnington are aware of the new procedures.

37. At the time of the original inspection, training staff considered and discussed recommendations for improving training at their monthly briefings and elsewhere. Although ideas usually came from staff at the training centre, apprentice masters, learners and staff at the subcontracted colleges were encouraged to make suggestions. Examples of improvements included a revised plan for the first phase of training, which eliminated duplication by the subcontracted colleges of training which was already taking place at ABRO Donnington's training centre. Learners have used the extra time to cover additional theory and to acquire new skills. However, ABRO Donnington was not monitoring and evaluating its activities to identify ways of improving them. There was a lack of written arrangements to assure quality and there was little use of data to guide improvements. At reinspection, ABRO Donnington had rectified these weaknesses. It has analysed the results of learners' initial assessments and discovered that some learners have poor numeracy skills. As a result, it has arranged for an external consultant to give these learners extra help with numeracy. As a result of feedback from learners and monitoring of the subcontracted training, the training manager and training supervisors have reviewed learners' training at college. The college has agreed to take specific steps to improve achievement and attendance. One of the training supervisors is now attending the team meetings of the college's staff to monitor the situation. Staff from ABRO Donnington now visit the college regularly to observe training and inspect resources. ABRO Donnington has negotiated a separate contract with another college for its most recent intake of learners to ensure that they receive effective training. Staff at ABRO Donnington supplement the procedures for assuring quality with unplanned but frequent checks. One of the trainers regularly visits learners' workplaces to observe their training. If he identifies any areas which require improvement, he acts immediately. For example, he arranges for learners to move to another area if their current work placements are not giving them the experience they need.

38. At the original inspection, ABRO Donnington had no systems for obtaining feedback from learners and others involved in training. It did not keep records of any feedback which individual members of staff happened to gather and none of the training centre's committees included learners. Although the organisation's small size meant that it was possible to obtain feedback without formal systems for gathering it, the lack of procedures meant that there was no systematic assurance of the quality of training. Since the original inspection, ABRO Donnington has rectified these weaknesses. It has established a group of learners, trainers and apprentice masters to provide feedback. The learners chair the group's meetings and carry out the administration for them. The minutes of the group record learners' feedback and any actions which have been agreed. Learners have found these meetings so useful that ABRO Donnington is increasing their frequency from quarterly to monthly. The organisation now issues questionnaires to learners at the end of the first phase of their training and when they complete their training programmes. The organisation has analysed the responses to the questionnaires and used them to make improvements. For example, it is reviewing the display boards and literature it uses at careers conventions as a result of feedback from learners at the end of their first phase of training. Learners also have the opportunity to provide feedback to their assessors during progress reviews and after observations in the workplace.

39. At the time of the original inspection, action-planning was poorly organised. Although ABRO Donnington agreed on various actions to rectify weaknesses, it rarely recorded who was responsible for carrying them out, when they would be performed or how their effectiveness would be measured. Since the original inspection, ABRO Donnington has prepared a detailed action plan. The plan sets out actions to be taken, deadlines for taking them and the names of the responsible staff. It also specifies criteria for measuring performance, targets and deadlines for achieving them. The training centre's staff review progress towards fulfilling the action plan each month. All the members of the apprentice board have received copies of the plan and they review progress towards fulfilling the plan at their meetings every other month. ABRO Donnington has carried out the actions in the plan swiftly and kept good records of its progress. For example, it has changed the materials it uses for displays and hired consultants to enhance learners' training in basic and key skills. It has also changed the subcontractor for the most recent intake of learners and started to use basic skills tests and learners' school results as part of their initial assessment.

40. At the time of the original inspection, there were regular meetings of the assessors and internal verifiers but the meetings were not minuted. This continues to be the case. The two training supervisors are responsible for internal verification. At the original inspection, they were keeping separate sets of records and their records were difficult to obtain. Now, however, information about internal verification is readily available and the training supervisors are regularly sharing good practice. At the original inspection, the internal verifiers were observing the assessors but they were not planning their observations in advance and they had not agreed on a sample of assessments to observe. The internal

verifiers now observe each assessor twice every week. ABRO Donnington used to sample the evidence in learners' portfolios only when they were complete. It now samples evidence throughout learners' training and exceeds the awarding bodies' requirements.

41. ABRO Donnington rewrote its first self-assessment report in preparation for the original inspection. The training manager and training supervisors wrote the report and provided the trainers with copies of it. External agencies which were involved in the training played little role in producing the report. ABRO Donnington did not consult learners, apprentice masters, subcontractors or members of the apprentice board during self-assessment and did not give them copies of the report. The self-assessment report was insufficiently critical and failed to identify some important weaknesses. For the reinspection, the organisation produced a self-assessment report which followed the format of the *Common Inspection Framework*. It identified strengths, weaknesses and grades for each of the seven areas covered by the *Common Inspection Framework's*. However, it did not give a grade for the occupational area or for the specific aspects of learning inspected by the ALI. ABRO Donnington also produced a development plan to rectify the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. It specifies actions and targets and criteria for assessing progress. It also sets out which member of staff is responsible for each action, the timescales for carrying out each action and the arrangements for monitoring progress.