

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Sarah Hodge Group**

25 February 2002



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learnirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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

### Inadequate provision

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

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

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



## SUMMARY

### The provider

The Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group is privately owned and consists of eight hairdressing salons, five in Somerset and the other three in Devon. The current proprietors took ownership of the group in 1987 when there was one salon in Taunton and five members of staff. Today there are 55 full- and part-time members of staff. The organisation has been offering training on government-funded programmes since April 1987.

The salons are based in Taunton, Bridgwater, Chard, Wellington in Somerset, and Tiverton, Honiton and Barnstaple in Devon. In addition, there is a hairdressing academy above its East Reach salon in Taunton which is currently used for formal staff meetings and seminars chaired by external consultants and product providers. The organisation has additional plans for expanding the academy, for the theory associated with the completion of work by learners. Inspectors visited all the sites, with the exception of Tiverton.

### Overall judgement

The overall provision of the Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group is good. Leadership and management, including equal opportunities, is satisfactory. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. However, most of the problems identified as needing attention in the self-assessment report, are already being dealt with. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

### GRADES

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

<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- good salon environments
- particularly well-motivated learners
- good range of learning activities
- good retention and achievement rates
- open and responsive management
- effective monitoring of learners' progress

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- no formal strategic planning
- insufficient monitoring of quality assurance processes
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more frequent formal feedback from learners
- more frequent equal opportunities training for staff
- better resources for theory training

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at the Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group (SHHG) in February 2001. They visited seven salons/workplaces and the hairdressing academy and interviewed 11 learners on advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships. They interviewed 14 of the salon's staff including the training co-ordinator/nominee, assessors and internal verifiers. Inspectors also interviewed the two proprietors of SHHG. They observed and graded three learning sessions. Inspectors reviewed a range of documents including their website, the most recent manual, 18 individual learning plans, the initial assessment programme, the induction programme, including the equal opportunities and health and safety questionnaires, 11 portfolios, internal verifier reports, external verifier reports, progress review documents and learners' feedback questionnaires. Other documents include the agendas and notes of the quality assurance training meetings and the operational file of the training co-ordinator. In addition, inspectors examined the equal opportunities policy and the quality assurance policy statement. Evidence was also gained from photographs of promotional activities as well as the most recent promotional material for the SHHG. Other paperwork included the contract with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Inspectors studied the latest self-assessment report which was produced in September 2001.

### Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. The Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group (SHHG) is a group of eight salons in Somerset and Devon. All salons are located in prime sites in the centre of each of the eight towns.
3. The SHHG has been training learners under direct contract with the former Somerset Training and Enterprise Council since 1987. They have been contracted to train learners with funding from the Somerset and Southwest LSC, under the work-based learning for young people programme, since February 2001. The SHHG is contracted to train foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices. There are 17 learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship programmes and three on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes, including key skills. The training co-ordinator has the responsibility of reviewing the learners' progress every 12 weeks. She also co-ordinates the internal verification programme. Successful learners remain in employment with the SHHG. Opportunities are also offered in management for those who are suitably qualified.
4. The region in which the salons are located is mainly agricultural. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is less than 1 per cent, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In October 2001, unemployment varied from as low as 1.2 per cent in Chard to 2.9 per cent in Bridgwater, compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. The proportion of school leavers gaining five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2001 was 55 per cent in Somerset and 51 per cent in Devon, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.



## Work-based learning for young people

5. The SHHG is contracted to offer work-based learning for foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices.
6. There are currently 20 learners on work-based programmes in hairdressing. Seventeen are foundation modern apprentices and three are advanced modern apprentices. Key skills are started at the start of each learner's training programme after the initial assessment and induction sessions. A significant proportion of learners complete the full framework within the allocated time. Salon managers carry out on- and off-the-job training assessments and they are all experienced hair stylists. There is good practical training in all aspects of hairdressing.
7. The SHHG have successfully trained 29 advanced modern apprentices over the past three years, including national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. Of these, 16 have successfully achieved NVQ at level 3 and 13 at level 2. Both groups achieved the full framework. Retention and achievement rates are good. Learners have adapted well to the new changes in the time frame for completing the NVQs. Most of the learners have previously worked at the salons as part time Saturday staff or have been associated with the SHHG through work experience schemes with their schools. Learners work in good, well-equipped, hairdressing salons. Senior staff are available to learners for all matters concerning the achievement of their qualifications.
8. Learners have the advantage of role models in the assessors and internal verifiers, all of whom have been trained by the SHHG. They also gain additional professional expertise from product providers and consultants in the field, on a frequent basis. They make good progress in gaining hairdressing skills and achieving high standards.
9. Many of the learners score highly at the initial assessment stage and are usually placed on courses which match their levels of achievement. The training co-ordinator has recognised a need for further assessment of learners who may need additional assistance, especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

10. The SHHG currently employs 55 full- and part-time staff, including 17 foundation modern apprentices and three advanced modern apprentices.

11. The senior management team at the SHHG consists of its two proprietors and the training co-ordinator. The SHHG has 14 assessors who observe and record practical and written work in each salon, and three of them are qualified internal verifiers. Senior management encourage personal development and progression within the company. Opportunities for management roles are available when the necessary qualifications have been achieved. The staff manual was produced in January 2002 and contains the organisation's mission statement, its objectives and detailed policies and procedures. All staff are required to read the manual at least once a year. A copy is kept in each salon.

12. The SHHG has a detailed equal opportunities policy. The organisation makes a conscious and determined effort to recruit men and 10 per cent of the current learners are men. Marketing materials include images of male learners for presentations in schools and to the careers service. Male learners frequently make personal presentations on behalf of the organisation. There is no overall, formal quality assurance strategy and there are very few formal procedures which meet the requirements of a quality assurance framework. The current self-assessment report is the second one to be produced by the organisation. It was produced solely by the training co-ordinator, with the assistance of officers from the LSC. Self-assessment is not a part of the annual cycle for the development of the organisation.

### STRENGTHS

- good communications and networking
- effective monitoring of learners' progress
- good marketing strategies to recruit men
- effective procedures for complaints and appeals

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient monitoring of quality assurance processes
- lack of formal monitoring of training in the salons
- weak self-assessment process
- insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities during progress reviews

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed minutes of meetings
- better analysis of early leavers
- more frequent formal feedback from learners
- further development of quality training meetings
- more frequent equal opportunities training for staff
- more formal strategic planning
- better access for learners with restricted mobility

13. Communication in the organisation is good. The proprietors visit each salon at least once each fortnight. Line managers are available to learners to discuss all matters concerning the achievement of their qualifications. Learners are encouraged to visit other salons in the organisation and salon managers often do so. Good practice is shared on these visits. Achievements of learners and managers are displayed on the walls of each salon and are kept up to date. Quality assurance training meetings which started in June 2001, now take place each quarter for assessors and trainers, but they are not sufficiently established for their full impact to be felt across the organisation. Management meetings are held each fortnight to discuss progress reviews and targets. The meetings are not formally recorded, but managers take their own notes for discussion with learners and staff at each salon. Additionally, the proprietors meet with the training co-ordinator each week. The information from these meetings is not formally disseminated, but the frequent visits of the training co-ordinator, and the use of new technology to fax important information and good news to all salons, reduces feelings of isolation to a minimum. It also ensures that salon managers are kept informed of short-term decisions of the senior management team. The two proprietors are members of a number of national professional hairdressing bodies, which ensures that the organisation is aware of, and participates in, the latest activities. The products used in the salons are of the highest quality and the most up to date.

14. The training co-ordinator makes frequent visits to each salon, over and above her role as an assessor and internal verifier. The visits and meetings with learners and salon managers are well recorded. The training co-ordinator has an in-depth knowledge of the levels of achievement of each learner and is always in a position to raise problems with salon managers. Formal staff appraisal is currently being revived by the training co-ordinator and performance reviews are being undertaken during her visits to each salon. Staff are not set targets for retention and achievement rates for their learners. The management information data are not used to monitor progress nor to assist trainers with learners' length of time on training programmes.

15. There is no formal strategic planning at the SHHG. The proprietors and the training co-ordinator are in the process of developing ideas for enhancing current practice. The plans are mainly for short and medium term, but they are not formally recorded. Salon managers have some input into decision-making, but are not fully involved in the formulation of long-term strategic planning. Salon managers are satisfied that decisions

taken by the senior management team on their behalf are ultimately for the good of the organisation. The fact that the SHHG does not have an effective business plan has not, until now, been seen as a disadvantage.

### **Equality of opportunity**

**Contributory grade 3**

16. The SHHG has a detailed equal opportunities policy which is shared with all the staff. The organisation has developed some good marketing strategies to help recruit men, but there is insufficient information to attract individuals from other traditionally disadvantaged groups.

17. The organisation applies a system of flexible working hours. Staff can progress within the organisation, up to and including senior manager level. Currently one of the salon managers is working a four-day week and she is one of the 14 assessors. At the discretion of the proprietors, staff can take additional leave for personal reasons, and then return to work at the same level.

18. There are effective procedures for complaints and appeals. The procedures are detailed and are held in the company manual, which all staff are required to read at least once a year. A copy of the manual is kept in each salon. All learners are aware of who to go to if they have a complaint or an appeal against an assessment decision. Less formal complaints are dealt with efficiently as they arise.

19. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities during progress reviews. Some review documents make no reference to equal opportunities, but more recent documents have a box to tick to indicate that equal opportunities have been discussed. However, there is no space for the recording of any problems raised.

20. Data on equal opportunities are collected and monitored but there is no other monitoring of equal opportunities. The management and staff team meetings do not have equal opportunities as an agenda item and there has been no monitoring or discussion of equal opportunities at these meetings. The training co-ordinator has recently attended training on diversity and the information will be shared with other members of staff. More frequent equal opportunities training for staff was identified as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report.

21. Better access to all salons for learners with restricted mobility is another area identified for improvement. Some salons allow access to the lower floor, but most salons cannot accommodate learners with restricted mobility.

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

22. Although the self-assessment report and the organisation's latest manual refer to a quality assurance policy statement, the SHHG does not have a formal, overall quality assurance strategy. The statement is extremely brief and is not a working document. The organisation has few formal procedures in place to meet the requirements of a quality assurance framework.

23. The training co-ordinator takes responsibility for ensuring that progress reviews are undertaken regularly. She visits all the salons each month and has a meeting with every learner. Their progress is recorded and targets are set for the next month. There are additional visits if there is a request from managers or learners. Previously set targets are followed up by the training co-ordinator at each meeting and information is kept up to date. There is an individual learning plan for each learner, but some of the targets are not being met, and are carried over from month to month without adequate explanation. There is insufficient detailed target-setting, but there is good use of the summary sheet for monitoring. However, there is no monitoring of the progress of learners against the length of time on a programme, nor details of the type of evidence gathered. Other managers are not currently involved in the monitoring progress.

24. Management of the internal verification procedures is good, and external verification reports are good. There are three internal verifiers, all of whom have completed the key skills course in IT. The monitoring of learners is good and comprehensive records are kept in line with awarding body requirements. There are clear instructions for each grade of staff to follow. However, there is too little formal planning. There is some formal observation of theory assessment by internal verifiers but insufficient observation of practical assessment. There is a lack of attention to detail in dating some of the elements. Also, while the quality of learners' portfolios is good, documents are incomplete and individual learning plans do not always identify individual needs.

25. Some of the quality assurance procedures are monitored through team meetings. A new system of quality assurance training meetings was set up in June 2001, and they are held each quarter. Salon managers meet every fortnight at their management team meetings. Each manager takes notes, thus leaving decisions made open to misinterpretation. Matters discussed at the meetings are frequently passed on during the course of telephone conversations, or at separate meetings, to absentee managers. There is a system of power meetings at the start each day, but these meetings are not formally recorded.

26. Most of the training takes place in the salons, but there is no formal procedure for monitoring the training through observations. Some informal monitoring takes place but it is not recorded and fed back into any formal quality assurance process. The progress review sheets for off-the-job training do not sufficiently record data and this leads to a lack of consistency in the operation of the salons. One manager is unaware that her learners are on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes, and did not know the difference between foundation and advanced apprenticeships.

27. The current self-assessment report is only the second produced by the organisation and there is no involvement of staff in the process, which is weak. It is not an integral part of the organisation's annual evaluation cycle and there is insufficient formal feedback from learners. The questionnaires which they currently complete are not always dated and they only complete one questionnaire a year. This is more of a self-assessment exercise rather than a method for giving feedback on the experience gained in their training. There is insufficient feedback on aspects of the off-the-job training, initial assessment, the induction and general support.

28. The organisation is usually aware of the destination of learners who leave early. There are very few, since most of the learners have been with the organisation for many years, either as Saturday staff or on work experience arranged by their schools. The SHHG does not feed information about leavers' destinations into the formal planning process.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	20	2

29. There are 17 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVOs at level 2 in hairdressing and three advanced modern apprentices working towards NVOs at level 3. Both frameworks include key skills. Twelve of the foundation modern apprentices are not included in the tables below. NVO theory and practical skills training are carried out in the salons each week. In addition, there are training sessions at the academy for specific skills, and learners from all salons attend. The eight managers are also the salon hairdressing trainers and assessors. In all, there are 14 qualified assessors based in the salons and working as stylists, and three internal verifiers. The training co-ordinator is responsible for reviewing the learners' progress every 12 weeks and co-ordinating the internal verification procedures. Recruitment of learners relies mainly on school leavers, local advertisements for Saturday staff and promotional material. Some male learners have progressed to become stylists and are effectively used as role models for recruitment. Barbering courses are offered at the point of recruitment to encourage men to the industry. Recruitment involves interviewing against an organisation checklist to ensure that all potential learners go through the same process.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	6		4		10		11		10							
Retained	0		4	100	7	70	9	82	10	100							
Successfully completed	0		4	100	7	70	9	82	10	100							
Still in learning	3		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0							

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5		23		11		12		16							
Retained	0		17	74	6	55	9	75	13	81							
Successfully completed	0		17	74	6	55	9	75	13	81							
Still in learning	5		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0							

## STRENGTHS

- good salon environments
- particularly well-motivated learners
- good range of learning activities
- good retention and achievement rates

## WEAKNESSES

- insufficient individuality in learning plans
- insufficient assessment
- inconsistencies in completion of assessment paperwork

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better resources for background knowledge training

30. The SHHG salons are in central town positions and are well resourced, with good décor and professional modern equipment. They offer a broad range of hair treatments for men and women. The salons use and retail good professional products. The access to the hairdressing academy is by stairs and is unsuitable for people with restricted mobility. The academy is under-utilised, but offers a large training area for seminars for all the learners. Salon stylists produce good standards of work and are good role models. They are qualified hairdressers with high levels of practical skills. There are 14 assessors, 12 of whom have key skills awards, and three are internal verifiers.

31. The learners are particularly well-motivated, and are encouraged to achieve their aims. There are very good relationships between senior staff and learners and the self-



assessment report identifies that teamwork is good. There are good opportunities for learners to progress on to senior positions in the organisation and many of the senior staff were themselves trained by the organisation. There are wall-charts in the salon staffrooms which record all achievements against awarding body test targets. There is exceptionally good pastoral and professional support. Learners can contact a range of senior staff for support and guidance.

32. The learners have regular and frequent discussions about their progress with the training co-ordinator. She carries out progress reviews every 12 weeks, and additional monthly reviews for target-setting. The self-assessment report identifies that there is a good range of learning activities. Practical skills are taught regularly by salon trainers and they encourage learners to observe technical work during everyday salon activities, as well as carrying out specific training sessions. There is additional training carried out by the artistic co-ordinator, who visits the salons regularly to promote the SHHG quality assurance standards. She also organises activities on specific topics for staff from across the organisation. Most learners have a regular weekly three-hour period allocated to theory work. Manufacturers' representatives, who train salon staff in the use of new product lines, carry out additional theory training at the academy approximately four times a year. SHHG's staff regularly participate in national, regional and local hairdressing competitions and have won many notable prizes. Visits to national hairdressing exhibitions take place, usually with learners and senior staff travelling together in transport provided by the organisation. Learners and senior staff are involved in photographic work, either as stylists, assistants or models.

33. The achievement rates on the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes are recorded as a strength in the self-assessment report. The data for advanced modern apprentices show that three of the current year's learners have left early. The reasons for this are known and are unrelated to the quality of provision. Retention rates over time are good. There is a strong link between good retention rates and full achievement of frameworks. Key skills are introduced at the start of all training programmes and are completed before the NVQs. The changes and demands of the new key skills tests are being dealt with. The training programme is well-managed by the training co-ordinator, and supported by all SHHG's staff. There has been an average of 70 per cent retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices from 1998-99 to 2000-01, and 84 per cent for advanced modern apprentices. There is insufficient attention given to individuality, when planning the learners' training programmes and producing their learning plans. While learners complete application forms, are interviewed by salon managers and carry out nationally recognised literacy and numeracy tests, the results are not used as a basis for the choice of the modern apprentice framework. Many of SHHG's learners achieve extremely high scores in these initial assessments, but they are all enrolled on to foundation programmes. On learning plans, interim targets are recorded against NVQ and key skills units, but they do not take into account the prior learning and experience of learners. In addition, GCSE results are not used to accredit key skills units. All learners take the same NVQ optional units, and are not involved in making choices relating to career ambitions. Records in learners' files show that induction activities are carried out at the academy and in the

## SARAH HODGE GROUP

salons. Existing learners give presentations at the academy induction sessions to illustrate their experiences. Currently learners' additional support needs are dealt with by dedicated staff, although no-one has a basic skills qualification. There has been recent training about dyslexia. Learners are recruited with the view to becoming employed by SHHG, but they are well supported in career progression ambitions, such as becoming members of nationally recognised artistic hairdressing teams, getting photographic work published and carrying out promotional work.

34. There are insufficient assessments of everyday salon activities for NVQ and key skills achievement. The salon assessors are also busy stylists. Time is booked for trainers to supervise learners' practical training and assessments on model clients, but some learners have missed many of their NVQ unit target dates. Theory assignments are generally completed before the related practical assessments. Progress reviews do not focus on target-setting for NVQ and/or key skills units. The achievement of learners' NVQ units against specified target dates in their files is not always kept up to date. Salon product information, such as clients' record cards, appointment cards, consultation sheets or manufacturers' information leaflets are rarely used. Witness statements lack detail about the competence or experience being offered as evidence. The self-assessment report identifies that their portfolios lack evidence of their own work.

35. The assessment planning sheets have evolved over time and do not relate to current practices. They are completed in different ways by various salon assessors. Different assessors also complete assessments in learners' award body logbooks in different ways. There is no portfolio referencing. Clients' names, or coding for confidentiality are not recorded, making it impossible to tell how often clients are used. While there is little use of photographs, some portfolios show that salon colleagues have been used for assessments. Internal verification has not identified these inconsistencies, nor provided opportunities for assessors to share good practice across the organisation.

### Good Practice

*Every salon staffroom has a noticeboard showing the staff's personal targets related to their hairdressing work. Some lists have been going for a number of years and illustrate the development from new learners, through to their appointment as senior members of staff. These obvious examples of development and progression also act as motivators for new learners.*