

# INSPECTION REPORT

**STL**

**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 **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

STL is a large private training provider, established in 1984. The head office is in Sheffield. It has training centres in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham, Chesterfield and Derby. It provides work-based learning in retailing and customer services, business administration, hospitality, care of the elderly, and hairdressing, for young people training in national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeships. There are 1,055 learners.

### Overall judgement

The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of work-based learning in hairdressing is outstanding. In hospitality and business administration it is good. It is satisfactory in retailing and customer services but very poor in care of the elderly. The leadership and management of STL are satisfactory. Equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactory and quality assurance is good.

### GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	2

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

STL

<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>	<b>1</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	1

  

<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>5</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- good curriculum management in most areas
- effective recruitment of learners with low level of prior achievement
- well-managed strategic growth
- good assessment practice
- good support for learners with additional needs
- good progression from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships
- wide range of supportive work placements
- good training in most areas
- well-resourced training centres

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- low retention and achievement rates in some areas in 1998-2000
- inadequate management information system
- insufficient appreciation of equal opportunities issues by employers
- slow progress for some learners
- very slow response to poor training provision in health care

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better equal opportunities training for staff and learners
- more comprehensive partnership arrangements with employers

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 12 inspectors spent a total of 60 days at STL during March 2002. They interviewed 157 learners and conducted interviews with 60 employers. There were 110 separate meetings with staff. Inspectors observed and graded 21 learning sessions. They examined 143 individual learning plans and 127 learners' portfolios of evidence. They held one meeting with Connexions staff. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including learners' and staff records and personal files, specialist learning resources, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. Inspectors studied the self-assessment report and action plan which were produced in January 2002.

### Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	9	3	0	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. STL is a private training company with a head office in Sheffield. It has training centres in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Chesterfield. A new training centre in Derby was opened in March 2002. The company was originally established in 1984 and changed its name to STL in 1991. STL offers modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in retailing and customer services, business administration, hairdressing, hospitality and care of the elderly. Eighty-eight per cent of learners are employed. Most of those not employed are working towards NVQs at level 1. Learners in business administration, healthcare and hairdressing are able to train at all five training centres. Retailing and customer services and hospitality qualifications are taught mainly in the workplace. There are currently 1,055 young people in learning. Many learners have low levels of prior qualifications. All the training centres in South Yorkshire and Derbyshire offer work-based learning in the five occupational areas.

3. STL's business operations are controlled by the managing director, the director and the quality assurance manager. STL employs 92 staff. This includes three senior managers, 12 managers, and 58 employees who contribute to the training, assessment and internal verification of government-funded training programmes. There are 26 staff in finance, administration, health and safety, and on reception. The young people in learning with STL are placed with more than 775 employers throughout South Yorkshire and Derbyshire. STL was re-accredited with the Investors in People standard in September 2001. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. STL achieved the Quality Management System ISO 9002 in September 2000. This is an international quality assurance standard. Work-based learning is funded through contracts with South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Derbyshire LSC.

4. There have been major changes to industries in South Yorkshire during the past 20 years. By comparison with the rest of the country, the area is heavily reliant on manufacturing, construction, transport and communication, rather than business services. In South Yorkshire more than one in five people have no qualifications. Nearly one quarter of the population has poor levels of literacy and numeracy. In 2001, the unemployment rate was 4.6 per cent in Sheffield and 3.8 per cent in Derbyshire, compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. Over 33 per cent of the unemployed in the South Yorkshire region do not have an NVQ or equivalent qualification. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 42 per cent in Sheffield and 51.5 per cent in Derbyshire, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 3 per cent in Derbyshire and 5 per cent in Sheffield, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent.



## Work-based learning for young people

5. The quality of work-based learning in hairdressing is outstanding. Retention rates have been high during the past two years and achievement rates are good. Learners' progression to higher qualifications and to permanent jobs is particularly good. There is excellent support for all learners including those with additional needs. There is very good NVQ and key skills training. There is a good standard of training in business administration and hospitality. In business administration, there is good progression by foundation modern apprentices to advanced modern apprenticeships. There is effective support for learners, and the introduction of new occupational standards was well planned. Retention rates were low between 1998 and 2000, but have improved significantly since then. In hospitality, there is good key skills training and good assessment practices. The programme is well resourced. Retention rates were low before 2000 on foundation modern apprenticeships, but have been high in subsequent years. Retailing and customer services, the largest area of learning, is satisfactory. The area is well managed and there is a wide range of supportive work placements. Assessment practice is good and there is strong support for learners with low levels of prior achievement. Achievement rates have been low, but in the past two years both retention and achievement rates have improved. Training in healthcare for the elderly is very weak. Although measures to improve the service are sound, it is too early for them to have had any significant effect. There was a very slow response to the problem of poor training. Achievement and retention rates are very poor. Training is not sufficiently focused and learners who require additional learning support do not get enough help. The range of learning resources is poor.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

6. STL's senior management team includes two directors, the quality assurance manager, the finance manager and a newly appointed human resources manager. There are 93 staff, 58 of whom are involved directly in training, monitoring and assessment. Learners work on modern apprenticeship programmes or receive NVQ training in retailing and customer services, business administration, hospitality, hairdressing or healthcare. Retailing and customer services and hospitality are mainly taught in the workplace. STL's equal opportunities policy is designed with learners' interests in mind. Nearly 9 per cent of learners are identified as having additional learning or additional support needs. There is a company procedure to meet these needs. The quality assurance framework is linked to ISO 9002. This was awarded in May 2000 and STL had a successful ISO 9002 external inspection in May 2001. Policies and procedures cover all aspects of training and assessment as well as other aspects of the business. Work instructions assure quality control and standard forms are used. Self-assessment reports and action plans have been produced annually since 1998. The latest self-assessment report was produced in January 2002 in preparation for the current inspection.

### STRENGTHS

- well-managed strategic growth
- good staff development linked to business objectives
- effective internal communications
- effective recruitment of learners with low level of prior achievement
- good support for learners with additional needs
- swift response to discrimination issues faced by existing learners
- good use of feedback from learners and employers
- good assessment practice

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient checks to ensure compliance with some work instructions
- low retention and achievement rates in some areas in 1998-2000
- inadequate management information system
- no analysis or use of ethnic monitoring data
- insufficient employer understanding of equal opportunities issues

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more use of the company's intranet for quality assurance manual documentation
- better marketing of training to minority ethnic groups

7. The strategic growth of the company is well managed. Since 1998, the number of learners has increased from 425 to 1,055. Over the same period, staff numbers have also increased from 19 to 93 and there are now five training centres. This growth has been monitored carefully and kept under tight financial control. A business development team has been set up to assist in further expansion of the business. Each vocational team has established learners' achievement targets. The management team, in discussion with the programme managers of each vocational team, sets these targets.

8. Staff development is good and is linked to STL's business objectives. All staff have six-monthly appraisals at which their training needs are identified to meet the demands of the business. Line managers identify additional staff training needs monthly, and they log these with the quality assurance manager. Line managers train and coach their own staff and ensure that training programmes match staff requirements. Evening classes are held if large numbers of staff require training. These include information technology (IT) for key skills training. New staff take assessor training and shadow more experienced colleagues. There is strong emphasis on effective teamwork, and in 2000, 70 staff attended a three-day training and team development event.

9. Internal communications are effective. Every six weeks, meetings are held between programme managers and their staff. Programme managers, who also act as internal verifiers, meet every eight weeks. There are frequent team meetings in marketing, administration, health and safety, and equal opportunities. Senior managers periodically attend these meetings and staff appreciate their attendance. There are monthly management review meetings and a senior management review every six weeks. There is a very high level of communication among staff who deal with learners with additional needs. Informal communication also works well. Directors operate an open-door policy to encourage discussion. All staff have e-mail facilities and there is a new intranet system.

10. STL has been particularly successful in attracting a large number of learners who have not achieved well at school. There is a significant number of learners who have not achieved five GCSEs at grades A-C and/or GCSEs in mathematics and English. In healthcare, for example, the number of such learners is 58 per cent, in business administration the figure is 52 per cent and in retailing and customer care is 85 per cent. There are currently 115 learners receiving additional support. The company focuses on getting jobs or work placements for these learners. STL staff run jobsearch sessions for the learners before starting them on training programmes. This is done without LSC funding.

11. Learners with additional learning needs receive good support. The screening of learners is carried out sensitively and teaching is adapted to suit individual needs. Learners are given a contact list of external support agencies. Staff spend extra time with the learners, including evenings and weekends, to resolve personal problems. In many cases, previously neglected needs have been identified and are being met.

## STL

12. There are insufficient checks to ensure that work instruction sheets are followed correctly. Checks rely heavily on pre-planned internal audits and observation by line managers. Non-compliance with instructions can only be detected after mistakes have occurred. In one interview, a potential learner left the initial interview without being told details of allowances or being given details of the course.

13. There were low achievement and retention rates in some occupational areas in 1998-2000. Of all the learners who started in 1998, 74 per cent left without occupational qualification. There have been improvements on this figure in some areas. Achievement rates are consistently poor in healthcare, whereas in hairdressing, rates have been high in recent years. Internal progression between courses is improving year by year. STL is successful in getting learners into permanent jobs and the achievement of NVQs has been good. The overall trend in the achievement of full modern apprenticeship frameworks has been poor, but is improving rapidly in most areas. In most areas of learning, there are year-by-year improvements of between 7 and 10 per cent.

14. The management information system is inadequate, although the system has generally met the reporting requirements of external bodies. There has been insufficient detailed analysis and use of management data to monitor and improve the poor retention and achievement rates successfully. There has been no systematic analysis of the value of training to learners, most of whom attend with low levels of previous qualifications. There is insufficient use of data to monitor the effectiveness of support for learners with additional needs. In some areas of learning, there is insufficient monitoring of the rate of learners' progress.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 3**

15. The comprehensive equal opportunities policy is written from the learners' point of view. It itemises management and individual responsibilities as well as employer obligations. It defines discrimination of all types and meets legislative requirements. The policy cites examples of discrimination and explains why these actions are not justifiable. The policy is explained to learners at induction.

16. STL responds effectively in cases of learners facing discrimination or unacceptable behaviour. Problems are dealt with to the satisfaction of the learners. For example, one learner was moved quickly to another place of work when subjected to sexual harassment. The company buys new black shoes or dark trousers for learners who cannot afford to meet employers' dress codes. This has enabled learners to avoid potential discrimination.

17. The promotion of equal opportunities during induction is unimaginative and lacks impact. In spite of this, learners have a basic understanding of their rights and feel protected. Learners are required to assess their own understanding of equal opportunities, but this is frequently not carried out. They have, at best, only a vague recollection of the policy and discrimination issues. All staff receive basic training and deal well with discrimination and harassment problems. Any unresolved matters are referred to the equal opportunities manager.

18. Data on learner applications by ethnicity and gender are not adequately analysed. There is insufficient information available to identify under-representation of particular groups. There is insufficient monitoring of employers' selection procedures to identify any potential discrimination. Efforts have been taken to increase participation by learners from minority ethnic groups. However, these initiatives are not part of the company's strategic and business plan. There is no access for wheelchair users at any of the training centres, but alternative arrangements have been made to interview learners and offer training with three partner organisations.

19. STL discusses equal opportunities with employers and offers help before learners are placed with them. Employers are not sufficiently aware of equal opportunities issues. Many employers have equal opportunity policies, but are unable to discuss what equality of opportunity means in practice. Requests for help from smaller organisations have been dealt with effectively and efficiently. Employers are reminded of their obligations, but their actions are not necessarily monitored.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 2**

20. The quality assurance arrangements cover most activities in the company. There is a detailed internal auditing plan. External auditors check the quality assurance system annually. The system is active and some procedures have been revised since its inception. Programme managers carry out internal audit checks. For instance, line managers periodically observe and grade their staff carrying out training and interviews. Staff who achieve good grades have fewer observations. Internal verifiers are audited by internal verifiers from other training programmes.

21. Good use is made of feedback from learners and employers. STL uses a commercial monitoring system to formally seek and analyse learners' and employers' views. One important outcome from these surveys was an increase in access to computers for learners. Learners are given questionnaires at the start, mid-way and at the end of their training programmes. The results of each questionnaire are summarised verbally and numerically. If the responses to a question indicate less than 80 per cent satisfaction, then the relevant team takes appropriate action. Similar actions are taken with employer survey results.

22. The assessment and internal verification arrangements are thorough and well recorded. All assessors' decisions are sampled and graded. Feedback is detailed and recorded. Where additional training for an assessor is identified, this is recorded on a feedback form, entered onto the assessor's personal file and recorded centrally by the quality assurance manager. Internal verifiers meet their assessment team monthly to share good practice and standardise assessment decisions. Internal verifiers meet every two months to share good practice.

23. The self-assessment report involved all staff. It is largely accurate, but does not identify some strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Proposed grades for leadership and management, healthcare and equal opportunities were one grade higher than those awarded by inspectors. Action-planning is well established. There is evidence to show that action plans have resulted in improvements being made. Previous action plans have resulted in improvements in quality assurance arrangements and gaining feedback from employers and learners. STL's intranet does not have up-to-date quality assurance practice and procedures.

**Good Practice**

*A visually impaired woman is well supported with additional resources in the classroom as well as in the salon. This includes providing very bright lights and changes to her work schedule to enable her to do her job more effectively.*

## AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	146	2

24. There are 146 learners in business administration. Forty-five are advanced modern apprentices and 96 are foundation modern apprentices. The remaining five learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2. All modern apprentices are employed. Learners can start a training programme at any time during the year. Learners are either recruited directly by employers or by STL's marketing team. Between them, the STL's marketing and assessor teams have developed a wide network of employers, ranging from national companies to small local businesses, such as specialist finance and legal practices. The marketing team carries out initial assessments and inductions for the learners recruited by STL, while an occupational assessor undertakes these activities for learners recruited by the employer. The employer provides on-the-job training for work duties. The assessor, working with the learner in the workplace, delivers all the skills training and the background knowledge for the wider requirements of NVQ training. A range of learning support materials is available for learners to use in the workplace. Where they are available, and how they can be used, is discussed with the assessor during regular assessment planning meetings. Learners who require additional support can attend one of STL's training centres for portfolio-building and to develop IT skills, some of which lead to separate qualifications, such as a basic computer literacy qualification. Progress reviews take place every three months.

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	20		45		33		34		62						
Retained	0		27		19		13	38	19	31						
Successfully completed	0		3		13		13	38	19	31						
Still in learning	15		24		6		0	0	0	0						

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	75		95		69		41									
Retained	2		49		32		14	34									
Successfully completed	2		12		27		14	34									
Still in learning	54		37		5		0	0									

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5				6		14		54							
Retained	0				0	0	2	14	15	28							
Successfully completed	0				0	0	1	7	13	24							
Still in learning	5				0	0	0	0	0	0							

## STRENGTHS

- effective support for learners
- effective planning for introduction of new standards
- good use of accreditation of previous learning in initial assessment
- good progression from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships

## WEAKNESSES

- some poor assessment practices
- poor retention rates between 1998 and 2000

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of some employers in learning
- better reinforcement of induction



25. Learners are effectively supported in their training programmes. Assessor visits are frequent and have a clear purpose. The assessor team is experienced, well qualified and highly committed. Working relationships with learners are supportive and professional. Visits are tailored to the needs of the individual learner and result in modifications to the individual learning plans. Arrangements for visits are planned to take account of the availability of the learners. Learners can ring or e-mail their assessor at any time. Assessors carry laptops that can be used for training and assessment. Assessors use their knowledge and understanding of qualification criteria to ensure that all evidence generated by the learner is linked to both the NVO and key skills training. They explain the purpose of a visit and learners can differentiate between coaching, assessment and progress reviews. Coaching is very good. Trainers give clear instructions and check regularly that learners understand the tasks set. The choice of additional qualifications, such as shorthand typing, takes account of employers' as well as learners' needs. All employers are supportive of assessors' visits to the workplace. All work placement providers have sufficient resources to support the needs of the training programme.

26. The assessor team has planned well to anticipate forthcoming changes to programme requirements and to ensure an easy transition from old to new qualification criteria. Assessors have developed their own support materials. They have produced a well-designed assessor pack to help teach the new key skills. It includes comprehensive guidelines for staff on teaching the new occupational standards for business administration. There is clear evidence in learners' work that the necessary changes have been carried out smoothly.

27. Good use is made of the accreditation of previous learning. Staff identify how learners can apply this to their NVOs at level 2 and 3, including key skills aspects of their work. A job analysis sheet determines how well the learner's job meets the apprenticeship framework requirements. Assessors and the marketing team use this system consistently. Staff assess learners at interview to accredit any previous learning and to see how they prefer to learn. All these systems are used as the basis of the individual learning plan. Evidence of previous learning, such as certificates, is checked. For example, from the evidence presented in an initial interview, one learner completed the training programme in half the time it would normally have taken.

28. Over the past four years there has been a steady increase in the number of foundation modern apprentices who progress on to the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Learners' job roles have been extended to meet the development needs of the higher framework requirements. Data produced by STL show that 52 per cent of all learners entering training do not possess any GCSEs at grades A-C. Only 23 per cent of learners enter with grades A-C in mathematics and English. Additional learning support successfully enables the learners who are most at risk of failing, to progress.

29. The achievement of NVO or key skills units is slowed by the need to deal with minor detailed evidence requirements. Generating additional evidence for individual key skill units takes precedence over signing-off individual NVO units that have already

been achieved. Learners' portfolios of evidence and assessor/internal verifier files show that many learners are very close to achieving NVQ or key skills units and are much nearer to completing the modern apprenticeship framework than is initially apparent. Some learners leave the programme early without their achievements being recognised. Neither the learner nor assessor have easily accessed records showing how learners are progressing against individual NVQ and key skill units, in the overall training programme. Assessment practice sometimes relies too much on direct observation. There is a shortage of more innovative assessment methods.

30. There were low retention rates between 1998 and 2000 but these have subsequently improved considerably. The overall figures show that about 50 per cent of foundation modern apprentices and 55 per cent of advanced modern apprentices, remained on the programme. The proportion of learners who leave without the full qualification has declined significantly during 2000 and 2001. Data produced by STL show that approximately 45 per cent of foundation modern apprentices leave the programme early to start full-time employment with their current employer.

31. Learners have only a general recollection of their induction sessions and that information is not subsequently reinforced. Not all employers are sufficiently aware of the details of the learners' training programmes. Some employers do not understand the modern apprenticeship framework requirements fully, and some are not sufficiently involved in assessor visits, although all are kept up to date with learners' progress. Not enough employers are involved in the progress meetings between the assessor and the learner.

#### Good Practice

*Unit 4 of the business administration NVQ is used to reinforce equality of opportunity. Through this unit, one learner has developed the confidence to deal with a particularly sensitive problem at work leading to a positive outcome.*

## Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation

## Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	468	3

32. There are 468 learners in retailing and customer service. Sixty-nine learners have additional learning and/or support needs. Seventy per cent of learners have no GCSE qualifications at grades A-C. Fewer than 14 per cent have GCSE grades A-C in English and mathematics. Forty-two per cent of all learners are already employed in the industry. The rest are recruited from careers service or by direct marketing. There are 74 advanced modern apprentices and 310 foundation modern apprentices. The remaining 84 learners are on work-based learning programmes for young people. STL supports learners to find employment and work placements. All learners have an initial assessment and key skills screening. Induction is carried out at work, or if they are unemployed, at the training centres. Ninety advanced modern apprentices are working towards customer service and 12 are working towards retailing NVQs at level 3. Sixty-six foundation modern apprentices are working towards customer service and 276 learners are working towards retailing NVQs at level 2. Twenty-eight learners are working towards retailing and two are working towards warehousing NVQs at level 2. Thirty-eight learners are working towards distributive operations NVQs at level 1. Most training is carried out in the workplace. Assessors visit learners in the workplace approximately every two weeks. Learners use the workshops at training centres to develop and demonstrate their skills.

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	78		48		53		76		102						
Retained	1		22		11		25	33	16	16						
Successfully completed	1		7		10		25	33	16	16						
Still in learning	54		19		1		0	0	0	0						

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96		1994-95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	384		379		294		209								
Retained	13		121	32	88	30	82	39								
Successfully completed	13		54	14	85	29	82	39								
Still in learning	240		67	18	3	1	0	0								

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	138		55		85		206		391						
Retained	2		12	22	14	16	39	19	56	14						
Successfully completed	2		7	13	13	15	37	18	52	13						
Still in learning	77		5	9	1	1	0	0	1	0						

## STRENGTHS

- good assessment practice
- wide range of supportive work placements
- effective management of the occupational area
- good support for learners with low levels of prior qualifications
- good internal progression

## WEAKNESSES

- slow progress for some learners
- insufficient use of work-based evidence for key skills training
- poor achievement rates for modern apprenticeship framework

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better handouts and projects
- greater learner involvement with their portfolios

33. There is good assessment practice and effective internal verification. Assessors visit learners at least once a fortnight. All assessment takes place in the workplace and is responsive to the needs of the learner. Assessors have a good knowledge of occupational standards and current occupational expertise. Learners are involved fully in assessment. There is effective short-term action-planning. Learners are well briefed before their assessments and good feedback is given afterwards. Action plans focus on specific units, and evidence is cross-referenced. Targets are set for the achievement of individual units and these are reviewed at appropriate times. Learners are comfortable with the assessment process. Their working relationship with the assessors is friendly and professional. They are confident that help is available if necessary. Their views on training are sought through questionnaires three times during the programme.

34. Learners are well supported in a wide range of work placements. The variety of businesses includes golf clubs, supermarkets, garden centres, sports and general stores, clothes and shoe shops, cinema and a football club. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Employers support their learners in practical ways, such as in-house training linked to their NVQ training. Employers participate in the progress review process, help the learners to meet evidence requirements, help learners who have additional learning needs and move learners into different jobs to gain all necessary skills for their qualification. Arrangements can be made for learners to attend workshops at STL's nearest training centre for any practical training that they cannot get in the workplace. Assessors have laptops that they lend to learners for IT work. Resources for training are satisfactory. All STL's city centre premises have IT suites.

35. There is effective management of the occupational area. All assessors are either qualified with the relevant assessor qualifications, or are working towards these. New staff make rapid progress in carrying out their role effectively. Training towards the assessor units is helped by frequent monitoring visits from internal verifiers. Training needs are dealt with at monthly staff development sessions. All assessors keep up to date with changes in the published standards or new developments through the Internet. If assessors have problems with individual learners they are accompanied in their visits by colleagues. There is regular contact between assessors and internal verifiers. A creative approach to ensuring consistent practice in recording evidence and cross-referencing involves joint visits by the internal verifier and the assessor. This is not recognised fully by STL as a strength in the self-assessment report.

36. There is good training and pastoral support for learners with low levels of prior qualifications. Staff spend extra time with learners, including evenings and weekends, to

## STL

deal with learners' needs. Nominated staff at each training centre are training to identify dyslexic learners. A good range of learning resources, including key word dictionaries and prompt cards are used to assist learners' progress. Supportive employers offer extra help to learners when they need it. Ten-minute learning topics have been devised for one learner who has difficulty concentrating, to encourage reading, writing and numeracy skills. Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of these learners. Assessors are trained to identify basic skills needs. The programme is taught effectively in different formats to suit individual learning needs, work commitments and learning styles. There is good communication between the basic skills trainer and the occupational assessor to ensure effective action-planning.

37. For learners who achieve their initial qualifications, there are good rates of progression to other qualifications in STL. In 2000 and 2001, the progression rates for learners from NVQs to foundation modern apprenticeships were 71 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively. Progression rates from foundation modern apprenticeships to advanced modern apprenticeships for the same period were 32 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively.

38. Some learners make slow progress. Target dates are set for unit completion and achievement at the start of programmes. Some targets are not sufficiently challenging or have to be adjusted. Learners do not have any sense of urgency to complete units. Learners do not complete their units sometimes because they are missing a few pieces of evidence. STL does not use the full range of assessment methods for these final pieces of evidence. Witness testimonies and other forms of evidence are not used sufficiently to support learners' progress. The self-assessment report recognises this slow progress by learners. The reasons why learners are on a specific programme or level are not always logged clearly. There are no comments on the accreditation of previous learning or achievement. Information from the job analysis is not used to fast-track learners through units. More recently enrolled learners are progressing well.

39. There is insufficient use of work-based evidence in key skills training. This was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Some projects have not been devised to meet the requirements of the key skills qualifications and are not directly relevant to the work-based tasks. Training in key skills was introduced towards the end of some training programmes, as identified in the last inspection. Staff developments to rectify this have not yet made a full impact. Where learners are working towards the new key skills units, there has been insufficient preparation for the tests.

40. Modern apprenticeship framework achievement rates were poor before 2000. There are signs of improvement with the current advanced modern apprenticeship learners. In 1998, only 33 per cent of learners achieved their advanced modern apprenticeship framework and 39 per cent achieved their foundation modern apprenticeship. Eighteen per cent of learners achieved an NVQ. Retention rates have improved significantly since 1999, by approximately 40 per cent. The proportion of learners who leave without a qualification has declined from 74 per cent in 1999 to 36 per cent in 2001. The proportion of learners who leave into jobs has been good since

1998. Learners who leave their work placement early are helped to find a new work placement, or are referred to other agencies. Learners at risk of leaving the programme early receive coaching in interview techniques and jobsearch, curriculum vitae preparation and counselling, mentoring and home visits.

41. Some distance learning materials are poorly copied and are difficult to read. Some handouts include large amounts of text that is not relevant to learners' work. Learners' portfolios of evidence are well organised but they rely heavily on help from their assessors to access and file their evidence. Most portfolios rely on observation and questioning to provide evidence of learners' competence.

#### **Good Practice**

*The basic skills training is planned for the day before the learner's assessment visit, thus linking the occupational and basic skills learning. Assessors carry out home visits to learners who need additional support.*

#### **Poor Practice**

*An assessor held a learner progress review in a cold and uncomfortable room, at the top of a dark and untidy staircase. The last few minutes of the review were completed on the shop floor within hearing distance of customers.*

## Hospitality, sport, leisure &amp; travel

## Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	210	2

42. There are 210 learners on catering and hospitality programmes. There are currently 54 advanced modern apprentices, 149 foundation modern apprentices and seven learners on NVQ training. All but three are employed. All modern apprentices study key skills, as an integral part of their vocational training. STL's business development team targets employers and recruits their staff onto programmes, they also actively recruit employees for companies. Employed learners are given a two-hour induction in the workplace. There are 11 assessors and two internal verifiers, who give most of the training and assessment in the workplace. The employers also provide some training, as agreed with the assessor.

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										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	61		29		26		1									
Retained	2		17		6	23	0	0									
Successfully completed	2		6		6	23	0	0									
Still in learning	42		12		0	0	0	0									

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	251		171		128		22									
Retained	63		83		40	31	1	5									
Successfully completed	63		77		40	31	1	5									
Still in learning	143		6		0	0	0	0									



Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		16		18		22									
Retained	1		4		4	22	5	23								
Successfully completed	1		1		4	22	5	23								
Still in learning	4		3		0	0	0	0								

## STRENGTHS

- well-resourced hospitality programme
- good assessment and internal verification
- good achievement of key skills
- good retention rates on modern apprenticeships 2001-02

## WEAKNESSES

- poor modern apprenticeship framework achievements 1998-2000
- ineffective induction process

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better overall planning of training
- more systematic approach to initial assessment

43. The hospitality programme is well resourced. There is an average of 25 learners to each assessor. The assessors and internal verifiers are qualified and have a wide range of occupational expertise and experience. Staff meet regularly and are allocated time to update their own skills and competences. Assessors meet the programme manager monthly to agree short-term training targets. STL has a good range of work placements, which include public houses, restaurants, hotels, coffee bars, work canteens, fast-food outlets, nursing homes and entertainment complexes. A wide variety of hospitality training programmes are taught. The five training centres all have training rooms for easy access to off-the-job training and coaching. Each office has a well-equipped IT suite. Assessors also use laptops for IT training and assessment in the workplace. Good use is made of a local training kitchen for practical training and assessment for learners

who cannot complete NVQ units in the workplace. These facilities are also used for individual learners who need additional coaching. For example, one learner was assessed for the pasta unit in the training kitchen because there were no facilities in the workplace. All learners have access to good course workbooks to support their training.

44. There is good assessment and internal verification. Assessors work flexible hours to carry out assessments when learners are working shifts. Regular evening and weekend visits meet the needs of the individual learners and of workplace staff. All learners are visited at least fortnightly and often weekly. Some learners are visited twice a week. All assessments are carried out in the workplace. Learners' action plans are detailed and give clear guidance to them and the workplace supervisor. Observation records providing evidence for assessment are very detailed and make the most of the opportunity for gathering evidence. For example, the assessment records for the bar NVQ included observations which provided evidence towards five separate units. Learners are given feedback on their progress after each assessment. A progress review with the learner and workplace supervisor is carried out every three months. Supervisors are encouraged to provide witness testimonies and other supplementary evidence. The workplace supervisors, supported by the assessor, teach most of the occupational training, the assessor teaches key skills' training. There is a comprehensive internal verification strategy and process. Internal verification sampling plans, monitoring sheets, and feedback reports are updated regularly and meet lead body requirements. A newly recruited, full-time internal verifier audits the quality of the internal verification process. Internal verifiers sample each other's verified work at random, to ensure standardisation of the NVQ and consistency of feedback to assessors. Training sessions are well planned and a good range of learning methods is encouraged.

45. There has been a good achievement rate in key skills. Approximately 75 per cent of learners who achieved their NVQ in 2001-02, also achieved their key skills within the planned programme duration. Training in key skills is an integral part of training from the start of the programme. The initial action plan produced at induction includes key skills targets. Action plans are developed with key skills in mind, using real work activity towards key skills achievement. The programme manager gives workshops for assessors, to improve their understanding and teaching of key skills. Some learners achieve aspects of their key skills qualification before they complete any NVQ units.

46. There are good retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship for learners who started in 2001. About 80 per cent of learners still in learning are working towards the foundation modern apprenticeship. In 2001-02, 82 per cent completed their modern apprenticeship or are still in learning. Retention rates have improved considerably since 1999. Figures for retention rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship in the same period are satisfactory for 2000-01, improving in 2001-02. Retention rates on the NVQ programme have improved from 22 per cent in 1999-2000 to 62 per cent in 2001-02. The foundation modern framework achievements were low before 2000, but have improved significantly in recent years. They improved by 15 per

cent between 1999-2000 and 2000-01. Similar trends were found on advanced modern apprenticeship and the NVQ programme.

47. The induction for learners includes the completion of a job analysis sheet which identifies appropriate units for learners to work towards and is agreed with workplace supervisors and the learner. The induction also gives an overview of health and safety and equal opportunities policies and agreement on an initial action plan. Training given during the induction is not sufficiently re-emphasised during the programme. Induction is a largely passive experience for learners. Staff or assessors summarise key points of information in the policy handouts, without sufficient discussion or checks to ensure that learners understand. There is too much reliance on learners reading essential information at home. Learners have a poor recollection of the main messages of induction. Most learners remember induction as a form-filling exercise.

48. Links between training and assessment are not co-ordinated. Progress reviews and action plans clearly identify assessment activity, but training is not so clearly defined. Learners' short-term training targets are not clear enough for assessments. STL's well-defined initial assessment procedures are not applied consistently on all occasions. Not all learners with additional needs are identified sufficiently early.

#### Good Practice

*There has been a significant increase in internal progression rates in 2001. Thirty-five per cent of learners on NVQs progressed to foundation modern apprenticeships in 2000. This figure increased to 55 per cent for 2001. There was also an increase in progression from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships from 35 per cent to 40 per cent for the same period.*

## Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy

Grade 1

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	61	1

49. STL offers advanced modern apprenticeships, foundation modern apprenticeships, and NVQs in hairdressing. There are 16 learners on the advanced modern apprenticeship, 10 foundation modern apprentices and 35 learners working towards NVQs. STL operates from four sites, in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Chesterfield. Learners may join the programme at any time during the year. STL recruits learners directly. After interview and initial assessment they are placed in local salons. Learners are also referred through the Connexions service, and directly by employers. A programme manager has overall responsibility and there are four assessors. Of the five staff two are internal verifiers. Training and assessment is carried out in the salons. Assessors visit the salons weekly or fortnightly depending on the support required by learners. Separate background knowledge sessions are taught at all four training centres over a monthly period. Learners are informed of the sessions and can attend on a drop-in basis, if they require additional learning support.

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										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	22		19		18		2									
Retained	12		14		9	50	1	50									
Successfully completed	12		8		9	50	1	50									
Still in learning	8		8		0	0	0	0									

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																	
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	47		33		44		1										
Retained	29		20		16	36	0	0									
Successfully completed	29		19		16	36	0	0									
Still in learning	9		1		0	0	0	0									

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training																	
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	53		7		10		2										
Retained	1		2		7	70	2	100									
Successfully completed	1		1		7	70	0	0									
Still in learning	34		1		0	0	0	0									

## STRENGTHS

- good achievement and retention rates for modern apprentices
- good progression by learners
- very good on- and off-the-job training
- well-taught key skills
- excellent assessor and employer support for learners
- excellent pastoral support for learners with additional needs

## WEAKNESSES

- ineffective use of initial assessment for some learners

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better information about training for new employers

50. There are some outstanding achievement and retention rates for foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices in 2000-01. Fifty-five per cent of advanced modern apprentices, who started in 2001, and 62 per cent of foundation modern apprentices have already achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. Retention rates for these two groups for 2001 are 91 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively. In 2001, there was an overall retention rate for advanced modern apprentices of more than 80 per cent. There has been an increase in learners staying on programme for NVQ training in 2001. Before 2000, many learners who joined with few prior qualifications found it difficult to meet all the requirements of the framework. Inspectors checked verification records and portfolios of evidence to ensure that nearly all learners still in training are capable of achieving the full framework.

51. Learners make good progress towards their qualifications. All learners, many of whom have low levels of prior achievement, are encouraged to recognise and achieve their full potential. In 2000 and 2001, all learners who achieved their NVQ at level 1 progressed to a foundation modern apprenticeship programme. Sixty-two per cent and 81 per cent of those who successfully completed their foundation modern apprenticeships progressed to an advanced modern apprenticeship in 2000 and 2001, respectively. The advanced modern apprentices are encouraged to achieve the financial management unit as one of their three additional optional units. Learners gain additional skills to enhance their careers in the hair and beauty industry. Staff identify appropriate courses. For example, one learner intends to progress to a specialist theatrical make-up course after completing her advanced modern apprenticeship.

52. Training is of a very good quality. All practical training and assessment is carried out in the workplace. Trainers visit learners on level 1 NVQ programmes once a week, and the foundation and advanced modern apprentices once every two weeks. Trainers work with learners in the salons teaching the essential practical skills. They spend time discussing the information contained in learner packs, which have been developed by STL to reinforce the background knowledge and skills required to support the NVQ units. The packs give clear and easy-to-read information that guides learners through the units. Training is carried out individually or in small group sessions, depending on how individuals prefer to work. Assessors check regularly that learners understand the requirements of each unit. Learning and assessment plans are agreed with the learners, and recorded on their action plans. Learners are placed in good salons with a wide range of commercial products and professional equipment. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report.

53. Key skills are taught effectively to individual learners in the workplace. The teaching and learning is all focused on hairdressing and integral to the hairdressing modern apprenticeship framework. The assessors use practical examples of the use of number in the workplace to help learners recognise the value and context of key skills. For example, the application of number focuses on the use of commercial colouring products, which requires a knowledge of fractions and averages. The accompanying assignment encourages the learner to research the use of commercial products in the salons in which they work. They then convert the information to a spreadsheet, to

provide evidence of IT key skills. Learners make good use of the well-equipped IT suites at training centres to develop their computer skills. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

54. Assessors and employers offer excellent support to learners. Assessors visit learners weekly or fortnightly depending on the level of training and support required. Learners can ring their assessors to request extra visits. This enables learners to arrange a model and an assessment opportunity at short notice. Assessors make good use of any additional training sessions provided by employers to carry out assessments. Staff understand the social or welfare problems that may affect learners' progress. Any available information is used sensitively and effectively to support learners in achieving their training goals. Employers are very supportive of learners and most offer technical training in the salon. The self-assessment report identified this strength.

55. Hairdressing has attracted a large number of learners who have not been academically successful at school. More than 80 per cent of current learners have not achieved any GCSEs at grade C or above. More than 90 per cent have not achieved grade C or above in English and mathematics. About one third of learners in hairdressing have additional learning and/or social needs. Learners' additional needs are carefully identified during the first 12 weeks of their training. The excellent pastoral support for learners with additional needs and few prior qualifications has helped increase learner motivation, retention and progression rates. Staff spend extra time with the learners, including weekends, to help resolve personal problems. In many cases, neglected needs have been identified and are being met. For example, one learner with dyslexia, which was not identified at school, has been supported by specially designed learning aids, such as prompt cards and pictures. A counsellor has supported another learner on personal matters and this has enabled the learner to remain in training. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of this group of learners and they are committed to meet these needs. Many staff are trained in basic skills and dyslexia awareness and have subsequently identified learners who might benefit from an in-depth assessment.

56. A few learners are not clear why they are registered on a level 1 NVQ training programme. A few new employers are not sufficiently aware of their potential contribution to assessment activities, such as continuous assessment and witness statements.

#### Good Practice

*A learner lacking in confidence is being mentored and supported by an STL trainer, through weekly discussions and coaching. The additional support has improved her confidence and she now makes eye contact with the trainer and communicates more effectively.*

## Health, social care &amp; public services

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	170	5

57. There are 170 learners in this occupational training area. There are 11 learners on the level 2 NVQ programme, 130 on the foundation modern apprenticeship and 29 on the advanced modern apprenticeship. Training was subcontracted to another training company between 1998 and 2001. All learners are employed in a wide range of residential care homes, nursing homes or residential homes for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Training takes place almost entirely in the workplace. The healthcare training team carries out three-monthly assessments and conducts progress reviews. The team consists of five trainers/assessors. Three are qualified assessors and the other two are working towards assessor awards. There is one qualified internal verifier and one member of staff working towards a qualification. A subcontractor carries out most of the internal verification. All but one of the team has basic qualifications in healthcare practice and have experience of working in healthcare, some of which is very recent. The team is supervised by the quality assurance manager and supported by an experienced external consultant.

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	16		41		36		11		107							
Retained	0		7		2		2	18	10	9						
Successfully completed	0		5		8		2	18	10	9						
Still in learning	11		14		4		0	0	0	0						



Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																	
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	133		134		65		77										
Retained	0		31		12	18	16	21									
Successfully completed	0		2		12	18	16	21									
Still in learning	101		29		0	0	0	0									

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training																	
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	21		14		1		52		49								
Retained	0		3		0	0	11	21	7	14							
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	6	12	4	8							
Still in learning	8		3		0	0	0	0	0	0							

## STRENGTHS

- effective induction and support for new staff

## WEAKNESSES

- very slow response to poor quality provision
- very poor achievement and retention rates
- insufficiently focused training
- insufficient learning resources
- insufficient guidance for learners to make use of learning support

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent assessment practice

58. STL appointed new staff to deal with identified serious weaknesses in healthcare provision in 2001. The enthusiastic new staff team has received a thorough induction.

## STL

There is good support for the new staff, most of whom are inexperienced in training and assessment. An external consultant and the quality assurance manager provide effective guidance on NVQ training and monitoring procedures. New staff work alongside more experienced assessors until they are confident enough to take on their own learners. STL has joined a newly formed South Yorkshire Quality Care Partnership to enable staff to learn by sharing good practice and to have their ideas evaluated by a team. Current interim management arrangements are effective but the team still has no qualified and experienced leader. Of learners who started training in 2001, a higher number are still in training than in previous years. On the foundation modern apprenticeship, the current retention rate is 76 per cent and on the advanced modern apprenticeship it is 69 per cent. In previous years, retention rates have been consistently below 24 per cent on foundation modern apprenticeships and below 47 per cent on advanced modern apprenticeships. Current learners receive fortnightly visits in the workplace and are well motivated. Flexible arrangements are made for visits to accommodate learners' shiftwork. There are improved arrangements for evidence gathering. Many learners now have most of the necessary evidence for several units of the qualification. Direct observation of learners has increased and a more comprehensive approach to assessment has been introduced. Learners' portfolios are well organised and staff have started to monitor learners' progress more thoroughly. Learners' progress reviews have improved, with more focus on targets. Staff have positive relationships with learners and most learners respond by increasing their rate of work.

59. The response to the poor retention and achievement rates between 1997 and the beginning of 2001 was very slow. There was no effective monitoring of the training provision during the period 1998 to 2001, when it was subcontracted. Monitoring visits in 2000 by STL staff and external verifiers did not adequately identify serious weaknesses. Staff carrying out the monitoring were not qualified or experienced in healthcare. External verifier reports for the period do not clarify the problems. When STL took back the training provision in January 2001, weaknesses were acknowledged and changes were planned.

60. There are very poor achievement and retention rates on all programmes. Throughout the past four years, retention rates have been around 20 per cent or less. If all current learners were retained, retention rates would still be below 50 per cent. None of the learners on NVQ programmes have achieved their objectives since 1999. The achievement rate by learners who complete the programmes is more varied. On apprenticeship programmes that are completed, an average of 13.5 per cent of learners achieve NVQs, but do not achieve the full apprenticeship framework. All learners who finish advanced modern apprenticeships and foundation modern apprenticeships, achieve the full apprenticeship framework successfully. However, most of these programmes have very small numbers remaining.

61. There is no overall plan for training, so learners are unable to build up their understanding logically. There is no clear strategy to manage the flexible arrangements for training provision, and learners do not receive enough focused training. This inhibits learners' progress and most have only a basic knowledge of the subject. This is shown

by their responses to questions and in evidence in their portfolios. Visits only concentrate on the observation process. No learning outcomes are defined for training sessions and there are no plans to assess learning. Trainers are beginning to introduce key skills, but there is no overall plan for this. The vocational trainers/assessors have insufficient knowledge and experience in key skills training to make learning effective. Employers are not sufficiently involved in training, assessment and progress reviews.

62. The range of learning resources available to learners is limited. There are a few books for learners to borrow at the Doncaster site, which are rarely used. There are no videos, charts, audio tapes or CD-ROMs. Computers are available at each site, but many learners do not use them. Few workplaces have appropriate learning resources.

63. Learning support is available, but learners require better guidance to make use of it. Three dyslexic learners have no additional help. Many learners are reluctant to attend basic skills sessions. One learner said that she went at the beginning, but hasn't been since because she hasn't been asked. There are many spelling and grammatical errors in portfolios of evidence. No correction or feedback is given to learners.

64. Assessment overall is satisfactory, but varies in quality according to the experience of the assessor. Some assessment reports and activities are not sufficiently clear. The assessment of diverse evidence is slow, as is the identification of performance criteria following assessment.

#### Poor Practice

*In one session, the trainer checked some previously written answers to questions and a reflective account with the learner, and gained further information through verbal questioning. Neither trainer nor learner recognised this as assessment, no judgements were recorded and the learner was unaware of how this contributed towards achievement of the NVQ.*