

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Axia Solutions Ltd**

17 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 **learn**direct 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

Axia Solutions Ltd has taken over the training and assessment which was previously organised by the Association for Ceramic Training and Development (ACTD). This transfer took place in May 1999 and Axia Solutions Ltd became a vocational assessment centre in April 2001. It is based in the Hothouse Ceramic Design Centre in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent and employs some of the staff who were previously employed by ACTD. It offers training mainly in ceramics manufacture and business administration, but there are also a few learners in warehouse and distribution, and engineering. Most of the ceramic manufacture learners are working towards foundation modern apprenticeships whereas business administration learners work towards foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. Most learners are based in companies which are directly connected to the ceramics industry. There are currently 115 learners, most of whom are modern apprentices. There are 53 in ceramic manufacture, nine engineering and laboratory technicians and a further 13 in NVQ training. In addition, there are 19 foundation modern apprentices, seven advanced modern apprentices and 14 in NVQ training in business administration.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The work-based learning for young people in business administration is satisfactory, but the engineering and manufacturing training and leadership and management of Axia Solutions Ltd is less than satisfactory.

### GRADES

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

| Engineering, technology & manufacturing | 4 |
|---|---|
| Contributory grades:                    |   |
| Work-based learning for young people    | 4 |

| Business administration, management & professional | 3 |
|--|---|
| Contributory grades:                               |   |
| Work-based learning for young people               | 3 |

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- good on-the-job training
- good pastoral support for learners
- effective management action to resolve problems

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- poor use of data in planning
- poor action-planning resulting from the self-assessment process
- slow progress of some learners
- delayed assessment of key skills

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better recording of learners' progress
- more systematic sharing of good practice

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspections spent a total of 16 days at Axia Solutions Ltd (Axia) in December 2001. They interviewed 47 learners and visited 18 employers, where they interviewed 27 workplace supervisors. They conducted 19 interviews with Axia's staff and observed and graded three training and four classroom sessions. They also examined a range of documents including learners' portfolios of evidence, progress review files, policies and procedures, organisational reports, staff development and review records, operational agreements, promotional literature and reports from awarding bodies. Inspectors studied Axia's self assessment report which was published in August 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

|  | Grade 1  | Grade 2  | Grade 3  | Grade 4  | Grade 5  | Grade 6  | Grade 7  | Total    |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Engineering, technology & manufacturing            | 0        | 1        | 3        | 1        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 5        |
| Business administration, management & professional | 0        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2        |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>0</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> |

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. Axia is a limited company, which offers training and assessment for the ceramics industry. This includes ceramics, business administration, distribution and warehousing, customer service, key skills and assessor awards. The assessment centre was transferred from The Association for Ceramic Training and Development (ACTD) in April 2001. ACTD was formed in 1992 to provide ceramics training in Staffordshire. In 1998, ACTD became the national training organisation (NTO) for the ceramics industry, and at this point Axia was formed by two ex-staff members of ACTD. They employed four of the existing staff team with the aim of continuing the training activities in the ceramics industry.

3. Three-hundred and fifty ceramic manufacturing companies are concentrated in the Stoke-on-Trent area, employing approximately 30,000 people. Products range from tableware and giftware to tiles, sanitary-ware and industrial ceramics. Recent international events and the resulting economic climate have resulted in a down-turn in demand for tableware and domestic products and this has led to reduced production and redundancies in several companies. There have been reductions in the recruitment of learners in ceramics. Learners are placed in a wide range of companies, which represents the industry in terms of size and product.

4. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area still shows a heavy dependence on manufacturing. The full-time jobs traditionally undertaken by men have been in decline, resulting in short-time working, redundancies and factory closures. The image of the industry has suffered, as a result, making recruitment of school leavers difficult. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Stoke-on-Trent achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 36 per cent compared with 47.9 per cent nationally. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 1.4 per cent of Staffordshire's population compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. Axia has a contract with Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

### Work-based learning for young people

5. Training in the workplace in manufacturing and business administration is satisfactory. Many learners are given well-structured and effective training by workplace supervisors and assessors. Learners receive good support and have regular progress reviews. The employers actively promote the national vocational qualifications (NVQs) within their organisations. Retention rates in manufacturing are low. The industry is in decline and learners have been made redundant. The progress towards completion of frameworks is slow for many learners. Target-setting during progress reviews is poor. Internal verification and the assessment of key skills is consistently left until late in the training programme.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 4

6. Axia is a limited company which is owned by two senior staff members, the company secretary and the director of training, who is also responsible for quality assurance. There are four other members of staff who have support and training responsibilities for the learners. There is a training co-ordinator, a training adviser, assessors and administrative staff. Axia has a quality assurance system with a range of policies and procedures and an equal opportunities policy. It produced its second self-assessment report and action plan in August 2001.

### STRENGTHS

- well-managed and highly effective staff development
- particularly good links with employers
- good understanding of equal opportunities by assessors
- effective implementation of quality assurance procedures

### WEAKNESSES

- poor use of data in planning
- ineffective progress review system
- poor management of initial assessment process
- insufficient use of equal opportunities data
- poor recording and monitoring of complaints
- insufficient evaluation of subcontracted training
- poor action-planning resulting from self-assessment

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more sharing of good practice
- more active promotion of equal opportunities
- more involvement of staff in self-assessment process

7. Axia's staff development activities are managed well. Staff have regular reviews, during which their personal development needs are discussed. Training that takes place is effectively linked to the needs of the individual and Axia's business needs. Staff are given many opportunities to develop their management and teaching skills. All but one members of staff are trained assessors and verifiers. One staff member is qualified to teach basic skills and others have been trained to teach key skills and basic skills. Most staff have had relevant training in using computers.

8. There are particularly good links with employers. Staff have an extensive knowledge of, and experience in, the ceramics industry. They are highly thought of by employers,

which like their professional approach. They have a good understanding of employers' needs. Some staff have worked with employers to develop the NVQ standards for the industry. Axia also maintains productive links with other external bodies, such as its national training organisation, the Employment Service and local schools.

9. Axia does not use data effectively to help in its decision-making. It currently monitors data on the number of learners and their completion rates of NVQs and modern apprenticeship frameworks in order to meet the requirements of its contracts with local LSCs. Axia does not use the data it collects to set strategic objectives for the company or to set specific targets for improvement in areas such as retention and achievement. There is too little analysis of the time learners take to complete their modern apprenticeship frameworks. Staff are not given measurable and realistic targets based on effective analysis of data.

10. The progress review process is ineffective. Although progress reviews are held frequently, they lack depth and detail. The reviews do not give learners a clear picture of the progress they have made or what they need to do to make further progress. Learners are not set sufficiently specific targets. Workplace supervisors are not routinely involved in progress reviews and are not asked to make written observations about learners' progress in the workplace. Axia holds the only copy of the review paperwork. Employers and learners are not able to use it as a working document to help them monitor progress between reviews.

11. Axia is not making good use of the information collected during learners' initial assessment. Although information on learners' numeracy and literacy skills is kept in learners' personal files, it is not used to develop effective individual learning plans. The plans of those learners identified as having additional learning needs do not reflect these needs. Learners' prior achievements and learning are not routinely recorded on their learning plans. Some learners have to repeat work they have already covered because their previous achievements are not shown in their learning plans.

12. There are several examples of good practice which is taking place at Axia or its subcontractors not being shared with the rest of the consortium. Although good practice may be discussed at team meetings, it is not always being highlighted in the minutes of these meetings to ensure it reaches a wider audience. Many staff meetings are not formally minuted.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 4**

13. All assessors, including the work-based assessors, have a good understanding of equal opportunities. Their training in equality issues begins as they work towards their assessors' qualifications, and their knowledge of equality and what it means in the workplace is regularly checked by the internal verifiers. The assessors' understanding of equality contributes to a protective culture in the company, where learners feel that they are treated fairly and protected from harassment. Learners have a basic grasp of equal opportunities and grievance procedures. These issues are discussed at their induction and dealt with subsequently during off-the-job training sessions.

14. Axia's equal opportunities policy, although it is updated every year, does not refer to current relevant legislation. There is a grievance and appeals procedure, but Axia does not record any grievances and so cannot monitor properly the effectiveness of any actions that are taken. When a complaint is made informally, Axia takes prompt action to deal with the situation.

15. The company collects details about its learners in terms of their ethnicity, gender and any disabilities, but does not use this information effectively. Although any imbalances or trends are noted, they are not used as the basis for any strategy to target recruitment activities. None of the 115 learners has a disability or any additional learning needs. There are no learners from minority ethnic groups, although 2.1 per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. In 1999, Axia ran a project to help raise the profile of the ceramics industry as an industry that is open to all. More women have joined Axia since then. A good proportion of the current learners in manufacturing, 68 per cent, are women.

16. Axia has redesigned its learning materials to be free from cultural and gender stereotyping. All employers are asked if they have an equal opportunities policy before a learner is placed with them, and encouraged to develop one if they have not. The company does not, however, clearly state its commitment to equality of opportunity in all its advertising and promotional material.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 3

17. Axia has comprehensive written procedures that cover all the key processes of the company. There is a system for controlling paperwork to ensure that all staff are using approved documents. Staff are fully involved in developing and updating the procedures. The procedures are held in a quality assurance manual, which is given to all staff, subcontractors and employers. New staff are able to see clearly how the processes operate and other staff can see to what standard they are expected to work. The manual also gives employers a good picture of Axia's training, assessment and review processes. Axia does not, however, regularly check that all staff are working to the procedures as they are set out.

18. The action plan that Axia produced to accompany the most recent self-assessment report is insufficiently detailed. It only deals with the weaknesses identified through self-assessment and does not include plans for reviews or updates. Target dates for action have passed by without any amendments being made to the plan and it is unclear what, if any, progress has been made. The self-assessment process is mainly carried out by Axia's managers. Other staff are not fully involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses, although they are given the opportunity to comment on the self-assessment report.

19. Axia does not adequately monitor some of the subcontracted training for specialist courses. The number of learners receiving this training represents 6 per cent of the total number of learners. The company is not regularly evaluating whether the training is being provided to the required standard, and to the terms of the contract.

20. The internal verification plan does not always ensure that internal verifiers are properly sampling assessment decisions and checking the standard of work in learners' portfolios.

### Good Practice

*The company secretary at Axia visits all employers and subcontractors twice a year to carry out an evaluation of their views about the services given by Axia. During the visit, Axia also determines the recruitment needs of the employers.*

## AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

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

21. There are nine learners in engineering. Six are advanced modern apprentices working towards the NVQ in engineering at level 3 and three are advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQ level 3 in laboratory operations. There are 66 learners in manufacturing. Fifty-three are foundation modern apprentices and the remaining 13 are undergoing NVQ training. All but one of the manufacturing learners is working towards the NVQ in ceramic manufacturing at level 2, and the remaining one is working towards the NVQ in performing manufacturing operations at level 2. Learners are recruited either by employers directly or by Axia who recruits on the employers' behalf. All learners undergo an initial assessment of their basic skills. There are 16 employers involved in the training of learners. Training is all work-based and evidence is used for key skills. Formal key skills workshops are held in the workplace. The self-assessment report identified six strengths and two weaknesses.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the 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                     |         |   | 93      |    | 30        |    | 70      |    | 25      |    |
| Still in training                       |         |   | 2       | 2  | 13        | 43 | 21      | 30 | 17      | 68 |
| FMA framework completed                 |         |   | 51      | 55 | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  |
| NVQ level 2 completed                   |         |   | 58      | 62 | 5         | 17 | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  |
| Left without completing the framework   |         |   | 40      | 43 | 17        | 57 | 49      | 70 | 8       | 32 |

| 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       |    |           |   | 4       |     | 3       |     |
| Still in training                     |         |   | 2       | 67 |           |   | 4       | 100 | 3       | 100 |
| AMA framework completed               |         |   | 0       | 0  |           |   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 2 completed                 |         |   | 1       | 33 |           |   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 3 completed                 |         |   | 0       | 0  |           |   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |
| Left without completing the framework |         |   | 1       | 33 |           |   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |

| NVQ Training                                     |         |     |         |     |           |     |         |    |         |     |
|--|---------|-----|---------|-----|-----------|-----|---------|----|---------|-----|
| NVQ Training                                     |         |     |         |     |           |     |         |    |         |     |
|  | 1997-98 |     | 1998-99 |     | 1999-2000 |     | 2000-01 |    | 2001-02 |     |
|  | No.     | %   | No.     | %   | No.       | %   | No.     | %  | No.     | %   |
| Number that started                              | 1       |     | 1       |     | 8         |     | 17      |    | 11      |     |
| Still in training                                | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0         | 0   | 2       | 12 | 11      | 100 |
| Individual learning plan completed               | 1       | 100 | 1       | 100 | 8         | 100 | 15      | 88 | 0       | 0   |
| Left without completing individual learning plan | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0         | 0   | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 1 completed                            | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0         | 0   | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 2 completed                            | 1       | 100 | 1       | 100 | 8         | 100 | 15      | 88 | 0       | 0   |

## STRENGTHS

- good NVQ training
- good employers
- high proportion of work-based assessors
- good personal support for learners

## WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates in manufacturing
- slow progress of learners towards modern apprenticeship frameworks
- inadequate internal verification
- delayed teaching and assessment of key skills

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement by workplace supervisors in NVQ process

22. On-the-job training is good. In larger organisations it is planned in advance, but in some smaller organisations the training is carried out to meet production needs. Most of the training is well linked to the requirements of NVQs. Experienced staff, many of whom are qualified assessors or internal verifiers, give the training on an individual basis. Those learners who have had to move within their organisation for operational reasons have been given good training to take up their new roles. Much of the training is exceptionally well recorded. One large employer holds evening classes in literacy and numeracy. The employer allows learners an hour of normal working time to attend and learners give up an hour of their own time.

23. Axia uses a good range of ceramic manufacturing employers. These employers range from prestige worldwide manufacturers to small specialist producers of hand-finished goods. The emphasis on training in these employers is reflected in their local, national and international reputations and in the high standard of products they manufacture. The employers can provide training in the full spectrum of skills required by the industry.

24. Axia provides good personal support for learners. The ceramics industry is experiencing declining sales, with associated factory closures and redundancies. Some learners have been made redundant, but Axia has given them plenty of help to find other employment. Axia's staff visit learners more frequently than required by their contract with the local LSC. They visit every month for the first three months and every eight weeks after that, unless extra visits are requested. Each learner is given a useful list of support organisations and contact telephone numbers. Axia's staff give their mobile telephone numbers to learners, who welcome this gesture and the high degree of support they get from Axia's staff. Learners have been helped to cope with problems such as homelessness and unplanned pregnancies. Most of this pastoral support is not recorded.

25. A high proportion of employers' staff are qualified as work-based assessors. Local businesses were highly influential in developing the content of the ceramic manufacturing NVQ, and show a strong commitment to the qualification by allowing many of their staff to gain it. The workplace assessors have a good understanding of the implications of gathering evidence, confirming competence and giving feedback.

26. The retention and achievement rates in manufacturing are poor. Fifty-seven per cent of learners who started training in manufacturing in 1999-2000 left early, and 70 per cent of those who started in 2000-01. Retention rates for advanced modern apprentices and NVQ learners in engineering are good. There are good achievement rates for NVQs

at level 2 in manufacturing, but the proportion of learners completing all the requirements of the foundation modern apprenticeship framework has fallen from 55 per cent in 1998-99 to zero in subsequent years. The number of learners made redundant from the ceramics industry in recent years has had an impact on the rates of achievement possible.

27. The progress of foundation modern apprentices towards achieving the requirements of the qualification framework is slow. Work-based assessors have to meet their production targets and cope with the demands of heavy workloads. This is affecting the frequency of assessments and slowing down learners' progress towards NVQs. Some learners are moved to areas of their organisation where the work they do is not directly relevant to their NVQ. Workplace supervisors are not always sufficiently involved in the NVQ process to be able to identify opportunities for assessment.

28. Internal verification is inadequate. It is carried out when learners have completed their NVQs. There are no regular checks of the validity of learners' evidence during their training programme. In some cases, assessors do not carry out assessments until learners are competent in all aspects of their work. This precludes intermediate internal verification and contributes to learners' slow progress.

29. Key skills training and assessment is carried out too late in learners' training programmes. Evidence for key skills is collected from the workplace. In most cases, key skills portfolios are not begun until learners have completed their NVQs. Learners are directed to record some evidence for their NVQ that could also be used as key skills evidence. They are collecting this evidence, but it is not being assessed against key skills criteria. Axia has not given any formal key skills training for six months.

#### Good Practice

*Learners record their daily production figures in their log book. This information is then used as evidence for key skills.*



**Business administration, management & professional****Grade 3**

| Programmes inspected                 | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Work-based learning for young people | 100                | 3                  |

30. Axia offers advanced modern apprenticeships, foundation modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in accounting and administration at NVQ levels two and three. There are 40 learners, 19 of whom are foundation modern apprentices, seven are advanced modern apprentices and 14 are in NVQ training. All of the advanced modern apprentices and two of the NVQ learners are employed, and all of the foundation modern apprentices are in work placements. Most of the work placements are in the administration offices in local pottery firms.

31. The learners apply to Axia in response to advertisements in the local press or are referred by careers officers or friends. Otherwise they are directed to the organisation by their employers who want them to work towards an NVQ. All learners have an interview and an initial assessment before they start training to test their numeracy and literacy skills. Once the learners are in a work placement they have a one hour induction into their training. A member of Axia's staff discusses the contents of the induction pack which includes statements from policies and procedures, NVQ paperwork, health and safety and equal opportunities. The training, assessment and internal verification for accounting is subcontracted to a local college where learners attend each week on day release for off-the-job training. Over 40 per cent of the administration learners attend group training sessions each month which are given by Axia in their workplace. The rest of the learners do not attend any group training sessions. Almost all of their training is on-the-job with occasional input from the assessor. The training team for administration consists of three staff members. One is an internal verifier, one is an assessor and training co-ordinator and the third member of the team is an assessor and lead internal verifier. All the staff are occupationally experienced and have assessor and internal verifier qualifications. A trainee assessor assists and has responsibility for one learner. Assessment is carried out in the workplace for administration learners, and in the college for the accounting learner. The training co-ordinator carries out progress reviews with all learners every eight weeks.

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

| Work-based learning for young people    |         |   |         |    |           |    |         |    |         |    |
|---|---------|---|---------|----|-----------|----|---------|----|---------|----|
| Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA) |         |   |         |    |           |    |         |    |         |    |
|   | 1997-98 |   | 1998-99 |    | 1999-2000 |    | 2000-01 |    | 2001-02 |    |
|   | No.     | % | No.     | %  | No.       | %  | No.     | %  | No.     | %  |
| Number that started                     |         |   | 14      |    | 18        |    | 13      |    | 12      |    |
| Still in training                       |         |   | 1       | 7  | 1         | 6  | 6       | 46 | 11      | 92 |
| FMA framework completed                 |         |   | 7       | 50 | 11        | 61 | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  |
| NVQ level 2 completed                   |         |   | 12      | 86 | 15        | 83 | 2       | 15 | 0       | 0  |
| Left without completing the framework   |         |   | 2       | 14 | 6         | 33 | 7       | 54 | 1       | 8  |

| 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                   |         |   | 2       |     | 3         |    | 3       |     | 2       |     |
| Still in training                     |         |   | 1       | 50  | 1         | 33 | 3       | 100 | 2       | 100 |
| AMA framework completed               |         |   | 1       | 50  | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 2 completed                 |         |   | 1       | 50  | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 3 completed                 |         |   | 2       | 100 | 2         | 67 | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |
| Left without completing the framework |         |   | 0       | 0   | 2         | 67 | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   |

| NVQ Training                                     |         |   |         |    |           |    |         |    |         |     |
|--|---------|---|---------|----|-----------|----|---------|----|---------|-----|
| NVQ Training                                     |         |   |         |    |           |    |         |    |         |     |
|  | 1997-98 |   | 1998-99 |    | 1999-2000 |    | 2000-01 |    | 2001-02 |     |
|  | No.     | % | No.     | %  | No.       | %  | No.     | %  | No.     | %   |
| Number that started                              |         |   | 14      |    | 6         |    | 12      |    | 1       |     |
| Still in training                                |         |   | 0       | 0  | 3         | 50 | 10      | 83 | 1       | 100 |
| Individual learning plan completed               |         |   | 12      | 86 | 2         | 33 | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0   |
| Left without completing individual learning plan |         |   | 2       | 14 | 1         | 17 | 1       | 8  | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 1 completed                            |         |   | 0       | 0  | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 2 completed                            |         |   | 2       | 14 | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0   |
| NVQ level 3 completed                            |         |   | 10      | 71 | 3         | 50 | 1       | 8  | 0       | 0   |

## STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job training for most learners
- frequent assessment for most learners
- effective support for learners

## WEAKNESSES

- some slow progress with NVQs
- late introduction of key skills

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of learners' progression
- more effective communication with the workplace supervisors

32. The off-the-job training given by Axia is good, and this was identified in the self-assessment report. For one group of learners who are based at the same factory, this is in the form of monthly group sessions. The training is well-planned and taught in an interesting and informative manner. It is also supported by good handouts which reinforce the learning. The accounting training at the local college is also good. The rest of the learners are given one-to-one training by their assessor in the workplace. The group sessions and the one-to-one tuition helps to develop the background knowledge necessary for the learners to achieve their frameworks.

33. The assessor for administration visits the workplaces approximately every six weeks. For most of the learners the visits are monthly or fortnightly, but they can be every week if the learner is struggling. A range of assessment methods are used. The accounting learner is not assessed in the workplace and only sees the assessor in college where the assessments are group-based and are mostly simulation. The portfolios of evidence for administration are satisfactory and include substantial amounts of work-based evidence.

34. Learners are visited each month in the first three months of their training and every eight weeks after that. All learners have the mobile telephone numbers of the assessor and the training co-ordinator and there is also an e-mail facility. Each learner is given a list of contact numbers for external agencies for any pastoral needs they may have. This level of support ensures that all learners are on appropriate training programmes and any problems are identified and resolved at the earliest opportunity. This encourages learners to stay in training. Seven learners have reached the end of the funding, but Axia continues to support them to ensure that they achieve their frameworks. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory.

35. There are some instances of learners making slow progress. A group of eight learners started training with Axia five months ago. While they have received on- and off-the-job training, none have achieved any units towards their NVQ as yet. Some learners have been disadvantaged by staffing difficulties, and while this has now been resolved, they feel that their progress has been delayed.

36. All learners are aware of the key skills requirements of their frameworks, but many learners have not started collecting appropriate evidence. Until recently, the key skills have not been an integral part of the vocational training. Some learners leave training with the NVQ but without gaining any key skills and therefore do not complete their modern apprenticeship. Learners do not recognise the transferable skills they gain in completing key skills, and do not link them to their working activities and their personal development in the workplace. The late introduction means that it takes longer to achieve the framework.

37. Recording systems do not show individual NVQ progression. There is no clear indication as to which units learners are currently working towards, and which have been achieved.

38. Communications between the workplace supervisor and the organisation are weak. Information is given to the workplace manager, but it is not necessarily received or understood by the learners' immediate supervisor.

#### Good Practice

*The organisation arranges taxis for learners and prospective learners to interviews, and other training sessions when public transport is not suitable. This ensures that no learner is disadvantaged by living in a rural area.*