

INSPECTION REPORT

St Helens Chamber Limited

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

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

Inadequate provision

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

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

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

SUMMARY

The provider

St Helens Chamber Limited is based in St Helens, Merseyside. It has 764 young people on programmes of work-based learning in 11 occupational areas. Most of the learners live and work in the Merseyside area.

Overall judgement

Work-based learning for young people in construction, engineering, business administration, and professional studies is satisfactory. However, for the learners in retailing, hospitality, sport and leisure, information and communications technology, hairdressing and health and care, it is unsatisfactory. The equal opportunities provision within the company is satisfactory, but quality assurance of training is weak. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The quality of the training provision of St Helens Chamber Limited is inadequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

GRADES

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

Construction	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

Information & communications technology	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

ST HELENS CHAMBER LIMITED

Retailing, customer service & transportation	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- good standard of work placements
- good training resources
- good learner participation in additional training
- good staff appraisal system

KEY WEAKNESSES

- weak assessment practices
- low retention and achievement rates in many areas of learning
- ineffective progress reviews in most training areas
- weak management of on- and off-the-job training
- inadequate monitoring of training and assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better integration of key skills across most areas of learning
- further development of the internal verification process
- better use of individual learning plans
- further development of initial assessments

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 14 inspectors spent a total of 53 days at St Helens Chamber Limited in December 2001. They interviewed 107 learners, conducted 39 interviews with staff, visited 71 employers and interviewed 51 workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded six learning sessions. They examined 57 portfolios of evidence and 81 individual learning plans. Nine subcontractors were visited. Inspectors examined a range of paperwork, including contracts with the local learning and skills council (LSC), the business plan, policies and procedures relating to health and safety, equal opportunities and quality assurance, staff training plans, minutes of meetings, staff training records, achievement data and learners' files.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Total	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	6

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. St Helens Chamber Limited (the Chamber) is a private not-for-profit organisation. In 1996, the St Helens Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise was formed as a result of the merger of the chamber of commerce, the training and enterprise council (TEC), business link and the enterprise agency. The organisation operated successfully from 1996 to 2001, increasing membership from 290 to over 1000 companies. In March 2001, the Chamber ceased to be St Helens Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise and became a private not-for-profit organisation called St Helens Chamber Limited. The head office is in St Helens, Merseyside. It offers training for young people and adults in land-based occupations, construction, engineering, business administration, accounts, management, information and communications technology (ICT), retailing, customer service, warehousing, hospitality, sports and leisure, hairdressing and beauty, childcare and care for the elderly, and visual and performing arts in the Merseyside area. Learners work towards foundation modern apprenticeships, advanced modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Eleven full-time staff and two part-time staff manage the training provision.

3. The Chamber subcontracts all of its training to 21 private training providers, 90 per cent of which is with a local further education college. The Chamber's role is one of quality control. Currently, there are 764 learners, of whom 708 are on modern apprenticeship programmes and 56 are on NVQ programmes. Training advisers visit learners at work to review progress. All learners are in full employment in leisure centres, shops, accountancy firms and local businesses.

4. The Chamber has contracts with the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Employment Service. The unemployment rate in St Helens in September 2001 was 5.8 per cent, compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. 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 2001, the proportion of school leavers in St Helens who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 45.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 50 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. There is a broad range of good work placements across all areas of learning. There are good training facilities and equipment in subcontractors' and employers' premises, which meet industry standards. Most learners undertake additional qualifications which meet their individual needs and the needs of their employer. There is good progression to further and higher qualifications in business administration, retailing and health and social care. The Chamber works well with all employers. There are weak assessment practices in many areas of training, and the planning of assessment is poor. Progress reviews are ineffective in most occupational areas.

6. Retention and achievement rates across most of the training programmes are poor. There are low achievement rates of the full modern apprenticeship framework in hairdressing and health and social care. In construction and health and social care, retention rates are improving and they are satisfactory in business administration and construction.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

7. The Chamber does not directly provide training, but acts as a facilitator and mentor for the employer, the learner and subcontracted training providers. There are three operational teams within the Chamber, the training services, community partnership, and business and membership services, which are supported by the central services, marketing and finance teams. There is an equal opportunities policy and a quality assurance system. One member of staff has overall responsibility for quality assurance and equal opportunities for the whole Chamber. The Chamber was first accredited with the Investors in People award in 1997, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, and has an internationally recognised quality assurance accreditation. The first self-assessment report was completed in 1997, the third self-assessment report was published in August 2001.

STRENGTHS

- effective internal and external communications
- strong financial management
- good staff development and appraisal arrangements
- effective strategy to improve employment rates

WEAKNESSES

- poor monitoring of equal opportunities in employers' and subcontractors' premises
- inadequate monitoring of training and assessment
- weak subcontracting arrangements
- weak management of on- and off-the-job training

8. The Chamber has effective communications and the staff have a clear understanding of the aims of the organisation. There are routine arrangements for team meetings and communication within the Chamber. After the board meetings, which are held every two months, key items are further discussed in operational teams. The Chamber's staff contribute, through the action plans from their own meetings, to the strategic and business plans. Regular meetings between Chamber managers, co-ordinators and operational teams help to encourage good communications. The views and concerns of staff can also be expressed through the Chamber's staff council. Strong links between the Chamber and its members have helped to increase the number of companies who employ modern apprentices.

9. The Chamber's financial management is good. Detailed finance reports are

produced each month after consultation with the managers. There are procedures in place for monitoring and forecasting and managing any fluctuation of income. Local surveys and labour analysis data are effectively used as a basis for decisions on the range and scope of the training programmes offered. The Chamber prepares action plans after an analysis of local trends and the impact they may have. For example, a thorough analysis of the availability of education and training for 16-19 year olds in St Helens has resulted in a range of additional funding. The need for additional guidance and initial assessment was identified and regeneration budgets and European Social Funding (ESF) have been used to create a free guidance and assessment unit in St Helens. Prospective modern apprentices now use this facility to meet with a training adviser and to undertake their initial assessments before beginning training.

10. Each member of the Chamber's staff has two appraisals each year. Their performance is closely monitored against agreed targets which are linked to the business requirements of the Chamber and the personal development needs of the individual. Sufficient resources are allocated for staff development and most individual requests are met. The Chamber has a well-planned approach to the development needs of its staff and is carrying out a series of staff development activities to meet the broader training needs, for example, providing key skills training and training in equal opportunities.

11. The Chamber has been successful in encouraging an increasing number of employers to employ their learners at the outset of training. Between 1992 and 2001, the employed status of learners increased year on year from 9 to 59 per cent across the borough of St Helens. From the beginning of 2001, all work-based learners have been in full-time employment.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

12. The Chamber has an equal opportunities policy and an implementation strategy which was drafted and agreed in November 2001. However, there is no code of practice or procedure which describes how the Chamber will review and develop equal opportunities. The policy does not cover the monitoring of equal opportunities in employers' workplaces or the arrangements for subcontractors of training.

13. The Chamber identified, in its self-assessment report, that the promotion of equal opportunities is weak. It has recently taken action to remedy several of the problems. It is involved with careers events in local schools in some of the more deprived areas of the borough and in September 2001, it introduced 'a women into management' programme. Twenty-six of the 31 learners recruited onto this programme are working towards an NVQ at level 4 in management and five are working towards an NVQ at level 5 in management. The learners' induction programme adequately covers the legal basis for equality of opportunity and training advisers have a set of prompts to use during progress reviews. However, learners' and employers' awareness of equal opportunities issues is generally low. The Chamber has recently given information on equal opportunities to all learners and employers.

14. The Chamber is in the process of reviewing its marketing literature to encourage more learners from under-represented groups. The self-assessment report identified that there is a need for a database of information about learners. It has been created, but the Chamber has not analysed the data sufficiently, as yet, and there are no clear targets for the recruitment of more women learners and learners from minority ethnic groups.

15. There is no routine monitoring of equal opportunities in work placements or within the 21 organisations subcontracted for training and assessment. The Chamber does not have sufficient information to be able to assess whether the measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour and harassment are effective. The staff attended a one-day briefing session which was designed to raise their awareness of equal opportunities in the workplace, but the briefing did not deal with the wider role which staff have in promoting the implementation of equality of opportunity.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

16. One new member of staff has overall responsibility for quality assurance and equal opportunities. A new quality assurance strategy which deals with each aspect of the learning process is being developed. Comprehensive quality assurance procedures, supported by appropriate policies and explicit working instructions, have been introduced and are broadly understood by the staff. The Chamber has completed one self-assessment report since April 2001. Audits of the Chamber's performance identified important weaknesses in quality assurance.

17. The quality assurance framework does not include arrangements to quality assure work-based learning or assessment and internal verification procedures. It does not establish the standards of training and assessments expected for learners in the workplace or with subcontracted training providers. The Chamber is unable to make informed recommendations for continuous improvement and it does not have a clear strategy for improving retention rates. The Chamber gains feedback from learners three times during their learning programme. The information is evaluated and reports are circulated to staff and management. Feedback from employers is now sought and some evaluation is taking place. Subcontractors and the Chamber's staff are not required to provide feedback. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

18. Internal verification is satisfactory in engineering, construction and health and social care, although, if better planned, standards of assessments would be improved. In hospitality there was no planned internal verification and in hairdressing there was no internal verification of work-based assessors.

19. The contractual arrangements made by the Chamber with employers and subcontracted training providers are inadequate. The agreements which are in place are insufficiently detailed to specify roles and responsibilities. They do not place any responsibility on subcontractors to supply appropriate support arrangements for learners during off-the-job training. They do not clarify the communication links necessary to share important information. As a result, the on- and off-the-job training in most occupational areas operates in isolation and does not take into account work-based evidence for the NVO requirements. Employers offer good opportunities for skills development, but they are rarely linked to the work, training and assessments which take place off the job. For example, learners in engineering, hairdressing and construction routinely demonstrate high level skills at work, only to repeat many of them during off-the-job training sessions.

20. The self-assessment report was sufficiently critical and accurately identified a number of weaknesses, particularly those in leadership and management. An action plan has been introduced to deal with the weaknesses, but many of the target dates are unrealistic. A significant number of strengths identified in the report were considered to be no more than normal practice.

Good Practice

The Chamber identified the need for higher level training for their learners. They also identified the need for more women managers in business. In September 2001, they developed a training programme to meet these needs and there are 26 women on this programme who have all progressed from business administration, retailing and health and care training programmes.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	139	3

21. There are 139 learners, of whom 110 are advanced modern apprentices, 14 are foundation modern apprentices and 15 are on NVO training programmes at levels 1, 2 or 3. Learners work towards NVOs in bricklaying, electrical installation, gas services installation, general construction, painting and decorating, plant maintenance, plastering, plumbing, glass supporting fabrications and wood occupations. All learners are in full-time employment and attend off-the-job training at two local further education colleges for one day a week. The colleges' learning support units carry out an initial assessment for all learners and offer the additional learning support needed. The Chamber provides an induction session for learners. The colleges are also responsible for the assessment of NVO programmes and the key skills awards. All learners have a training adviser who is employed by the Chamber. Progress reviews are carried out by the Chamber and college staff separately.

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			1		15		16		3
Still in training			0	0	2	13	9	56	3	100
FMA framework completed			0	0	9	60	5	31	0	0
NVO level 2 completed			0	0	12	80	5	31	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100	4	27	2	12	0	0

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			55		39		54		31	
Still in training			7	13	26	67	47	87	30	97
AMA framework completed			14	25	3	8	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			17	31	22	56	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			18	33	8	21	3	6	0	0
Left without completing the framework			34	62	10	26	7	13	1	3

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			13		10		11		6	
Still in training			0	0	3	30	6	55	6	100
Individual learning plan completed			9	69	4	40	3	27	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan			4	31	3	30	2	18	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			5	38	1	10	2	18	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			2	15	3	30	2	18	0	0
NVQ level 4 completed			2	15	0	0	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good standard of work placements
- good recent retention rates
- particularly good college training facilities

WEAKNESSES

- poor use of workplace evidence
- weak progress reviews
- inadequate involvement of employers in learning and assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater emphasis on equal opportunities and health and safety during progress reviews
- further development of internal verification
- more emphasis on assessment planning in painting and decorating
- further develop prior achievement arrangements for key skills

22. The Chamber works with a wide range of good employers. Their premises offer safe working environments where learners can produce a good standard of work. Employers are able to offer the full range of activities required to complete the modern apprenticeship framework. For example, one learner was moved to various sites to gain the relevant experience and skill levels.

23. Retention rates are improving on construction programmes. Those for advanced modern apprenticeships have risen over the past three years from 13 per cent in 1998-99 to 87 per cent in 2000-01. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices has also improved and is now 56 per cent for 2000-01. There have been few early leavers in 2000-01 and 2001-02. Improvements are mainly because of more thorough initial assessment procedures which now ensure that learners are placed on training programmes which directly reflect their individual needs and their job roles. Achievement rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship are improving and reached 60 per cent in 1999-2000. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices were poor in 1998-99 at 25 per cent. There have been few achievements of the full apprenticeship framework since then, but 56 per cent of 1999-2000 starters have achieved the level 2 NVQ and have progressed to an NVQ at level 3.

24. College workshops and classrooms are spacious, well maintained and offer a good learning and assessment environment. Three of the workshops for carpentry and joinery have separate assessment and machine areas. Machinery in the workshops is of a high standard. The plumbing workshops have well-equipped assessment bays which can be locked to protect the learners' work. A new workshop has been designed to accommodate the revised gas safety requirements of the plumbing NVQ. Assessment bays in the electrical installation workshops offer the wide range of surface finishes which are needed to fulfil the assessment requirements. Painting and decorating workshops have realistic work settings which are currently being modified to the requirements of the revised NVQs. Occasionally, the bricklaying workshop becomes congested, because of unfinished assessment models which take up valuable work space.

25. There is no assessment of learners' work in the workplace. All assessment is carried out through simulated work activities during the off-the-job training. Workplaces offer many good opportunities for assessment through the wide range of day-to-day work

activities, but the assessors do not use them. Progression towards the achievement of qualifications is slow. When evidence has been generated in the workplace, it is not authenticated by the workplace supervisors and learners are still required to carry out simulated exercises as the main source of evidence. The evidence which is produced in the workplace is seen as supplementary to that produced during training at the college. Off-the-job training is well planned, but there is insufficient planning of assessments, particularly in painting and decorating.

26. Progress reviews are carried out by training advisers and college tutors. These separate visits take place every 12 weeks. The reviews undertaken by the training advisers are mainly concerned with general support and review of progress. In most cases, the reviews which are carried out by college staff are undertaken on college premises and are intended to give feedback on progression. However, they focus on work that has been completed and fail to set short-term targets with specific timescales. Some learners display higher levels of competence than their qualification requires, but it is not being recognised through the review and assessment process. Insufficient emphasis is placed on equal opportunities and health and safety during the progress reviews.

27. Training subcontractors do not adequately involve the employers in assessment and learning and links between on- and off-the-job training are weak. There is little formal planning of on-the-job training and in most instances it simply reflects the work being carried out by the employer. Employers are not sufficiently aware of the content of the off-the-job training and do not understand the NVQs and their role in the training and assessment process. Some attempts have been made by the Chamber to raise awareness of the training and assessment requirements of NVQs, but these have been limited to lists of NVQ units. Employers have little understanding of the key skills training needed for the modern apprenticeship frameworks and links between key skills training and the training programme are poor. In most instances, learners start on the communications key skill when they start training programmes. Application of number and information technology (IT) start when communications is finished. Most learners do not start on application of number until year two of the training programme.

Good Practice

Learners in some occupational areas receive additional training in the form of a health and safety module, which is more detailed than the usual induction programme for health and safety. Learners work through a handbook and receive a certificate from the college if they successfully complete the module.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	305	3

28. The Chamber manages the engineering NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. Learners can specialise in electrical, machining, fitting, maintenance, production, motor vehicle and technician occupations. Additional training programmes are offered in performing engineering operations NVQ at level 2 and selected vocational qualifications. All training programmes are delivered by nine local subcontractors and take between one and four years to complete. There are currently 305 learners, of whom 231 are advanced modern apprentices, 49 are foundation modern apprentices and 25 learners are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. All learners are employed. Most advanced modern apprentices spend between 26 and 44 weeks with the subcontractors to carry out their initial off-the-job training. The subcontractors are responsible for the initial assessment of basic and key skills, assessment and verification of the NVQ and off-the-job training. Work-based mentors and supervisors provide the on-the-job training. Opportunities are available for learners to study for higher qualifications and some continue to degree level. The two-stage induction programme is given by the college and the employer. The subcontractors review the learners' NVQ progress every 12 weeks and the Chamber advisers also review the general progress of learners every 12 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			54		24		11		21
Still in training			14	26	6	25	8	73	21	100
FMA framework completed			4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			20	37	1	4	2	18	0	0
Left without completing the framework			36	67	18	75	3	27	0	0

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	38		54		106		104		52	
Still in training	13	34	13	24	75	71	81	78	49	94
AMA framework completed	18	47	12	22	5	5	2	2	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	8	15	8	8	1	1	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	20	53	8	15	8	8	1	1	0	0
Left without completing the framework	7	18	29	54	26	25	21	20	3	6

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	4		48		28		39		15	
Still in training	0	0	6	12	0	0	5	13	14	93
Individual learning plan completed	3	75	27	56	14	50	25	64	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	1	25	15	31	14	50	9	23	1	7
NVQ level 1 completed	1	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	21	44	8	29	24	62	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	3	75	6	12	2	7	1	3	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good standard of work placements
- good training resources
- wide range of relevant additional qualifications
- good off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- poor awareness of qualification framework by employers
- poor work-based assessment for level 3 learners
- ineffective progress reviews
- low retention rates for foundation modern apprentices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more regular updating of individual learning plans
- wider employer involvement in planning on-the-job training
- greater emphasis on planning of internal verification in engineering

29. Work placements offer good opportunities for learners to collect evidence for NVQ assessment. Learners receive effective on-the-job training from suitably skilled people who ensure that they develop the occupational skills and experience needed. Some employers have developed effective training plans for learners to work across a range of departments, but other learners' on-the-job training is not as well structured and is dependent on the production requirements of the individual company. However, learners in this situation still gain experience on a range of equipment. Some learners are trained on manufacturer's product courses. Employers give learners a thorough induction into the company, which includes specific health and safety requirements and the promotion of a safe working environment. The standard of the work placements was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

30. The Chamber also identified the colleges' good training resources as a strength in their self-assessment report. Training workshops are spacious and planned to promote a safe working environment. They have a wide range of up-to-date and well-maintained equipment and machinery. There is a good level of specialised equipment to develop learners' skills in turning, milling, welding and computer numerical control systems. Employers value the resources and the training which the learners receive in developing their skills and preparing them for work. Specialist resources at most companies are designed to meet the needs of modern industry. Tutors are enthusiastic, have good industrial experience and are qualified in training and assessment skills. They offer good personal support and encourage the motivation of learners.

31. Most learners achieve additional units of the NVQ to meet their own individual needs and those of the employer. Many learners achieve additional qualifications in fabrication and welding, programmable logic controllers, risk assessment and abrasive wheels. Learners in maintenance who need to operate a lift truck, receive formal training leading to a licence to drive these vehicles. Some employers encourage learners to achieve higher level qualifications, such as higher national certificates and degrees. Learners at one large manufacturing company achieve additional training in glass technology.

32. Off-the-job training for level 2 of the NVQ is good and offers a well-planned introduction into engineering. A variety of assessment methods are used involving a wide range of equipment. Training sessions are well prepared and there are good links to the development of learners' practical skills and experience. Tutors encourage learners to take part in class discussions and there is good communication between them and the learners. The achievement rates are better during this introductory stage of the training than for any other qualification stage. Feedback from learners strongly

indicates that the experience gained on this programme is the most significant early contribution to their apprenticeship. Employers confirm the value of this introductory training. Learners' progress is recorded every week using a good monitoring system.

33. Most workplace supervisors have insufficient knowledge of the NVQ structure or of the training programmes. They are not given enough information about the learners' training requirements and, as a result, are unable to help with the collection of suitable evidence. Some are unaware of the key skills requirement of the modern apprenticeship framework.

34. There is insufficient observation of learners in the workplace, particularly learners at the level 3 NVQ. The assessor discusses the assessment practice with the learner before the assessment takes place, but there is no plan to identify what is being assessed. Learners are not clear about the method of assessment or what evidence they are required to present. Assessor reports do not clearly show what is observed and there is no reference to which part of the training has been assessed. There is insufficient feedback from assessment which does not set targets for further actions and there is an over-reliance on witness testimonies from workplace supervisors. The assessment of the learners' portfolio of evidence is not continuous throughout the programme, and in most cases, it is left until the end of the fourth year of training. Internal verifiers sample a range of portfolios to monitor the assessors' performance. This is well documented, but there is no action plan for improvement. There is no formal schedule for internal verification.

35. The progress review process does not guide learners towards the achievement of their main qualification. The Chamber and the subcontractor carry out progress reviews at least every 12 weeks, but the process is not thorough. Review documents contain insufficient recorded guidance and specific targets are not always set. Workplace supervisors are seldom involved in the progress review process, but are informed of the outcome at the end of the review. Some of the comments on the review document are not legible. Equal opportunities is not discussed and the individual learning plan is not used as a basis for the progress review. In some cases the individual learning plans are not updated or used to record changes in circumstances.

36. Some learners do not complete their modern apprenticeship frameworks within the targeted timescales. Thirty-four per cent of the 1997-98 intake of modern apprentices are still in training. Some employers plan for a five-year apprenticeship programme, which has required several learners to ask for extensions in order to complete their NVQs. The retention rate of foundation modern apprentices is now improving, but has been poor. In the period 1998-99, 75 per cent left without completing the modern apprenticeship framework.

Good Practice

At one large manufacturing company, learners' progress is monitored electronically. Learners are encouraged to produce their evidence reports on computer and then electronically transfer the information to their assessor. Learners receive immediate feedback from their assessor and are able to make appropriate amendments. This is a valuable time saver as locations can be several miles apart.

Poor Practice

One learner who was working towards a level 3 NVQ was close to the end of his training programme when it was noticed that he was working towards two inappropriate units. He had to redirect his evidence towards two new units in the final two months of his programme, which caused considerable additional work.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	104	3

37. The Chamber offers work-based learning in administration and management leading to NVQs in administration at levels 2, 3 and 4 and in management at levels 3, 4 and 5. There are 104 learners, of whom 37 are foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs and key skills in administration. Forty-four of the 66 advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs and key skills in administration at level 3 and the remainder are working towards NVQs in supervisory management at level 3. One learner is working towards an NVQ at level 4 in management training. The Chamber subcontracts all the training and assessment to five subcontractors, but most learners attend one local further education college. All learners are employed across a range of local businesses. Most of the learners are women and there are no learners from minority ethnic groups. Learners may start at any time of the year, although most start their college induction in September. There is a basic skills initial assessment for communication and numeracy, but no assessment of individual IT skills. Learners and assessors agree upon an individual learning plan, which allows the learners to monitor their own performance. Most members of the team are qualified internal verifiers and most are working towards the key skills assessor qualification. There is a good range of occupational experience and professional qualifications within the team.

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			23		29		30		13
Still in training			1	4	5	17	18	60	13	100
FMA framework completed			11	48	10	34	1	3	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			18	78	17	59	2	7	0	0
Left without completing the framework			11	48	14	48	11	37	0	0

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			74		55		38		19	
Still in training			7	9	22	40	22	58	15	79
AMA framework completed			28	38	12	22	1	3	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			20	27	3	5	1	3	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			3	4	2	4	1	3	0	0
Left without completing the framework			39	53	21	38	15	39	4	21

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					2		3		2	
Still in training					0	0	0	0	1	50
Individual learning plan completed					1	50	1	33	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan					1	50	2	67	1	50
NVQ level 1 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					1	50	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 4 completed					0	0	1	33	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good arrangements for progress reviews
- thorough induction arrangements
- good off-the-job training
- comprehensive internal verification
- good progression rates to further training

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient planning of training
- no initial assessment of IT skills
- poor feedback on assignments by tutors
- poor completion rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of learners' experiences in training

38. There are clear and comprehensive progress review procedures and learners understand the review process. Advisers from the Chamber visit learners every 12 weeks to monitor their progress. The training provider assessors also make separate 12-weekly visits to monitor the learners' progress, to check their work and to help them prepare for their next assessment. Learners value these regular visits. Assessors and learners discuss the types of evidence required for their assessments and agree a plan of action for the next visit. Employers are invited to the progress review meetings and are encouraged to contribute to the discussions. The assessors work well with the learners to identify areas where they are unable to obtain portfolio evidence. Where necessary, assessors can suggest activities to provide the evidence. Assessors liaise well with employers, one learner was moved to another office to help her find specific material for her portfolio. Learners and employers keep records of the progress reviews.

39. The induction arrangements are comprehensive, consisting of sessions in the workplace and at college. The induction in the workplace explains the job role and responsibilities, and at college, learners are given time to familiarise themselves with the college layout and the facilities, including the library and the drop-in IT facilities. Learners receive good information on the financial support available to them. They have a good understanding of health and safety and equal opportunities policies and their own responsibilities in the workplace. Learners are given useful information about the services available to them including careers advice and progression routes to higher education. The induction includes an advice session to ensure that learners are gaining the best possible range of skills. For example, a few learners were advised to take additional qualifications in IT to support their individual and workplace needs.

40. Off-the-job training is well planned and learners receive good individual support from the tutors. Schemes of work and lesson plans show a range of different teaching styles. Each lesson builds on the current skills of the learners and new skills are developed quickly. At work, learners are often given demonstrations of tasks and are asked to apply the skills learned at college. In this way learners develop new skills at work from their college training. College tutors do not always take full advantage of learners' current skills. In one lesson, there were two learners who had good skills in IT

software. Other learners clearly wanted to share information with them but tutors moved them on to another topic.

41. There are clear arrangements for internal verification. A comprehensive schedule with a back-up system ensures that a range of learners' work is checked. The verification arrangements are explained to learners during induction. Schemes of work and lesson plans are checked to ensure that they meet the qualification criteria, and there is good feedback to assessors. Assignments are checked before learners receive them, to ensure that they meet assessment requirements. All amendments must be completed and signed by the internal verifiers before they are given to the learner.

42. Over 56 per cent of the learners in administration progress to different NVQs at levels 3 and 4. Many learners have achieved their administration NVQ at level 2, 3, and 4 and some are progressing to management qualifications at a level 5 NVQ. Currently, 26 learners are training for higher level management qualifications. The Chamber's training advisers, the college student services and employers all inform learners of career entry qualifications. Learners who wish to transfer to another qualification are given guidance to ensure that a long-term plan is followed.

43. College managers, trainers and work supervisors have a poor understanding of the full modern apprenticeship framework. They do not meet regularly enough to discuss the training programmes. Learners are unsure about the main point of contact if they are experiencing problems with any part of their training. Recent meetings among the key partners have resulted in a decision to ensure that all employers receive clear information about the NVQ training programmes. This will help them to work with the learners to find appropriate evidence for their unit assessments. This decision has not yet had any practical effect on the learner.

44. During induction, learners are assessed using basic skills tests. These involve communications and numeracy, but there is no initial assessment of IT skills. During the training programme, some learners are required to carry out tasks which are below their ability levels, while others are unable to cope with the set tasks because their knowledge of IT is inadequate. Additional support needs have only become apparent at this point, when assessors have had to make special arrangements to meet these needs.

45. The written feedback on learners' work is poor. Tutors comments are minimal and do not offer constructive guidance to the learner. They do not challenge or inspire the learner to improve their work and to achieve their main qualification. Sometimes learners do not present their work in the most appropriate way and tutors do not suggest alternative forms of evidence.

46. The foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes have poor achievement rates. Between 1998 and 2000, the achievement rate was only 19 per cent. The retention rate on both programmes is low, but improving. It has risen from 8 per cent in 1998-99, to 31 per cent in 1999-2000. The Chamber is aware of the low retention and achievement rates. The monitoring of learners' attendance and time-

keeping, and the reporting of feedback from learner questionnaires has improved.

Good Practice

Learners on the management programme meet each month to formally review and discuss individual progress. Learners take it in turn to chair the meeting, at which minutes are taken and action plans are formed. The action plans form the basis of the learners' work activities before the next assessor visit. Copies of the minutes and action plans are forwarded to the training advisers and the workplace supervisors. Learners find these meetings motivating and constructive.

Information & communications technology

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	11	4

47. There are 11 learners in this sector. Two are foundation modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 2 in using IT and nine are advanced modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 3 in operating IT systems, use and support of IT, or using IT. All learners are in full-time employment with local businesses. All IT training is subcontracted to a local further education college. All learners attend the local college for off-the-job training for examination-based qualifications and key skills training for one day each week. All other training is carried out on the job by workplace supervisors. Some recruitment is as a result of the Chamber's marketing team identifying existing eligible employees, and some employers use the services of the Chamber to advertise for and recruit young people. Initial assessments are given by the Chamber and the college. Two training advisers provide a link between the college and the employers, for guidance and pastoral support to the learners. The training advisers also carry out progress reviews. College tutors carry out all the assessments.

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

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			14		10		2		5	
Still in training			2	14	1	10	2	100	4	80
AMA framework completed			6	43	2	20	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			7	50	2	20	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			6	43	7	70	0	0	1	20

STRENGTHS

- appropriate additional training in the workplace
- good standard of work placements

WEAKNESSES

- poorly organised internal verification
- insufficient assessment planning
- unstructured work-based learning
- poor achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of workplace supervisors in off-the-job training
- better health and safety guidance in college computer rooms

48. Employers provide learners with additional training to improve their effectiveness in the workplace. Some learners have undertaken training in equal opportunities and health and safety, and others have had training in the use of lifting techniques for the manual handling of computers. One learner has been trained to use fire extinguishers.

49. Employers give learners good opportunities to develop their skills. All evidence for qualifications is gained in the workplace, as part of the learners' job role and all evidence is well recorded in their portfolios of evidence. Learners working towards the NVQ at level 3 in operating IT systems are also working towards a qualification in computer networking, as part of the modern apprenticeship framework.

50. Internal verification by the college is poorly organised. For some level 3 NVQ programmes, there is no strategy for the internal verification of learners' work. Assessors and internal verifiers do not meet regularly to discuss good practice. Urgent work to improve the assessment of training has only recently begun. Staff are now being monitored when carrying out assessments, and the internal verification of portfolios is taking place.

51. The college does not plan for workplace assessments and relies on the learners to request assessments when they feel they are ready. Learners have the responsibility for requesting workplace assessments, but they are not clear about the procedures for doing so. As a result there is insufficient assessment in the workplace. One learner has been on an advanced modern apprenticeship programme since February 2001 and up until December 2001 has only had one workplace assessment. The learner has previous qualifications and skills and has good opportunities to demonstrate competences on a daily basis.

52. There are no links between on- and off-the-job training, a weakness which was identified in the self-assessment report. There is no involvement of workplace supervisors in the learning taking place in the college. The college's training starts in September and background knowledge is given for one unit at a time. Learners who join the training programmes at other times, start their training at the beginning of the next unit and work on health and safety topics until that time. There are no regular meetings between the college and the workplace supervisors to arrange a co-ordinated schedule of training. Employers want the learners to gain skills to increase their ability levels in the workplace, but they do not provide a structure for their training. Most learners are motivated and enthusiastic and seek guidance and training from colleagues in the workplace. Many learners are given the opportunity to work in a range of jobs to enhance their skills, but there is no structure for arranging these opportunities.

53. Achievement rates for the full modern apprenticeship framework are poor. Fourteen of the 31 learners who started on advance modern apprentice programmes left early and only nine achieved an NVQ at level 2 or 3. There have been no achievements of the full apprenticeship framework since 2000. Nine learners are still in training.

54. The college carry out an initial induction and assessment process which includes advising learners of health and safety requirements. However, this is not reinforced in the computer rooms, where there is no display of health and safety materials. Some of the chairs are unsuitable for working at a computer.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	40	4

55. There are 40 learners, and most are working towards qualifications in customer service or retailing NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Seven learners are studying for qualifications in distribution and warehousing. There are 24 foundation modern apprentices, 10 advanced modern apprentices and six learners working on NVQ programmes. All learners are in full-time employment, with organisations which include independent and corporate retailers, car dealerships, a local solicitor's practice and a dentistry practice. Learners are recruited through vacancies advertised by the Chamber, or through the careers service. All learners receive an induction before their training starts. They carry out initial assessment tests for key and basic skills, to identify their learning support requirements. Training and assessment is subcontracted to four training providers, which include a local further education college and one national training provider. Most learners attend off-the-job training sessions for advice on gathering NVQ evidence, portfolio-building, and to work towards the key skills units. Learners take part in two types of progress review. Training providers' assessors visit learners in the workplace at least once each month to carry out assessments, to review progress and to offer support and guidance. Other reviews are carried out by training advisers from the Chamber and focus on the learners' overall progress and development during their training programme.

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			12		21		23		6
Still in training			0	0	5	24	13	57	6	100
FMA framework completed			1	8	1	5	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			4	33	3	14	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			11	92	15	71	10	43	0	0

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			9		9		10		
Still in training			1	11	6	67	3	30		
AMA framework completed			1	11	2	22	0	0		
NVQ level 2 completed			3	33	0	0	0	0		
NVQ level 3 completed			3	33	4	44	1	10		
Left without completing the framework			7	78	1	11	7	70		

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					50		26		11
Still in training					0	0	0	0	6	55
Individual learning plan completed					32	64	20	77	2	18
Left without completing individual learning plan					18	36	6	23	3	27
NVQ level 1 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					33	66	17	65	2	18
NVQ level 3 completed					0	0	3	12	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good standard of work placements
- particularly good short-term action-planning

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective individual learning plans
- no planning of on-the-job training
- poor integration of key skills training
- inadequate training support from one subcontractor
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of progress reviews
- better assessment planning by one subcontractor
- more frequent internal verification at one subcontractor

56. There is a range of good work placements which enable learners to work towards their main qualifications and to gain additional qualifications. Work placements include local and national retailing businesses, customer service and sales outlets. Learners benefit from a wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace, including the use of office equipment, reconciling cash transactions and the daily opening and closing of the employers' premises. Employers and workplace supervisors offer good support and work well with the learners to help them identify, structure and present the most suitable evidence for their portfolios. Where necessary, they also move the learners between departments to allow them to get the full range of NVQ evidence. Learners have a good awareness of health and safety issues. The Chamber encourages workplace managers to train as NVQ assessors. This is currently taking place in one workplace.

57. Assessors visit learners in the workplace at least every month and sometimes every two weeks. They set good short-term targets and learners are encouraged to set some of their own targets. The assessor and the learner agree an action plan which gives clear guidelines and dates for completion. Many learners discuss their plans with the workplace supervisor which helps to plan the learners' work.

58. Individual learning plans are not used effectively to establish and monitor learners' progress. Target-setting does not sufficiently take into account individual circumstances. For example, two learners have identical target dates for the achievement of their NVQ and key skills training, although they carry out different job

roles in different companies. Many individual learning plans do not record important information, such as the young person's career aims, or their programme framework. In other instances, targets are set for key skills units which have already been achieved. The learning plans are not updated to reflect the learners' progress. In some cases, brief comments are added to the forms when progress reviews take place, but this is not routine practice. Learners have copies of their individual learning plans, but they do not see the relevance of them. There is insufficient exchange of information between all parties involved in the learners' training programmes.

59. There is no structure to the on-the-job training and there are insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. Advisers and assessors make informal agreements to offer training opportunities at work, but they are not recorded or formally monitored. Learners are unable to put into practice the skills they learn during off-the-job training. In one case, a learner had not been trained in dealing with difficult customers, but was having to do so as part of her job role. Some employers have a poor understanding of the qualifications involved. They are not aware of the learners' progress and they do not know what takes place during the off-the-job training sessions.

60. For many learners, key skills training and assessment starts at the end of the training programme. Many learners who have been on their training programme for eight months have only just started to work on their key skills. Assessors do not guide the learners to make best use of the NVQ evidence and some learners carry out projects to generate evidence for the key skills. In one case, the learner was asked to complete a project about planning to redecorate her bedroom, when there was a lot of readily available evidence from the workplace.

61. One training provider, which is responsible for the training of approximately half of all the learners, does not offer the additional learning support identified by the initial assessment process. One learner was told he needed support with application of number over a year ago, but has not received any such support. Learners working with this training provider have not received the comprehensive information pack which includes security, health and safety, and consumer legislation. There is inadequate planning of the support required to meet individual learners' needs and a failure to record any support which is provided. Assessment planning at another training provider is too general and long-term. Assessment plans are carried out for every unit at the start of the training programme, but they are not sufficiently detailed. They do not allow for the planning of work activities which would offer opportunities for assessment during the programme. There is a lack of regular feedback to learners and assessors with one provider, where internal verification only takes place when the learner has finished the training programme.

62. On the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes, the proportion of learners who achieve the full framework is low. In 1998-99, only 8 per cent of learners on the foundation programme completed the aims of their individual learning plans. In 1999-2000, this fell to 5 per cent, and for 2000-01, none of the learners have completed the modern apprenticeship framework. Only 11 per cent of

the 28 learners on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme between 1998 and 2001 achieved the full framework. There has been some improvement in retention rates. The retention rate on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme has increased each year from 1998-99. On the advanced modern apprenticeship programme there was a rise in the number of learners leaving early in 2000-01, because one employer withdrew from the training programme and two employers closed down.

Good Practice

Learners with one subcontractor meet to discuss their training programmes and to identify areas for improvement. Representatives from the group then attend a review meeting with staff and have the opportunity to put forward the group's views.

Poor Practice

When warehousing portfolios are complete, staff remove the assessment records before returning the portfolios to learners. Learners are not given copies of the assessor's reports which would give them the opportunity to monitor their own progress and any changes to their training programme.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	28	4

63. There are 28 learners, of whom 22 are advanced modern apprentices and five are foundation modern apprentices. One learner is working towards an NVQ at level 2. All advanced modern apprentices start their NVQ training at level 2. Learners have an initial assessment, which is carried out by the Chamber's staff. All learners are in full-time employment and work in sports centres, fast food outlets, golf courses, public houses and a local professional rugby league club. Training and assessment is subcontracted to two training providers who also have responsibility for initial assessment and internal verification. There is one work-based assessor. Most learners attend college one day each week for key skills training and group tutorial sessions. The Chamber's adviser visits learners every 12 weeks to carry out a progress review and to meet with the employer. The results of the progress reviews are copied to the learner and the employer.

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					10		3		1
Still in training					3	30	1	33	1	100
FMA framework completed					5	50	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					2	20	2	67	0	0

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			16		14		21		1	
Still in training			0	0	8	57	13	62	1	100
AMA framework completed			3	19	1	7	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	4	29	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			13	81	5	36	8	38	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					2		2			
Still in training					0	0	1	50		
Individual learning plan completed					1	50	0	0		
Left without completing individual learning plan					1	50	1	50		
NVQ level 1 completed					0	0	0	0		
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0		

STRENGTHS

- broad range of appropriate qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient work-based assessment
- inadequate arrangements for key skills training
- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor use of the results of initial assessment
- no planned internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better application of the training chart in key skills training

64. Learners can gain a broad range of appropriate qualifications. This allows learners to specialise in areas of interest and enhances their career development. This flexible approach to training has helped small numbers of learners by matching the NVQ to their job role. Learners do not have enough involvement in the selection of the optional units for their individual NVQs. In addition to the main qualification, a high proportion of learners have undertaken industry-related qualifications in weightlifting, coaching and life-saving awards, as well as first aid and food hygiene certificates. The work placements often have a number of different leisure facilities which support additional qualifications and provide excellent training and assessment opportunities.

65. There is insufficient work-based assessment in hospitality, and sport and leisure. Learners collect evidence from the workplace, but this does not form the basis of any assessment. There are no observations by workplace supervisors. The main method of gathering evidence is through assignments from college. Learners are set a number of assignments to be completed by the end of the year and they are designed so that all learners complete their work on the same unit at the same time. This lack of work-based assessment in catering is identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report, although it was not identified in sport and leisure. The work-based assessor is confused about who has responsibility for the learners' assessments. Assessors are not always able to carry out work-based assessments because of the different working arrangements and shift patterns of the learners. This has been recognised by the training provider, one assessor has now been given time to go out on a regular basis. Progress reviews lack detail, are not regularly updated and are not being used by learners. Few learners have action plans and they have not negotiated short-term targets with their assessors.

66. Most learners do their skills training at the local college. However, the sessions are in the evening and learners find it difficult to attend because of their work shift patterns. They are confused about the requirements of key skills for the modern apprenticeship framework and few learners are aware of the full range of key skills. Tasks have been developed to allow learners to gain evidence which is specific to their area of learning, but they are not used to good effect. One learner has received the NVQ certificate and other additional qualifications, but still needs to complete the key skills training to achieve the full modern apprenticeship framework. Charts are available which identify the key skills requirements against the NVQ requirements, but they are not used effectively. The chart clearly identifies ways of gaining evidence from the workplace and has been designed to help learners make progress at their own pace. However, there is no monitoring of how the charts are used by the assessors.

67. Retention and achievement rates are poor. In 1999-2001, only 30 per cent of foundation modern apprentices were retained. Between 1998-2001, 41 per cent of advanced modern apprentices were retained. Between 1998-2000, only 13 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 50 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. None of the learners have achieved the framework in the past two years.

68. Initial assessment documents are incomplete and are not used to identify learners' individual needs. An advanced modern apprentice has received key skills training at level 1, despite having good GCSE grades. Many of the advanced modern apprentices have good GCSE results, but assessors automatically enter them for level 2 of the NVQ. Learners who have achieved their key skills on a previous training programme, have them endorsed by the assessors.

69. The internal verification plan does not ensure adequate coverage of assessments or assignment work, and there is no schedule for sampling learners' work. Internal verification is carried out in all training programmes, but there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that the correct assessment decisions have been made.

Good Practice

The main hospitality provider offers a wide range of realistic working environments to match the full range of NVQs on offer. They include a town centre restaurant, a public house and a micro brewery.

Poor Practice

Leisure and sport learners who are based with the main training provider, all follow the NVQ in the same order and at the same time of year. This does not allow learners to work at their own pace. Some learners feel they are ready for an assessment, but cannot be assessed until the unit completion date.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	78	4

70. The Chamber provides modern apprenticeships and other work-based learning for young people in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are 78 learners, of whom 72 are hairdressing apprentices and six are beauty therapy apprentices. Thirty-six are foundation modern apprentices, working towards NVQs at level 2 in hairdressing and receiving key skills training. Thirty-nine advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 2 and 3 in hairdressing or beauty therapy and key skills. Three learners are working towards an NVQ in hairdressing. The Chamber works with 39 employers and all learners are employed in local salons, ranging from small traders to large high street salons. The Chamber and the employers recruit learners jointly. The Chamber contracts with employers, who either buy in training from the local college or offer all or part of the training themselves. The college's staff carry out induction and the initial assessment of learners before the start of training. Learners then receive an induction with the employer and the Chamber. Learners may join the training programme at any time of the year. They can attend a local college one day each week for 44 weeks, for background knowledge, practical and key skills training and assessment. One employer trains and assesses its learners entirely at work and makes its own arrangements for internal verification. Two other employers undertake training and assessment at work and the college gives the background knowledge and key skills training in the workplace. Learners also receive training towards their NVQ in the workplace. There are 12 qualified work-based assessors. Training staff visit the learners at work, to review progress every 12 weeks. Those learners who attend college are also visited at work every 12 weeks for a progress review. Qualified internal verifiers carry out internal verification of assessment.

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			20		20		24		21
Still in training			0	0	4	20	12	50	20	95
FMA framework completed			2	10	4	20	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			7	35	4	20	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			18	90	12	60	12	50	1	5

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			41		28		19		22
Still in training			4	10	6	21	9	47	20	91
AMA framework completed			15	37	7	25	1	5	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	5	3	11	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			15	37	7	25	1	5	0	0
Left without completing the framework			22	54	15	54	9	47	2	9

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					3		2		4
Still in training					0	0	1	50	2	50
Individual learning plan completed					2	67	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan					1	33	1	50	2	50
NVQ level 1 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					1	33	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed					1	33	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good training methods to support additional learning
- good progress reviews in the workplace
- effective links between job roles and key skills training

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient work-based assessment for most learners
- insufficient internal verification
- slow completion of modern apprenticeship framework

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more systematic monitoring of NVQ and key skills
- better recording of prior learning on individual learning plans

71. There is a good variety of training methods to support a range of additional qualifications. Employers can choose the method which suits the learner and the workplace best. For instance, three employers carry out all the training and assessment at work and the learners' portfolios consist entirely of work-based evidence. Off-the-job training at the college is offered over 44 weeks for learners who attend day-release courses and training continues over the summer period. All learners can gain a wide range of additional training and attend specialised practical and product knowledge courses. There is a successful college competition team which includes work-based learners. Some employers also encourage learners to take part in local, regional and national competitions. There are opportunities for all learners to attend additional in-house training with the employer and this motivates the learners and further develops their skills.

72. Learners have a progress review every 12 weeks mainly to establish progress towards their main qualification. For most learners, this is carried out by college staff in their workplace. Learners who receive all their training at work have this progress review session with the employer, where specific targets are set and monitored. The targets are then reviewed at the next meeting. The progress review by the Chamber is also carried out every 12 weeks and involves the learner, the employer and the Chamber staff. Learners who attend the college receive a certificate when they achieve an NVQ unit. Learners and all those involved in their training receive copies of the progress reviews. The individual learning plan is drawn up when learners start their training, but there is insufficient recognition of learners' prior experience.

73. Key skills assignments for hairdressing and beauty therapy have recently been

developed to make them to be relevant to the learner and their job role. Learners understand the key skills and consider them to be a relevant part of their training. A training chart which cross-references the key skills and the NVQ units identifies training and assessment needs. Learners now start their key skills training much earlier in the training programme. Evidence from the workplace, such as client questionnaires, is included in the portfolios and learners are encouraged to develop key skills across their assignments. For example, the use of IT is included in all NVQ and key skill assignments. There is currently no assessment at work for key skills and progress is monitored during the progress reviews. Employers are often unaware of the learners' progress towards attaining key skills.

74. There is insufficient work-based assessment for most learners. Twenty learners are trained and assessed entirely at work and seven others have access to a work-based assessor. The range of models at the college is not broad enough, particularly at an NVQ at level 3. One modern apprentice is working as a stylist in the salon, but has not been assessed in the workplace yet. A college assessor visits most learners at work every 12 weeks when some assessment takes place, but this is not frequent enough. Most assessments are carried out at the college. Some learners do not use witness testimony to confirm workplace evidence. The quality of learners' portfolios is good, but some learners are not aware of their progress. For example, poor records of assessments resulted in one learner being unaware that she had not achieved the shampooing and conditioning unit until 15 months after she started training. Employers are often unaware of the planned off-the-job training, only what has taken place, as informed through the review process.

75. There is insufficient internal verification of assessors in the workplace. The internal verification system at the college is good, but there has been no verification of the assessors in the workplace for over 12 months. The three assessors have yet to be internally verified and they are unsure about the assessment decisions which they have made. One employer, who makes separate arrangements for internal verification, fulfils the requirements of the awarding body.

76. The proportion of learners who complete the full modern apprenticeship framework is small. Less than one third of learners currently achieve the NVQ and key skills award. Key skills training, is now starting much earlier for more recent learners, with the aim of improving achievement rates. The proportion of learners who stay in training is improving. In 1998-99, 34 per cent of learners were retained and this increased to 45 per cent in 1999-2000 and 52 per cent in 2000-01. None of the foundation modern apprentices have completed the framework for the past two years.

Good Practice

After attending external training events, two learners are expected to feed back information to the salon team. They are developing their skills in communication and their colleagues value their contribution.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	59	4

77. There are currently 59 learners working towards NVQs at level 2 and 3 in early years care and education, care, dental nursing, veterinary nursing and pharmacy. All learners are employed. Forty-three learners are working towards NVQs at level 3, most of these are training in early years care and education. Eleven learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in childcare. There are five learners working towards an NVQ at levels 2 and 3 in care. All advanced modern apprentices and foundation modern apprentices are working towards key skills awards. Learners are recruited through the local press and the careers service. The Chamber helps learners to find a job before they start training and potential learners are visited in the workplace to complete enrolment procedures. All learners undergo an initial assessment of their basic skills. The Chamber's staff prepare an individual learning plan and learners attend an induction with the training provider and with the Chamber. All learners receive an induction pack and they also undergo induction at the workplace. The three subcontracted training providers carry out all internal verification. Work-based assessors carry out assessments in the workplace. Off-the-job-training is carried out at two local further education colleges, training centres or in the workplace. The college carries out work-based assessment for three learners, and one employer delivers its own training and is an accredited assessment centre. Learners can start training at any time during the year. The training providers and the Chamber review learners' progress every 12 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			20		5		22		1
Still in training			1	5	1	20	8	36	1	100
FMA framework completed			2	10	2	40	3	14	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			7	35	3	60	3	14	0	0
Left without completing the framework			17	85	1	20	11	50	0	0

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			19		10		39		7
Still in training			1	5	8	80	28	72	6	86
AMA framework completed			8	42	0	0	1	3	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			2	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			9	47	0	0	2	5	0	0
Left without completing the framework			10	53	2	20	10	26	1	14

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			12		4		2		3
Still in training			2	17	0	0	1	50	2	67
Individual learning plan completed			7	58	0	0	0	0	1	33
Left without completing individual learning plan			3	25	4	100	1	50	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0	1	33

STRENGTHS

- good standard of work placements
- effective training support by the Chambers' staff
- good retention rates for advanced modern apprentices

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates of the full modern apprenticeship framework
- poor assessment practices
- ineffective use of individual learning plans
- insufficient work-based learning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better integration of key skills with vocational training

78. There is a good range of work placements which provide a variety of work-experience situations. For example, learners in childcare gain experience looking after children at different stages of development. Employers are enthusiastic about the training. They motivate learners and offer additional training, such as an externally certificated course on care practices and another on safe practice. Those training in care for the elderly, attend courses on topics such as caring for incontinent clients, and visit a funeral director to discuss bereavement. These training sessions add to the learners' understanding and their ability to cope with a wide range of situations.

79. The Chamber gives effective support to employers. They work well together to increase opportunities to gain evidence for learners' portfolios. One employer was given essential guidance and support towards becoming an independent training and assessment centre. This employer now subcontracts training to the Chamber. As part of a community project, the Chamber funded eight employees to train for NVQs at level 2 in care. They also funded some of the work-based assessor training. Forty per cent of assessors who trained recently are from care and early years care employers. The Chamber also provides a wage subsidy to employers who are prepared to employ and support a learner. A significant number of learners have found permanent jobs as a result of this. The Chamber also supports employers by carrying out the initial screening of prospective recruits. Employers value the support given by the Chamber's staff.

80. The retention rates are good for advanced modern apprentices. They have improved from 5 per cent in 1998-99, to 80 per cent in 1999-2000 and 72 per cent for those starting in 2000-01. However, retention rates for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners are poor. Only 10 of the 47 learners who started between 1998-99

and 2000-01 remain in training. Achievement rates for all training programmes are poor. Achievement of the full modern apprenticeship framework for advanced modern apprentices was 42 per cent in 1998-99. Since then only one has been achieved.

81. Work-based assessment is weak across all areas of care. There is not enough observation of everyday work and insufficient forward-planning of assessments. Many records are incomplete, with missing signatures and dates. Learners are responsible for initiating their own assessments, but do not fully understand the process. Written feedback to learners is poor and does not encourage progress. Assessors do not plan how the learner's background knowledge will be assessed and this is often left to the training providers to organise. There is too much emphasis on written evidence before assessment takes place. For example, with one provider, learners complete a package of written evidence before they are assessed in practice. There are some learners in care settings who do not have a work-based assessor. One learner had three assessors within a six-month period and was given conflicting advice from each one. Most work-based assessors do not have time to carry out all the requirements of the assessment process.

82. Individual learning plans do not give sufficient information about learners' backgrounds, experiences and learning needs. Learning plans are not routinely used and updated by trainers as part of the progress review process and there is poor use of the results of initial assessment. The progress review process does not result in realistic and challenging targets which motivate the learner. Employers, supervisors and assessors are not sufficiently involved in the process and they do not influence target-setting. The review of job roles carried out at the start of training does not result in an appropriate training programme. Most of the level 3 learners are in jobs which do not match their training programmes.

83. There is insufficient training for care and childcare learners. Planning for work-based learning is poor and supervisors do not take advantage of situations at work to raise learners' awareness of how theory is applied in practice. Work-based activities are not routinely linked with the requirements of the NVQ. There is no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Most learners attend off-the-job training, but not enough time is given to the development of their background knowledge of care and childcare. Most learners in care and childcare have a poor understanding of the NVQ standards and there is too much emphasis on producing written evidence. The planning and integration of key skills training is poor.