

INSPECTION REPORT

Action For Employment Limited

15 July, 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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Action for Employment Limited is a national specialist in employment, training and welfare support for unemployed people as well as providing a range of business support services. It provides work-based learning programmes from 65 offices nationwide. In addition, it provides recruitment, training, enterprise and business services, consultancy, advice and guidance services. Its head office is in Sheffield. Although it provides training in 11 areas of learning, only nine areas of learning were inspected as there were too few learners on hairdressing and media and design work-based learning programmes. There are currently 2,640 learners in training.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in all areas is satisfactory with the exception of construction and health and social care. Business administration, management and professional and foundations programmes are good. New Deal clients in both areas of learning are gaining employment and receiving good practical support from Action for Employment. Leadership and management and quality assurance are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is good.

GRADES

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

Land-based provision	3
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	4
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

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Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4
New Deal 18-24	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4
New Deal 18-24	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4
New Deal 18-24	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4
New Deal 18-24	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	2
Life Skills	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3
Programme Centres	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- good job outcomes on most Jobcentre Plus programmes
- exceptional personal and practical support for all learners
- good on-the-job training in work placements
- particularly individualised Life Skills programme
- good internal and external communications

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement in work-based learning for young people
- inaccurate and incomplete individual learning plans
- ineffective progress reviews
- inadequate target-setting

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better links between on- and off-the-job training
- more attention to literacy, numeracy and language learning for all learners

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 21 inspectors spent a total of 144 days at Action for Employment Limited (A4e) in July 2002. They examined 220 portfolios of evidence, interviewed 441 clients and learners, and carried out 232 interviews with Action for Employment staff. They visited 121 work placements and employers, and interviewed 73 workplace supervisors. They examined 331 individual learning plans and made 117 visits to A4e sites. In addition, they studied a range of policies, procedures, minutes of meetings and other records, as well as internal and external verifiers' reports and assessment records, lesson plans and schemes of work. They observed and graded 49 learning sessions. Eighty-nine per cent of all learning sessions observed were graded as satisfactory or better.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	2	3	4	2	0	0	11
Information & communications technology	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	6
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	2	3	1	1	0	0	7
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	1	5	4	9	3	1	0	23
Total	1	10	14	16	7	1	0	49

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. A4e is a company limited by guarantee and is managed locally by a team of regional directors. Each office has a business manager, whose primary responsibility is to provide services for local customers and clients. Regional support teams work with the business managers and comprise regional managers, regional support managers, regional training managers and regional development managers. There are 1000 staff and 2,640 learners. The company has changed significantly over the past 12 months with the introduction of the New Deal 25+ and work-based learning programmes for adults. Previously operating from 30 sites nationwide, the company now has 65 operational sites and 18 other business sites. The company also has two New Deal 18-24 private sector-led areas in South Humber and Exeter and East Devon. A4e covers the six regions of Yorkshire and the Midlands, the Northwest, the Northeast and Scotland, the Southeast, the Southwest and the Eastern region. Each regional director reports to the chief executive officer. The company currently provides more than 350 New Deal and work-based learning contracts on behalf of Jobcentre Plus. It also provides training for six local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). Learners are working towards either national vocational qualifications (NVQs) or short-course training provision. They may be on short-term jobsearch, intensive or motivational soft skills programmes. Training is provided in 11 occupational areas, however hairdressing and media and design were not inspected due to too few learners. The two private sector-led New Deal 18-24 units of delivery were also not included in this inspection.

Work-based learning for young people

3. Work-based learning for young people is unsatisfactory in four areas of learning and satisfactory in two. There are few learners on information and communications technology (ICT) training programmes. There is slow progress and poor achievement on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and NVQ training. In retailing, there is very slow progress on modern apprenticeship programmes. Achievement on NVQ programmes is particularly poor but many learners are still in learning and many gain employment before completing their training. In care, and early years care and education programmes achievement rates are poor and progress is slow. Key skills training is an integral part of training leading to the NVQ. In most other modern apprenticeship programmes, key skills training is not an integral part of training leading to the NVQ. There is insufficient training and poor completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks. In engineering, the programme completion and retention rates are satisfactory for foundation and advanced modern apprentices and for NVQ learners. Learners are well supported in the workplace by employers and assessors and have access to a wide range of suitable equipment and facilities. Individual learning plans are poor. Planned completion dates for units and qualifications are not individually designed and plans are not updated to take account of learners' progress and achievements.

New Deal 18-24

4. New Deal 18-24 is satisfactory or good in all but one area of learning. There are few clients in land-based provision but staff are qualified and resources are satisfactory. In ICT, the number of clients starting has increased rapidly during the past three years, from 36 to 219. More clients are gaining employment and more clients are completing their planned learning. Retention rates are falling. In retailing, retention and achievement rates on all training programmes are good. Many full-time education and training clients and voluntary service overseas clients gain jobs. In engineering, many clients gain relevant employment and retention rates are satisfactory. Clients are well supported in the workplace by employers and assessors. There is a wide range of suitable equipment and facilities. Individual learning plans are poor. For foundation programme clients, training staff work well with Gateway to Work clients. They have a well-structured jobsearch programme, and sufficient staff to offer individual attention. On the best programmes, training sessions are lively and thought provoking. Trainers in Sheffield use competitions, quizzes, prizes and other incentives well. Most Gateway to Work clients gain jobs. The full-time education and training clients' welfare needs are met. Their oral communication improves. ESOL clients become more proficient in spoken English, and have plenty of practise in speaking it. Clients' reading, writing and numeracy skills are generally less well taught. Clients, and their trainers, do not know what they have learned. Many clients have particular barriers to employment, for example poor interpersonal skills or poor attendance. Very few clients complete their planned learning targets. Approximately a third of these clients gain jobs.

Life Skills

5. Life Skills training is satisfactory. A4e provides a wide range of learning opportunities to deal with varied personal needs, such as self-harm, drug dependency, debt and social isolation. Staff provide learners with a range of learning options and encourage them to select the most relevant options. Staff organise activities, such as field trips. They work well to rectify barriers to learning and achievement. The achievements that learners and trainers talk about cannot usually be traced back to targets on training plans and are rarely recorded as achievements. Learning objectives are not sufficiently detailed. Although trainers review learners' progress frequently, they do not refer to specific literacy, numeracy or other learning targets. Learners are not clear what they have achieved in literacy and numeracy. Staff use some creative strategies to encourage learners' writing skills, such as building stories around photographs that learners have taken, and developing personalised dictionaries, but learners are often set inappropriate tasks, such as copying out text that they do not understand. The National Curriculum has not yet been adopted for Life Skills programmes. Staff are not yet qualified to teach literacy and numeracy. Learners gain confidence and are motivated. There are good working relationships between learners and staff. Learners receive a wide range of relevant support to help them deal effectively with personal issues.

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults

6. All New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults training provision is satisfactory or better. There are few clients in land-based provision for New Deal 25+ but A4e tries to ensure that the work placement and resources are available. Some clients who worked in local authority parks and gardens have achieved an NVQ at level 2 and then gained appropriate employment. In ICT, the number of clients has increased from 49 to 133. The number of clients who gain employment has increased to 38 per cent, so far this year. Forty-four per cent of clients are still in learning. There is a decrease in completion of planned learning. Retention rates so far this year are 42 per cent, and 44 per cent of clients are still in learning. In retailing, retention rates and the number of clients who gain jobs are good. In engineering, retention rates and the number of clients who gain employment are good. Clients are well supported in the workplace by employers and assessors and there is a wide range of appropriate equipment and facilities. Individual learning plans are poor. Planned completion dates for units and qualifications are not individualised, and clients on Gateway to Work programmes often work alongside younger clients on the same programme. Clients become motivated to gain employment. The number of clients who gain jobs is generally satisfactory or good. In the Northeast, only about 10 per cent of Gateway to Work clients who are over 25 gain jobs. In the East and the Midlands, more than 50 per cent gain jobs. Clients on basic employability training programmes (BET) are particularly well supported in practical ways. Their appearance, well-being and communication skills improve. About 40 per cent of them gain jobs, even though most faced severe barriers to employment, such as poor literacy and numeracy, when they started training with A4e. However, their learning targets are not sufficiently specific to enable clients and staff to know what progress they have made. Staff often do not relate literacy and numeracy training to employment or even to clients' daily lives.

Programme Centres

7. Training provision for programme centres is good. Staff at programme centres know their clients well, and understand their ambitions. They know that some clients are isolated or depressed. Staff work in teams of two or three. They are congenial and work in clean and well-decorated surroundings, which create a welcoming environment. Staff listen to clients, and encourage and maintain clients' motivation. They advise clients about possible career changes. They have good links with employment agencies, and local employers as well as with Jobcentre Plus staff. They have a good knowledge of the local employment market. Clients have good access to the latest job vacancies, and to the Internet. Clients are encouraged to attend as often as they wish. Staff keep paperwork to a minimum. Simple systems help staff to remember clients' ambitions, for example in Darlington, they write each client's name and ambition on a whiteboard. On average, slightly more than half of clients succeed in obtaining relevant employment. Achievement rates are good. The number of clients who gain jobs varies at different training centres at different times. Staff and managers are not always sure why there is a sharp drop in the number of clients who gain jobs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

8. A4e Work is the division of A4e responsible for Jobcentre Plus and local LSC training provision. A4e Work is managed by a designated board, comprising the chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer, director of support services, the technical director, head of business development and the five regional directors. Most central support functions are based in Sheffield, including human resources, finance and payroll, the central internal verification team and the board of directors. A4e has established regional teams and restructured its head office. It operates in six regions in England, each of which is managed by regional directors, who report to the chief executive officer. Each regional team comprises a director with responsibility for a team of regional managers, a support manager, a training manager and a development manager. The regional directors are responsible, through their regional managers, for business managers at each of the 65 offices in England. Each training centre has a business manager and, dependent on size, has a deputy business manager, recruiters, client support workers, administrators and trainers. The A4e Work board meets each month to discuss its strategic direction and product development. The board has recently re-drafted its strategic goals and business plan, against which staff performance is measured. There are staff induction and appraisal systems. The quality assurance policy and framework are on the company intranet. A4e has a detailed equal opportunities policy.

9. A newly appointed senior manager oversees the company's UK College department, which monitors and internally verifies all accredited training. It has 20 staff responsible for internal verification, assessment, training and monitoring. A4e Work is currently de-centralising its internal verification processes. Assessors have recently been assigned to a regional training manager for support and advice. Two regional internal verifiers have been appointed in the North and East regions. They are piloting systems and processes to pass on to other regions. A4e has recently introduced a quality assurance framework linked to annual self-assessment. An internal systems and audit team audits the administrative procedures in each office. These audits are followed up with formal reports and action plans. Staff complete an annual staff survey, the results of which are published in the organisational bulletin. Feedback from learners, employers and work-placement providers is collected through focus groups, progress reviews and some questionnaires. The processes for collecting feedback vary from office to office.

STRENGTHS

- clear strategic direction
- effective internal and external communications
- frequent and effective staff appraisal system
- good management of targets and business planning
- effective management information system
- particularly effective support for staff and learners
- good implementation of equal opportunities policy and procedures
- good access to training centres for those with mobility difficulties
- well-structured and well-established self-assessment process
- well-planned strategy for internal verification and assessment
- good use of data to improve the performance of learners and staff
- effective use of pilot projects to test new initiatives

WEAKNESSES

- weak management of training and learning
- no literacy, numeracy and language skills strategy
- poor reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality of opportunity
- weak monitoring of learners' records
- unsatisfactory monitoring of training
- insufficient implementation of shared good practice

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better action-planning to include provision of training
- better use of assessors' expertise to judge quality of work placements
- better lesson plans to include assessment strategies
- better use of equal opportunities data
- more diversity of staff in all regions
- better monitoring of subcontractors

10. A4e has a clear strategic direction. All staff are well motivated and committed to the company's aims and objectives. Strategic goals are displayed on posters in each training centre. Staff have received relevant training in these areas and are dedicated to achieving the goals. A4e has effectively managed the rapid expansion and change of the past 15 months. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are encouraged to put forward new ideas to managers. The leadership and management of regional teams are effective. The process management of contract compliance is good.

11. A4e has effective internal and external communications. There are good

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partnerships and links with a wide range of organisations, including local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus staff. In London, an initiative between Jobcentre Plus, the local employment action zone, and a national retailing company has resulted in good success for clients on BET obtaining employment. There are also good links with awarding bodies, the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), and with small, medium and large organisations. Internal communications are good, and A4e has regular meetings at all levels throughout the company. The A4e Work board meets each month to discuss strategic planning and how to achieve the strategic goals. Information from this meeting is sent to the regional teams and local offices for discussion at their weekly meetings. Meetings are minuted and have action points and deadlines. Staff use the intranet to keep up to date with any changes. The intranet also has information on current policies and procedures. All staff receive the weekly bulletin and are kept up to date with other company issues by e-mail.

12. A4e has a frequent and effective staff appraisal system. New staff receive an initial appraisal after three months' employment. All staff are appraised by their line manager after three months. Staff complete a self-assessment questionnaire against set criteria which is discussed with their line manager at the appraisal meeting. Targets are set to meet individual and organisational objectives. The regional training managers have recently analysed staff training needs. A4e organises internal training and development, which covers a range of topics, including equal opportunities, initial assessment and dealing with difficult situations which can occur during training provision in the workplace. Staff can also undertake external training, such as, teacher training qualifications. Two-thirds of training staff have a relevant teacher and/or trainer qualification. There are well-developed training programmes for business and regional managers and an induction programme for new staff.

13. Management of targets and business planning is good. Data are used effectively to monitor the business plan and the number of learners who gain jobs. Business managers produce a three-monthly development plan in negotiation with their regional managers, which include percentage targets to improve retention rates and job outcomes. Some targets are set to improve training and qualification achievements. Financial management is good. Each business manager is set clear financial targets and targets for learners' success in obtaining relevant employment. Progress is monitored each week. There is a clear mechanism for applying for additional spending for resources.

14. There is an effective and sophisticated management information system. Data are used well. For example, monthly graphs are produced of projected and actual job outcomes and new employer links at each training centre. If training centres are under-performing, relevant action is taken. Staff keep detailed regional and local records on learners about their length of time on training programmes, work placements, progress review dates, qualifications and employment. The regional manager and head office staff monitor these reports. Data are checked for accuracy. Staff use the data for continuous improvement. For example, retention rates on New Deal 18-24 options are poor in some regions. In the London region, incentives are currently being piloted to

improve clients' attendance, punctuality and retention rates but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

15. There is particularly effective support for staff and learners. For example, A4e has provided support for learners to improve their job prospects beyond its contractual requirements. The after-care system, which monitors and supports learners when they have completed their training programme, provides additional jobsearch facilities and guidance on starting and maintaining employment. Lists of successful learners are displayed on posters. Learners are also given certificates from A4e. A monthly in-house magazine celebrates staff's and learners' successes. A4e provides a range of incentives for staff to meet business targets. It pays for staff to have driving lessons and to take the theory test. The human resource department effectively supports managers in the regions to resolve staffing issues. A4e has produced a range of support packs for staff to help them develop their skills. For example, a pack is being piloted in one region for staff who are matching learners to jobs. It covers how to approach potential employers and how to place the learners in the most appropriate job.

16. Management of training and learning is weak. Poorly structured off-the-job training was acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report. A senior manager has been appointed recently to oversee the UK College. Vocational training is not planned well. Employers and work-based supervisors on modern apprenticeship programmes are not involved effectively in planning training. Some employers provide good training, but this is not always linked to the NVQ requirements. A4e provides employers with information about their role and responsibilities and the requirements of modern apprenticeship framework. However, many employers do not have a good understanding of the training programmes and are not involved sufficiently in the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Key skills training is introduced towards the end of the training programme. Learners' progress on modern apprenticeship programmes is slow. Literacy, numeracy and language skills training, on BET programmes and New Deal 18-24 full-time education and training, does not cover the development of relevant work skills. There are no schemes of work and individual learners' needs are not met adequately. Learners' progress is not monitored regularly. Most lesson plans do not contain details of assessment methods and training. Learners' training and learning are not recorded clearly. There are inadequate links between initial assessment, individual learning plans and progress reviews. Data are recorded on learners' achievement of qualifications, but these data are not analysed to identify trends and areas for improvement.

17. There is no strategy for literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners' and learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills are assessed when they join the training programme, but there is no strategy to meet these needs. This was acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report. A4e is currently working with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit to rectify this. However, there is currently no detailed action plan to co-ordinate this training. There is no policy for additional literacy, numeracy and language skills support. There are insufficient staff with relevant specialist qualifications. Some staff do not know the new core curriculum and standards. A4e has set up a focus

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group on literacy, numeracy and language skills. There are insufficient arrangements for staff to meet and share good practice.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

18. There is good implementation of the equal opportunities policy and procedures. The equal opportunities policy is detailed. There are clearly written definitions of racial and sexual abuse, disability, bullying and harassment. The policy also states the responsibilities of learners, employers and staff. A wide range of publicity material is produced in several languages to promote the training to under-represented groups. Some learners have helped to produce promotional leaflets in their own language. All training centres have an equal opportunities representative who develops and implements equality of opportunity in the training centre. At some training centres, a quiet room is available. Religious holidays are observed.

19. Equal opportunities representatives develop a detailed equal opportunities action plan. The development plan for equal opportunities development of staff has good, relevant lesson plans. There are also some good new initiatives. For example, one initiative works towards removing identified barriers to training and employment and refer learners to specific relevant support agencies. Staff are able to carry out a benefits calculation for learners. A policy states that all training centres must be situated close to bus routes and jobcentres. A4e also has some small offices in rural towns where transport to the main training centre is difficult. Many ex-learners maintain contact with their training centres. Equal opportunities data are collected and used to influence recruitment policies. A4e is making all premises accessible for people with restricted mobility. There is some good equal opportunities training in some Life Skills training sessions.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

20. The self-assessment process is well structured and well established. Staff receive relevant training and each office submits a yearly self-assessment report in December. All reports are moderated and compared to ensure consistency. All office reports are kept on a database and senior management have access to reports in their areas of responsibility. Development plans are monitored frequently by regional managers alongside the business plans for each office. A national report is prepared centrally, from the local reports. All senior managers are able to contribute to the report and to the development plan. All staff are able to take part in the self-assessment process. Feedback from learners and workplace supervisors, and employers' views are used during the self-assessment process. The board of directors agrees the report before it is published. Regional managers review the company's progress against the development plans in monthly meetings with business managers. The strengths and weaknesses in A4e's self-assessment report mainly matched those given by inspectors.

21. A4e has recently reorganised its internal verification and assessment structure, which is now well planned and managed. Regional internal verifiers and regional assessor co-ordinators now work in the north and east regions accompanied by an administrator who deals with the relevant paperwork. The strategy is well managed by the UK College, to check for consistency, ensure the observation of assessors, and to establish standardisation of practice.

22. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, there is good use of management information to improve learners' and staff's performance. All offices monitor learners' progress using the good database systems. Senior managers use the information technology (IT) system to monitor the number of learners who obtain relevant employment from each office. If an office in one area consistently under-performs, this is picked up centrally and can be dealt with effectively. Staff are set targets, linked to incentive schemes, which are monitored well. A4e has used pilot projects frequently during the past 12 months to test new initiatives. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, many of these have been successful. Feedback from learners and staff is used to develop initiatives before they are implemented. For example, A4e made sure that learners from different locations, backgrounds and with different learning needs were involved in the new intensive activity programme (IAP) routeway planner. Pilots have also been used with the new jobsearch package and a new induction package for staff.

23. There is weak monitoring of learners' records through the new quality assurance framework. Individual learning plans are not updated to take account of learners' progress. Some learners are not given a copy of their individual learning plan. A4e has an initial assessment process for learners' literacy and numeracy levels, as well as their occupational skills and the way in which they prefer to learn. However, this is not used effectively. There is often no link made between the results of the initial assessment and the individual learning plans. Learners often only fill in part of the initial assessment themselves. Learners' progress reviews are inconsistent. Although there are specific guidelines on the frequency of progress reviews, some offices do not follow them. Some

progress reviews are insufficiently detailed and some problems are not dealt with. Targets are general and do not have appropriate deadlines. Comments are not adequately detailed and do not help learners to progress. Progress reviews were acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

24. The quality assurance of training is not satisfactory. Training sessions are sometimes observed by senior staff, but are not recorded routinely. Trainers are not given verbal or written feedback on observations and there is no agreed criteria on which to base judgements. Learners' feedback on training is not systematically collected. Focus groups meet to give feedback on specific initiatives, but learners' and employers' comments on the training are not collected. The internal audit team checks on processes, such as the frequency of progress reviews, and the achievement of targets on individual learning plans, but it does not evaluate their content or whether they link effectively to the learners' experience.

25. A4e has systems to share good practice, and business managers are encouraged to bring good practice examples to their monthly meetings with regional directors. These meetings are minuted and all good practice examples are recorded. However, many business managers do not routinely implement identified good practice or adapt the recorded example to their own learners' needs and to their local setting. There are some exceptional examples of good practice, which are not established as standard practice.

26. Monitoring of the learners' training experience with subcontractors is not effective. Many offices work with subcontractors to provide some training provision. A4e has contracts and service level agreements with the subcontractors. Learners' progress reviews are the main record for feedback on subcontracted training provision. However, as they sometimes contain insufficient information, they are not useful.

Good Practice

There is good investment in staff by the company. For example, potential managers are able to take a training course to develop their managerial and leadership skills. The course is externally accredited. Currently, 24 staff have achieved the qualification and 25 staff are on the training programme.

A4e actively promotes a healthy lifestyle to both its clients and staff. There is a health and happiness department which provides clients and staff with advice on diet and exercise, which includes residential courses.

The company has produced a CD-ROM containing learning plans to cover a wide range of jobsearch activities. These include sessions on dress code, equal opportunities in the workplace and barriers to getting a job. The lesson plans are detailed and are supported in some instances by quizzes to assess clients' knowledge and understanding.

A regional support manager has produced an excellent prompt sheet for recruiters, to use when interviewing clients for job vacancies.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	34	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	12	3

27. There are 46 clients on training programmes in land-based provision, which is carried out in training centres, situated in the Southeast, Gloucestershire and the Northeast. Thirty-four New Deal 18-24 clients are on the environment task force, voluntary sector and full-time education and training options. The length of the training programme depends on the option. Twelve adults are on a training programme for at least 52 weeks, which provides long-term training. All clients work towards up to four units of NVQs at level 1 in amenity horticulture or animal care. They attend off-the-job training for jobsearch and other training one day each week and spend the other four days on work placement. All clients are referred from jobcentres. Training is carried out at the work placement, which include allotments, and outdoor pursuits and animal rescue centres. There are workbooks for background knowledge for amenity horticulture. Individual or small group training sessions are carried out at the training centres.

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

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			43		26					
Retained*			10	23	12	46				
Planned learning completed			16	37	22	85				
Gained job			14	33	17	65				
Still in training			12	28	0	0				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			131		72		62			
Retained*			16	12	18	25	29	47		
Planned learning completed			58	44	48	67	38	61		
Gained job			53	40	45	62	34	55		
Still in training			34	26	0	0	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good job entry rates
- good use of a wide variety of projects and work placements

WEAKNESSES

- poor planning of training
- no assessment or feedback of clients' work in amenity horticulture

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- results of project training to be cross-referenced to the NVQ
- correct documents to be used when carrying out reviews and assessments
- all available information on clients to be used in progress reviews

28. Job entry rates are good. The proportion of clients on New Deal 18-24 gaining jobs has increased from 54 per cent in 1999-2000, to 62 per cent in 2000-01. In the current year, 40 per cent of these clients have gained jobs and 26 per cent are still in learning. The proportion of clients gaining jobs on New Deal 25+ was 65 per cent for 2000-01, and is currently 33 per cent for 2001-02 with 28 per cent of these clients still in learning.

29. A4e makes good use of a wide variety of projects and work placements. Clients produce vegetables and flowers on allotments and have established an organic garden at an Outward Bound centre. One client with learning difficulties is working in a riding school carrying out basic animal care duties. The organisation provides a good range of

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hand tools for practical skills development. Health and safety practice is monitored well and reinforced throughout the training. Workplace supervisors help clients work well together on work placements. On one project there is good practice and guidance on how to work with others. All training is recorded daily and shows what has taken place and who has attended. These activities are not cross-referenced to the NVQ requirements. Insufficient evidence is provided from clients' workplace training.

30. Training is poorly planned. There are insufficient records of the planning of training, particularly on individual learning plans. Some assessment is carried out at the same time as training. In one training centre in Gloucestershire, A4e has not identified some clients' barriers to employment or their literacy and numeracy needs. More than 40 per cent of clients return to the environment task force option rather than gain jobs. There is poor use of lesson plans. Some individual training is poorly structured. One training centre has experienced staff and a training room with good resources. Where workbooks are used to develop learners' knowledge and understanding in amenity horticulture, there is no record of assessment or feedback to clients. Any identified numeracy and literacy needs are not remedied. Workbooks are not assessed. Some staff do not understand which documents to use for progress reviews. Recorded information is poorly detailed. Some progress reviews are not thorough and do not cover relevant issues, such as absenteeism.

Poor Practice

A client who has achieved Scottish higher qualifications (equivalent to the general certificate of education, advanced level) is working towards an NVQ at level 1.

Construction**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	71	4
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	30	3

31. There are 101 clients and one other learner on construction training programmes. Seventy-one New Deal 18-24 clients are on the voluntary sector, environment task force or full-time education and training options. There are 30 New Deal 25+ clients on the longer occupational training (LOT) programmes. All clients are working towards NVQs at level 1, an intermediate construction certificate, or an intermediate construction certificate, in painting and decorating, bricklaying, carpentry and joinery or general construction. Most clients, who are on a 26-week training programme, are working towards five NVQ units in construction. Clients on 13-week training programmes are working towards three NVQ units. All clients and learners complete an initial assessment, which is followed by an induction. All clients and learners complete an individual learning plan. Some clients receive all of their training and work experience off the job, through community projects supervised by A4e, or through subcontractors. Others attend local colleges on day release. The rest are on work placements and receive all their vocational training at work. A4e trainers and assessors visit them in the workplace at least every four weeks. The work placements are in a range of organisations, such as small builders, larger construction companies, local authority's building departments and charitable organisations. All clients carry out at least half a day's jobsearch each week.

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

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts			92		45				
Retained*			40	43	22	49				
Planned learning completed			29	32	9	20				
Gained job			27	29	15	33				
Still in training			29	32	1	2				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

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New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			276		413		370			
Retained*			70	25	190	46	187	51		
Planned learning completed			27	10	59	14	78	21		
Gained job			72	26	169	41	151	41		
Still in training			69	25	2	0	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good achievement by clients of additional qualifications
- good practical and personal support for clients
- good off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- inaccurate and incomplete individual learning plans
- slow progress of clients on work placements
- inadequate progress reviews
- poor retention rates

32. There is good achievement of additional qualifications by clients. Training staff recommend to clients specific additional qualifications to improve their employability. Clients achieve certificates in environmental health, first aid, lift truck, use of power tools, and an examination-based qualification in information technology. Many jobsearch modules are promoted and accredited as separate units, such as interview techniques, coping with setbacks, and the use of the Internet.

33. There is good practical and personal support for clients. Occupational trainers provide good support for clients to help them achieve their qualifications. Jobsearch trainers provide a wide range of training in Life Skills as well as employability skills. Staff take clients to interviews and help some clients with presentation skills. Notices about supplying interview clothes are displayed next to other relevant information. Specially trained staff in each office use a database of self-help organisations to provide other relevant help for clients.

34. Off-the-job training is good. Well-qualified and well-experienced trainers use good teaching techniques. Most training is practical, with relevant talks given on specific topics. Health and safety is emphasised well at all times. Trainers help clients collect evidence for assessment. Clients develop many new skills and are able to practise and repeat work if necessary. Clients can start the training programme at any time. Clients who have been on the training programme for some time act as mentors for new clients. Staff, customers and clients discuss and negotiate deadlines for work and methods of working. Clients are fully involved in their training programme from planning to completion.

35. Individual learning plans are inaccurate and incomplete. Many individual learning plans do not identify which units clients are working towards. Target achievement dates are often not set for each unit. The date for the end of the training programme is given as the target date. Targets on individual learning plans are not systematically updated according to learners' progress. Some clients do not understand which qualification they are working towards.

36. Clients make slow progress on work placements. When clients start with A4e, they have an induction and complete an individual learning plan before their occupational trainer/assessor is available. When clients start their training programme, they do not know what qualifications they are working towards and are not given any relevant training materials. Some clients are on work placement for four weeks before they start their training. Clients are visited by an assessor at least every four weeks, and sometimes, fortnightly. Clients are given tasks to complete, but insufficient information is given to workplace supervisors for them to provide appropriate training. One trainer is a qualified assessor, but none of the trainers is involved in assessment. There is insufficient workplace assessment. Clients on work placements make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. Portfolios of evidence are posted to a verifier based in Sheffield who does most of the verification. Portfolios of evidence are satisfactory, but they do not contain sufficient work-based evidence.

37. Progress reviews are inadequate. There is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications. Target-setting is inadequate and targets are not systematically followed up. Some progress reviews are not carried out and some are done by staff who are not occupationally competent. The information in the progress reviews does not adequately record the training that takes place. In some regions, clients have four different progress reviews, comprising the trainers' review, monitors' review, jobsearch review, and the recruiters' review. Clients and managers do not understand this system.

38. Retention rates are poor. Fifty-five per cent of clients leave the training programme early. Although New Deal 18-24 has the greatest proportion of clients, the retention rate is very poor. The New Deal 25+ training programme started in 2000-01 but only 33 per cent of these clients have gained jobs.

Poor Practice

One client was on work placement for five weeks before doing any work relevant to his individual learning plan. A scheduled assessment and training visit was cancelled.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	63	3
New Deal 18-24	20	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	18	3

39. There are 63 learners and 38 clients on work-based learning programmes for young people, New Deal 18-24, and New Deal 25+ and work-based learning programmes for adults, in engineering, technology and manufacturing. There are 10 advanced modern apprentices, 21 foundation modern apprentices, and 32 learners on NVQ training programmes. All advanced and foundation modern apprentices are employed. Most learners are in the Northern and Midlands offices. All learners, except those in A4e's training centre in South Humber, are in work placements. Most learners are working towards NVQs in performing manufacturing operations, and a few are working towards engineering NVQs and other motor vehicle qualifications. All learners are employed. All learners are recruited through Jobcentre Plus, Connexions or directly by A4e. All learners complete an initial basic and key skills assessment, and an interview, during which any previous experience is identified. Additional learning and/or social needs are identified and recorded on individual learning plans. Induction is carried out on the job and includes health and safety and equal opportunities training. Off-the-job training for advanced modern apprentices is carried out at a local college and comprises the background knowledge elements of the qualifications and key skills training. Employers provide a wide range of tasks for learners. Details of NVQ and key skills programme requirements are given to all employers. Assessors carry out progress reviews in the workplace.

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																
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	10																
Retained*	0																
Successfully completed	0																
Still in learning	10																

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		4		2											
Retained*	6		2		1	50										
Successfully completed	0		0		1	50										
Still in learning	20		1		0	0										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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	39		33		4		2									
Retained*	7		21		3	75	2	100								
Successfully completed	2		4		2	50	0	0								
Still in learning	25		7		0	0	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					58		32					
Retained*					21	36	23	72				
Planned learning completed					13	22	13	41				
Gained job					20	34	15	47				
Still in training					18	31	0	0				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			44		45		6			
Retained*			16	36	28	62	2	33		
Planned learning completed			1	2	13	29	1	17		
Gained job			16	36	21	47	2	33		
Still in training			16	36	4	9	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good job entry rates for Jobcentre Plus clients
- particularly good workplace support for learners
- good workplace resources

WEAKNESSES

- poor individual learning plans
- insufficient understanding by employers of work-based learning programmes for young people

40. Job entry rates are good for Jobcentre Plus clients. Thirty-three per cent of those clients who started New Deal 18-24 training programmes in 1999-2000 gained jobs, rising to 47 per cent in 2000-01. In 2001-02, 36 per cent of these clients have currently gained jobs. Of those clients who started New Deal 25+ training programmes in 2000-01, 47 per cent have gained jobs. In 2001-02, 34 per cent of these clients have currently gained jobs.

41. There is particularly good support for learners. Assessors visit learners at work every two weeks, or more often if required. They provide effective guidance and individual support to help learners carry out relevant NVQ tasks and collect evidence. Visits help maintain learners' motivation and improve their self-confidence. Effective reviews of portfolios and assignments help learners make good progress. There is good pastoral support. For example, one learner left the NVQ training programme for personal reasons. The assessor discussed the issues with the learner and helped him to stay on the training programme and achieve the qualification. Learners are supported well by employers who provide a good range of relevant training.

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42. There are good resources in the workplace. Learners have access to good facilities and up-to-date equipment. They experience a range of work which meets the NVQ requirements in work-based learning for young people and Jobcentre Plus programmes.

43. Individual learning plans are poor. All learners have one target date for the completion of their NVQ. Modern apprentices' individual learning plans have the same target date for completion of NVQ units, key skills and basic skills. Advanced modern apprentices' individual learning plans do not record background knowledge courses at a local college, which is part of the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Progress is reviewed frequently, but targets on the individual learning plans are not kept up to date. There is no record of completed units. Completion dates are not updated in response to changes in training programmes or progress. Most learners on work-based learning programmes for young people and Jobcentre Plus programmes do not fully understand the content and duration of their training programme. They do not understand what they have to do to achieve their NVQ. The training programme is managed closely by the assessor. Learners do not manage their own learning or take responsibility for their training programme.

44. Most employers do not have a clear understanding of the work-based learning programmes for young people. Although employers read and sign each progress review, the discussion relates only to the current training planned by the assessor. Employers do not receive a copy of the progress review. Learners' copies are kept in their portfolio, which most learners keep at home. Employers do not discuss and plan how learners can meet their NVQ requirements if the assessor is not present.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	99	4
New Deal 18-24	177	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	178	2

45. There are 178 clients on New Deal 25+ and work-based learning programmes for adults. Most of these clients are on LOT and the self-employment route and some are working towards either units from the administration NVQ at level 2, or the full qualification. There are 177 clients on New Deal 18-24 options either working towards units or a full NVQ in computer literacy and information technology or integrated business technology at NVQ level 2. There are 30 advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 3 and key skills, and 56 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 and key skills. There are also nine NVQ learners. All learners have an interview and initial assessment to identify the most suitable training programme, any additional support or training required, and their career aims. All work placements are checked for suitability and safety, and range from local small businesses and local authorities, to large retailing organisations, distribution chains, and charities. Learners are visited at work by A4e staff who carry out assessments and progress reviews. Some learners attend the training centres once a week, others gain new skills before going on work placement. All have a minimum of half a day's jobsearch training each week.

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	17		20		4		3									
Retained*	1		4	20	1	25	3	100									
Successfully completed	0		1	5	0	0	1	33									
Still in learning	16		12	60	2	50	0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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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		37		12		1									
Retained*	6		9	24	1	8	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		2	5	0	0	0	0								
Still in learning	33		21	57	2	17	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	15		15													
Retained*	1		2	13												
Successfully completed	1		2	13												
Still in learning	9		4	27												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					679		129					
Retained*					224	33	102	79				
Planned learning completed					106	16	44	34				
Gained job					187	28	89	69				
Still in training			178	100	178	26	0	0				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			472		431		319		4	
Retained*			142	30	251	58	219	69	2	50
Planned learning completed			32	7	91	21	120	38	2	50
Gained job			131	28	240	56	207	65	1	25
Still in training			176	37	1	0	0	0	0	0

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good retention rates
- good job-entry rates
- good initial interviews
- effective personal skills training
- good work placements
- well-organised training for self-employed route clients

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates on work-based learning programmes for young people
- inadequate progress reviews
- insufficient resources and learning materials
- inadequate key skills training and assessment

46. Retention rates across all the training programmes are good for the year 2000-01. Of those clients on New Deal 25+ training programmes, 79 per cent completed their training. In 2000-01, 58 per cent of clients completed their planned learning on the 18-24 New Deal programmes. Of those clients who started on New Deal 25+ and New Deal 18-24 in 2000-01, 69 per cent and 56 per cent respectively, gained jobs.

47. Initial interviews are good, and accurately identify learners' existing skills and experience, ability and career aims. Achievable targets and qualifications are identified. Some career and qualification guidance is given at the interview. Learners are matched to appropriate work placements. Any additional personal needs are also identified during this interview.

48. There is a wide range of well-structured training in personal skills. Learners are helped to improve their personal skills. A4e also provides training in interview techniques, time management, motivation, confidence-building and personal presentation. Good jobsearch training is provided to all learners and to non-employed learners on work-based learning programmes for young people. A4e provides help, support and preparation for going into work placements.

49. Work placements are good and are monitored for health and safety compliance every eight weeks. Learners are matched to appropriate work placements. Work placements include small manufacturers, the service industry, design and high tech employers, multinationals and large organisations, and charities. Some work placements provide specific training, such as a three-day training course on insurance quotes. A4e has a policy of promoting employment during and/or at the end of training. Those employers who have had two learners but have not offered them full-time jobs, are not used again as work-placement providers, unless it is a sheltered work placement.

50. Training is well-organised for clients on the self-employment route. Before starting this option, clients discuss their business idea and possible funding sources with their trainers. Clients can attend a four-week training programme, which includes intensive group training on business planning, marketing, bookkeeping and law. The group sessions are particularly well planned and taught in the company's spacious training suites. Experienced trainers use useful visual aids during training. There are particularly well-presented handouts. Learners are well involved in the training sessions and benefit from the experience and expertise of other members of the group. Outside speakers include an Inland Revenue officer and a local bank manager. Former learners now running their own businesses are often invited to talk to the group. After the training, learners who decide to proceed, prepare a business plan with guidance and coaching from their trainers. They are then ready to start test trading, supported by regular coaching and mentoring from their trainers. Trainers provide relevant support for learners for up to two years after they have finished their training.

51. Achievement rates are poor on work-based learning programmes for young people. Only 5 per cent of advanced and foundation modern apprentices completed their full apprenticeship frameworks in 2000-01. The achievement rate for learners on NVQ training programmes is 13 per cent. More than 25 per cent of learners are still on their training programme after a minimum of 15 months.

52. Progress reviews are inadequate. Target dates are not systematically set for the completion of individual NVQ units or tasks. The specified unit dates often have unrealistic or undemanding targets and do not show if additional training has been carried out or who provided it. Information on learning needs or lack of progress is not always passed on to the appropriate person. Some learners are visited every fortnight but others have to wait several weeks for their progress reviews. For example, nothing was done when learners reported they had not been assessed for up to five months while an assessor was off sick. There is insufficient or no employers' involvement in

progress reviews, and many are not signed by them. Some progress reviews do contain specific relevant information.

53. There are insufficient resources across the training centres, specifically textbooks, reference books and other learning support material. There is insufficient planned or structured training for vocational qualifications provided in training centres. Learners are often given a sheet of questions to answer to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the NVQ units. No other learning support material is available. Some training centres which provide Jobsearch do not have sufficient computers.

54. Key skills training and assessment is inadequate for advanced modern apprentices. Most key skills training comprises completing past test papers. There are insufficient other relevant learning support materials. Some learners do not understand key skills training and assessment, with some only starting to collect relevant evidence at the end of their training programme. A4e has started running key skills workshops to rectify this weakness.

Information & communications technology**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	17	3
New Deal 18-24	76	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	59	3

55. There are four advanced, four foundation modern apprentices and nine NVQ learners working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in IT. All clients on the New Deal 18-24 are working towards NVQ units at level 2. Sixty-two are working towards NVQ units using IT, three are working towards units in website design, and 11 are working towards a general ICT qualification. On New Deal 25+, 55 clients are working towards units on using IT NVQ at level 2, three are taking the use of the Internet and one is taking the general ICT qualification. Clients can also take computer literacy and information technology and integrated business technology NVQ at level 2. Applicants for New Deal are referred by their personal adviser and are interviewed by recruitment staff. They take the basic skills initial assessment paper and complete an individual learning plan. There is a five-day induction programme comprising a welcome day, an introduction to jobsearch and using the Internet and how to write a curriculum vitae. Learner's progress reviews are carried out at least every four weeks. Most learners receive off-the-job training in the training provider's computer suites. The advanced and foundation modern apprentices and the NVQ learners receive their off-the-job training on their employers' premises during regular assessor visits. Most assessment is carried out in the training suites. NVQ assessment is carried out on the employers' premises.

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													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	3		4												
Retained*	0		1	25												
Successfully completed	0		1	25												
Still in learning	2		2	50												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5		4		2											
Retained*	0		2	50	2	100											
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0											
Still in learning	4		0	0	0	0											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	8		5													
Retained*	1		2	40													
Successfully completed	1		0	0													
Still in learning	8		1	20													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts					133		49				
Retained*					56	42	24	49				
Planned learning completed					20	15	13	27				
Gained job					51	38	18	37				
Still in training			76	100	58	44	1	2				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

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New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			219		176		36			
Retained*			87	40	102	58	26	72		
Planned learning completed			33	15	37	21	7	19		
Gained job			78	36	95	54	19	53		
Still in training			76	35	0	0	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good range of assignments
- good pastoral and practical support for clients and learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor progress reviews
- insufficient work placements

56. Learners complete a good range of assignments. They identify topics, research, analyse and evaluate data and reach conclusions. For example, they plan a business from identifying initial sources of finance, drawing a floor plan of the premises, selecting and pricing fixtures, fittings and stock, budgeting for staff, creating a logo and providing solutions to a range of potential problems. Other examples include writing an eight-page article, designing and creating stationary, compliment slips and business card logos and letterheads and creating a website that links animal rescue centres and bird sanctuaries. Portfolios of evidence are well presented and contain a good range of evidence. Progress is monitored and recorded in detail and is kept up-to-date. One training centre has a timetable for computer use. Computer suites are well equipped with up-to-date computers and a range of software packages. IT trainers are qualified and experienced and provide good individual and group training and support.

57. There is good pastoral and practical support for learners. A member of staff is appointed in each office, to help and support learners. Learners can have an individual meeting with this staff member to discuss relevant issues. The service is mentioned at their recruitment interview and reinforced at induction. Learners can be referred to an outside support agency. All staff give frequent support and constructive advice during work-placement visits. There is a weekly learners' forum, with a representative from

each training programme, where they discuss issues and topics about their training. Minutes are given to the business manager for comment and action, if appropriate. One client, identified as dyslexic, is receiving additional help with her numeracy skills. One training centre has printed course notes and handouts on a range of different-coloured paper. A4e provides an aftercare service to help learners who leave without finding a job. Learners are contacted when a suitable vacancy comes up and are invited to the office for help in applying for the job.

58. Progress reviews are poor and review sheets contain insufficient objective comments about achievements and their progress. Comments are too vague and do not help learners to improve. Insufficient targets are set and there are no timescales. Assessors do not check set targets in progress reviews. There is insufficient reference to personal development, such as how learners interact with their workplace supervisors, managers and colleagues. Some assessors do not know how off-the-job training is progressing. Learners are not asked about the work they carry out, or their understanding of equal opportunities.

59. There are insufficient work placements. Staff have devised a project where learners work with charities to develop a website and create literature, but it is not the same as a work placement. Many learners do not know what type of working conditions they will experience when they start work. Work placements, however, are good and provide a range of work experiences. A4e provides a wide range of IT qualifications, but some staff are not qualified to teach the higher qualifications. When learners ask for a specific qualification that is not being provided, staff try to identify an external supplier. Learners can take additional qualifications such as health and safety and first aid.

Good Practice

One client who was made redundant from a company where he used computers on a regular basis, was placed with an Internet company. A4e is paying for relevant training.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	191	4
New Deal 18-24	235	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	102	3

60. One hundred and ninety-one learners are on work-based learning programmes for young people. Two hundred and thirty-five clients are on New Deal 18-24 on voluntary sector, environment task force, full-time education and training or employment options. One hundred and two clients are on work-based learning for adults, in LOT and New Deal 25+. Qualifications include retailing, warehousing and customer service NVQs at levels 1, 2 or 3, and lift truck certificates. Learners can work towards some units of the NVQ, or a full qualification. Modern apprenticeship programmes also include the relevant key skills training and assessment. All learners are on work placement with a commercial retailing employer or with voluntary organisations. All learners are employed. All learners have an initial assessment followed by an induction, which is usually carried out in the workplace. The regional assessors carry out all assessments in the workplace. All occupational training is carried out on the job by employers. New Deal and work-based learning for adult learners, are visited weekly for monitoring progress reviews and assessments. Learners are visited every two to four weeks. All learners have at least half a day's jobsearch training each week.

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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	32		28		11											
Retained*	0		12		4												
Successfully completed	0		1		1												
Still in learning	29		11		7												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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	102		68		8		1									
Retained*	0		20		4		1	100								
Successfully completed	1		3		1		0	0								
Still in learning	77		34		4		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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	24		37		4		1									
Retained*	6		19		3		0	0								
Successfully completed	0		4		0		0	0								
Still in learning	17		10		1		1	100								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					368		157					
Retained*					159	43	115	73				
Planned learning completed					98	27	46	29				
Gained job					150	41	87	55				
Still in training					102	28	0	0				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

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New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			792		656		413		10	
Retained*			302	38	337	51	281	68	9	90
Planned learning completed			302	38	126	19	174	42	7	70
Gained job			299	38	263	40	265	64	7	70
Still in training			232	29	3	0	0	0	0	0

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good achievement of lift truck qualifications
- good retention and achievement rates on the New Deal 18-24 voluntary sector and full-time education and training options and work-based learning for adults
- particularly effective development of learners' personal, practical and job skills
- excellent pastoral support
- good resources

WEAKNESSES

- particularly slow progress on modern apprenticeship training programmes
- ineffective progress reviews
- poorly planned background knowledge and key skills training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotion of modern apprenticeship frameworks' requirements to employers and learners
- more involvement of employers in planning training
- clearer links between retailing employers' training programmes and NVQ assessments

61. There is good achievement of lift truck qualifications. Of the 155 learners who have started lift truck training since April 2002, 149 have achieved their qualification. This

strength was acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

62. Retention and achievement rates are good on the New Deal voluntary sector and full-time education and training options, and work-based learning programmes for adults. On the environment task force, 47 per cent of clients gained jobs in 1999-2000, 36 per cent gained jobs in 2001-02 and 33 per cent of the current intake have already gained jobs, with 25 per cent of clients still in learning. During the same three years, retention rates for full-time education and training clients were 68 per cent, 52 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. For the same period, 60 per cent, 50 per cent and 35 per cent gained jobs, with 31 per cent of clients still in learning. For the same three years on the voluntary sector option, retention rates have been consistently good, at 72 per cent, 54 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively, with 26 per cent of clients still in learning. On work-based learning for adults, the proportion of clients who found jobs was high, at 73 per cent and 55 per cent in 2000-01. In 2001-02, 43 per cent of clients stayed on the training programme or gained jobs. Forty-one per cent of clients gained jobs and 28 per cent are still in learning. In addition, 60 clients on the voluntary sector option in charity shops have achieved an NVQ during their training.

63. Learners' personal, practical and job skills are well developed in group training sessions. Jobsearch training is good. Training sessions are well matched to learners' ambitions and learners work well together. There are some good approaches to learning and development through planned visits. Learners gain confidence and develop their skills through team activities, role play and discussion. Many offices encourage clients to try eight-week work trials, which are particularly effective in developing their commercial skills. Clients who are not ready to take on a job are placed in charity shops, where they can still develop their work skills. There is effective individual coaching in jobsearch and in the workplace. Clients' success is celebrated at each training centre, with photographs and stories displayed on the walls.

64. Learners are provided with excellent practical and pastoral support. Fresh fruit, drinks and snacks are provided in every office. Learners are given clear and realistic advice at the start of training. Staff visit learners each week in their first month and monthly thereafter. Learners with additional social needs work in charity shops with supportive employers. Staff deal with learners' issues but are firm about poor attendance and timekeeping. Learners are referred to appropriate support agencies, if necessary. A4e has paid learners' rent arrears, bought interview clothes, arranged crisis loans and booked dental appointments for learners. A4e visits learners once they have started their job and encourages them to continue their NVQ assessments, which are paid for. Resources in all training centres are excellent. Offices are well decorated and rooms are spacious and well laid out. There are canteens and rooms where learners can make telephone calls in private. Most learners have good access to computers with the Internet. Occasionally learners have difficulty using the computer as sessions are not pre-booked.

65. Learners' progress on most NVQ training programmes is slow and it is particularly slow for modern apprentices. This weakness was partly acknowledged in the self-

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assessment report. Since 1998, only two learners have achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. Eighteen of the current 39 learners are still in learning. Thirty-two advanced modern apprentices started in 2001, but none has achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. More than 50 per cent of foundation modern apprentices who started since 1998 are still in training. Many retained learners gain jobs and do not continue their modern apprenticeships. Some assessment practices are weak. Assessors work on several NVQ units at once and do not complete the targets so that they can sign off whole units. Some learners have been delayed starting their NVQs. One customer service learner waited seven months and a retailing learner only started after three months' wait.

66. Progress reviews are ineffective. They are not used to measure progress towards specific targets. All individual learning plans have the same target date for the completion of the whole qualification. There are no short-term targets for individual units. Progress reviews are not sufficiently detailed and comments do not provide good feedback. Assessors do not update individual learning plans to take account of progress. There is no recording of planned training. The same document is used for assessment and progress reviews. Learners and employers have a poor understanding of learners' overall progress. Employers have little or no involvement in progress reviews and many employers do not sign the review sheets.

67. Background knowledge and key skills training is poorly planned and taught. Training for voluntary sector clients is mainly jobsearch, with insufficient occupationally specific training to support the NVQ. Learners mainly use workbooks or learning packs. Some learners have difficulty with written questions and some of the support material is not written clearly. Assessors do not always have enough time in the workplace to explain the jargon and to check learners' knowledge and understanding. There is no structured off-the-job key skills training although some regional workshops have recently been carried out.

68. Employers and learners do not understand the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. A4e promotes the NVQ rather than the framework. The links between employers' on-the-job training and NVQ assessment are not sufficiently clear. Many learners have had good customer services, retailing or warehouse training which is not recorded on their individual learning plans or in their progress reviews.

Good Practice

On the noticeboards in several training centres, feedback and comments on training sessions are displayed to motivate clients.

Poor Practice

Some learners are given past key skills exam papers for practice. They take tests before they have had training in either background knowledge or exam techniques.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	4
New Deal 18-24	16	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	12	3

69. There are 28 clients and 15 learners on hospitality, sports and recreation training programmes. Sixteen clients are on the New Deal 18-24, taking the voluntary sector, environment task force, employment or full-time education and training options. They are working on units towards an NVQ at level 1 or 2 in basic food hygiene, or basic health and safety. The 12 New Deal 25+ clients are taking the LOT or IAP training programmes and are working towards units of the same qualifications as the New Deal 18-24 clients. Sixteen learners are on advanced modern apprenticeships, foundation modern apprenticeships and other NVQ training programmes. All learners are employed and are working towards qualifications in bar service, quick service, food preparation and cooking at NVQ level 2 and kitchen supervision at NVQ level 3. All learners complete an initial assessment, followed by an induction in the workplace or in the training centres. All learners also fill in an individual learning plan. All learners have all their training and assessment in the workplace. Learners have all their training and work experience off the job, in training centres or work placements. Employers and work placements include community centres, public houses, sports centres, hotels and restaurants. A4e visits learners at least every four weeks. All learners have at least half a day's jobsearch training a week

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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		1		1											
Retained*	1		0	0	0	0											
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0											
Still in learning	2		0	0	0	0											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	14		3		2											
Retained*	4		1	33	1												
Successfully completed	0		0	0	1												
Still in learning	10		0	0	1												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training	2000-01		1999-2000														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	8		2													
Retained*	6		1														
Successfully completed	2		0														
Still in learning	2		1														

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts					36		20				
Retained*					14	39	10	50				
Planned learning completed					10	28	4	20				
Gained job					14	39	7	35				
Still in training					11	31	1	5				

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			45		18		5			
Retained*			10	22	11	61	3	60		
Planned learning completed			0	0	3	17	1	20		
Gained job			9	20	9	50	2	40		
Still in training			15	33	1	6	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good job entry rates by clients
- good frequent workplace assessment
- thorough induction for clients

WEAKNESSES

- poor individual learning plans on work-based learning programmes for young people
- poor implementation of key skills training and assessment
- some inadequate initial assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better range of evidence for learners working towards NVQs at level 2
- more involvement by employers in planning training

70. The proportion of learners who gain jobs has improved during the past three years. Of those clients who started New Deal 18-24 training programmes in 1999-2000, 2000-01, and 2001-02, 40 per cent, 50 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, have gained jobs with 33 per cent of clients still in learning. Of those clients who started New Deal 25+ training programmes in 2000-01 and 2001-02, 35 per cent and 39 per cent respectively, gained jobs with 31 per cent still in learning.

71. Assessment practices are good. Learners are involved in the planning for assessment and have a good understanding of the process. Assessors carry out

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thorough and well-recorded observations in the workplace. There is good use of supplementary questions to ensure learners' understanding and competence. Learners receive comprehensive, detailed verbal and written feedback on their assessments. Assessors demonstrate good practice by observing learner carrying out specific tasks that generate evidence for several elements of their NVQ. Assessors visit learner at least every four weeks, and sometimes every two weeks. Visits include observation in the workplace and learners' progress reviews. Progress reviews are comprehensive and individual targets are set. Learner receive copies of their progress review sheets. Employers are not always involved in progress reviews. They also receive good support from assessors, ranging from background knowledge, to help with personal issues.

72. The induction programme is effective for clients. All clients attend an induction on the first day of their training programme. There is a planned programme of training, including quizzes, exercises and discussions. Learners have a clear overview of the training programme, a good introductory pack, a comprehensive training guide and details of how to contact staff. The training programme, disciplinary and grievance procedures, health and safety, equal opportunities and learners' entitlements are all explained well. An induction checklist ensures that learners receive all the relevant documents and information. Most learners understand the requirements of their training programme and the training and support arrangements.

73. Individual learning plans are poor. They do not contain sufficient relevant detail. Many do not contain the full modern apprenticeship framework requirements, and the basic food hygiene qualification is not systematically recorded on the individual learning plan. NVQ unit achievement dates are the same as the end of funding date. Unit achievement is rarely recorded on the individual learning plan. Targets on individual learning plans are not updated to record progress. Learners, clients and employers are not always given copies of individual learning plans. Targets on individual learning plans are not updated after progress reviews. Assessors are not involved in drawing up individual learning plans with learner. Some assessors have to change incorrect details on individual learning plans. Assessors only found this out up to four months after the learners had started their training programmes.

74. Key skills training and assessment is poorly implemented. Most learners and employers have insufficient knowledge of key skills training and assessment. Learners and assessors do not see key skills training and assessment as an integral part of the full modern apprenticeship framework. They do not collect sufficient evidence of their key skills' attainment through their vocational work. They do not always understand which key skills are part of their framework. Individual learning plans do not record key skills training and assessment. Key skills training and assessment has only been introduced when they had almost completed their NVQ units. Three learners were told to drop key skills training, although it is part of the modern apprenticeship framework. Some learners did not understand that they were on a modern apprenticeship programme. Since 1999, only one learner has achieved a modern apprenticeship framework. Thirteen learners are still in learning.

75. Some initial assessment is ineffective. Learners and assessors are not always given the results of their numeracy and literacy assessments. There is no continuous assessment. Some learners complete their assessments at home and post them back. Staff are not always sure which is the most appropriate qualification for learners after their initial assessment. Learners' previous learning and achievements are not systematically accredited. One learner had achieved key skills training but was told that they would have to do it again. A4e has identified its initial assessment problems and is implementing a new process to rectify it.

76. Achievement rates are poor on the modern apprenticeship frameworks. Only 24 learners have started modern apprenticeships since 1999. Thirteen learners are still on their training programme and only one learner has achieved the full framework.

77. Learners' portfolios at NVQ level 2 are assessed by observation and questioning. Portfolios are not sufficiently individualised and do not include a wide range of evidence, such as witness statements, photographs and work products.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	110	4
New Deal 18-24	32	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	37	3

78. There are 110 learners and 69 learners on care, or early years care and education training programmes. Twenty-eight clients are on the New Deal 18-24 voluntary sector or employment options, working towards three units of an NVQ at level 2 in care, or early years care and education. Four clients are on the New Deal 18-24 full-time education and training option, working towards a full NVQ at level 2 in care. One of the 40 New Deal 25+ clients is completing an IAP as preparation for work. The rest of the clients are on the LOT programmes. Learners are referred from their personal adviser. All learners are interviewed by recruitment staff and can join the training programme at any time. After initial assessment, learners fill in an individual learning plan. Learners are told about their rights and responsibilities and A4e's policies and procedures in the training centres. Assessors induct learners into NVQ and A4e in the workplace. Learners work in nurseries, schools, hospitals, nursing and residential homes for older people and young adults with learning difficulties. Learners can also do work experience in many different community projects. All work placements are checked for health and safety. Learners attend their local training centre for jobsearch training for at least half a day each week. Their progress is reviewed during this time. Learners' progress is reviewed every six to eight weeks and an assessor visits them every two weeks. There is no occupationally based off-the-job training.

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										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	28		9		8									
Retained*	2		2		0										
Successfully completed	0		0		0										
Still in learning	23		4		8										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	73		37		3											
Retained*	3		12		3	100										
Successfully completed	0		3		1	33										
Still in learning	59		10		2	67										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	4															

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults												
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			92		37							
Retained*			39	42	20	54						
Planned learning completed			17	18	15	41						
Gained job			32	35	11	30						
Still in training			35	38	2	5						

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

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New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			86		40		17			
Retained*			24	28	35	88	8	47		
Planned learning completed			4	5	4	10	2	12		
Gained job			21	24	19	47	7	41		
Still in training			28	33	4	10	0	0		

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive initial assessment process
- wide range of work placements
- good development of communication skills
- good access to additional training in the Southeast

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement of targets on individual learning plans
- ineffective monitoring of progress
- poor management of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better promotion of resources to learners and assessors in the training centres

79. All learners who train, complete a thorough initial assessment of their understanding of the occupational area, their skills and their needs. They take written tests and exercises to assess their literacy and numeracy skills, which are recorded on their individual learning plan and assessment plan. If key skills training is part of their individual learning plan, their key skills are assessed on computer. This is also clearly recorded in their learning plans. Learners who have additional support needs for key skills are given the modern apprentice workbooks. They fill these in at their own pace. Some learners have previous experience in many aspects of care, which are recorded on their individual learning plan.

80. There is a wide range of work placements. A4e has good working relationships with a wide range of care organisations. Learners experience a wide range of care before deciding on their preferred employment. Work placements include family centres, refuges, and single parent support groups. A4e also has good links with some National Health Service trusts and learners can work on general and elderly care wards in their local general hospital.

81. A4e has a good working relationship with a nursing agency in the Southeast. Learners can work as care assistants, increasing their work experience and their employability. A4e's learners participate in a four-day training scheme which provides most of the background knowledge for NVQ care. Learners have a good learning experience and can share good practice with other care workers. Additional training increases learners' understanding of their role in, for example, promoting continence and caring for people.

82. Most learners under 25 do not achieve the targets on their individual learning plans. In 2000-01, only 27 per cent of learners completed their individual learning plan. Since August 2001, only 10 per cent of learners completed their individual learning plans. Achievement rates are poor on the modern apprenticeship framework. Retention rates of modern apprentices since 1999 are varied and few learners gain jobs. However, 89 per cent of foundation modern apprentices recruited since August 2001, are still in training or have gained jobs. Achievement of planned learning among adults on work-based learning programmes was satisfactory in 2000-01, with 40 per cent completing the targets on their individual learning plans. However, in 2001-02, only 18 per cent completed their individual learning plans. In 2000-01, only 28 per cent of learners gained jobs. However, in 2000-01, 47.5 per cent of the New Deal 18-24 clients gained jobs.

83. There is ineffective monitoring of progress. The results of initial assessment are not used to develop individual learning plans. Some individual learning plans are photocopied and all learners complete the same NVQ units, regardless of the assessment arrangements in the workplace. Special arrangements have to be made with the manager at work for assessment. Learners' progress and achievement of NVQ units is slow. Written question sheets are given to all learners working towards their NVQ. Most learners and some modern apprentices have been assessed as having poor literacy skills, but they are told to fill in the question sheets and to write accounts of frequent activities in the workplace. Some learners fill in many copies of their written work. During learners' progress reviews, assessors record learners' problems. There are no alternative assessment methods. Assessors continue to support learners to complete their written work.

84. There is poor management of training. There are frequent, sometimes daily, moves of learners in the workplace. Staff do not monitor which areas of the nursery learners have worked in, and which practical skills they have learned. Most workplaces do not have an induction and training plan. They do not record the practical skills that learners acquire. Assessors do not record the age of children with whom the learners have

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worked. Assessment by observation at work is planned, but in the two weeks between planning and assessment, learners move into another room in the nursery. Workplace supervisors support learners and arrange for them to work with the appropriate age range to complete their assessment, but there is insufficient continuity of learning and experience. In one area, learners cannot start their work placement until they have had a police check. This can take up to six weeks and learners spend this time in the training centre. There is no childcare training plan for this period. Learners including those with poor literacy skills, are told to research child development and childcare in the local library. A4e has distributed learning packs and text books to all training centres but few learners and assessors know about them or use them. Early years care and education and care learners are given a pack of generic worksheets. Some of the generic worksheets are irrelevant to the learners' occupational interests and learners with poor literacy do not understand what is expected of them.

Poor Practice

In one area, learners are told to use the Internet to research child protection. Assessors are not sufficiently supportive and use language not fully understood by inexperienced learners.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 18-24	524	2
Life Skills	45	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	520	3
Programme Centres	352	2

85. More than 1,400 unemployed people are currently on foundation training programmes with A4e. Of these, 45 are on Life Skills training programmes. About three-quarters of the 9,500 clients who started this year joined Gateway to Work programmes or programme centres, where the aim is to gain employment. There are 352 clients who attend programme centres, and 394 clients on Gateway to Work programmes. Six hundred and fifty clients are on full-time training programmes to improve their basic literacy, numeracy, language and employability skills, including 511 adults over 25, who are on BET courses, nine adults on short intensive basic skills (SIBS) courses, and 130 young people aged 18 to 24 who are on full-time education and training options. Clients are in nearly every training centre in England. Many clients have been unemployed for a long time, and have poor self-esteem. Some clients only join the training programme because they would lose their benefits if they did not. Other clients are keen to learn. Some clients speak English as an additional language and are on English speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes. Most ESOL clients are in London or Wolverhampton and are taught in groups. ESOL clients elsewhere are usually taught alongside native English speakers.

86. Clients attending programme centres are expected to attend for four hours each week. There are nine programme centres, most in the Northwest or the Southwest. Programmes have no fixed length. Most clients stay less than three months.

87. Most Gateway to Work clients are in the Northeast, North or Northwest. Others are in the West Midlands, the East, Ilford or Bristol. In most training centres, Gateway to Work groups include clients who are older than 25, as well as younger clients. In South Shields and Gateshead, the age groups are usually taught separately.

88. SIBS clients and full-time education and training clients on basic skills programmes are often taught alongside clients on BET programmes. Clients with very different needs are often taught together. A4e runs BET programmes across the country, though in many training centres, there are fewer than 10 clients. Most BET and full-time education and training option clients gain some work experience during their programme.

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

Work-based learning for young people															
Life Skills															
	2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	162		27												
Retained*	0		0	0											
Successfully completed	76		18	67											
Still in learning	45		0	0											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults											
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults											
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts			1582		482						
Retained*			554	35	295	61					
Planned learning completed			195	12	102	21					
Gained job			430	27	184	38					
Still in training			520	33	0	0					

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

Programme Centres											
Programme Centres											
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts			2050		738						
Planned learning completed			0	0	0	0					
Gained job			859	42	408	55					
Still in training			352	17	0	0					

New Deal 18-24										
New Deal 18-24										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			5753		5037		44		1	
Retained*			3952	69	2822	56	23	52	1	100
Planned learning completed			2443	42	2582	51	10	23	1	100
Gained job			2968	52	3221	64	22	50	1	100
Still in training			524	9	0	0	0	0	0	0

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

STRENGTHS

- good proportion of clients gain jobs
- effective motivation of clients
- well-structured jobsearch training
- effective use of IT in jobsearch
- good practical support
- good development of clients' oral communication skills
- good equal opportunities training
- particularly effective Life Skills training programme

WEAKNESSES

- poor planning of clients' literacy, numeracy and language learning
- ineffective reviewing of clients' progress and achievement
- insufficiently detailed learning targets
- insufficient learning resources
- ineffective use of worksheets
- insufficient written feedback on clients' work
- poor rates of progression from Life Skills programmes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- literacy, numeracy and language courses to relate to National Curriculum standards
- greater use of IT to develop clients' literacy, numeracy or language skills
- more use of telephones in BET rooms
- better planning of clients' duties on work placements
- better focus by BET trainers on employment-related skills
- greater use of work placements for clients on ESOL courses

89. More than 4,000 of the 8,000 clients who left A4E this year gained jobs. The Gateway to Work programmes are particularly successful in helping long-term unemployed young people return to work. In some regions, more than 70 per cent of Gateway to Work clients have gained jobs. Many people over 25 also get jobs from the Gateway to Work, except in the Northeast, where a much lower proportion of adult Gateway to Work clients are successful. Around half of all clients leaving programme centres get jobs. Before starting the training programme, many BET clients had barriers to employment and nearly all could not get or keep a job. About 40 per cent of BET clients gained full-time employment on leaving the programme, compared with the national average of 25 per cent. Approximately 30 per cent of clients on the full-time education and training option gain jobs. A higher proportion of full-time education and training option clients have ESOL needs, and are in London, where a lower proportion of A4e's clients gain jobs than in most other regions.

90. Trainers motivate clients successfully. Clients work well with trainers. Many clients become more interested in employment and work towards gaining jobs. Most BET and full-time education and training option clients are able to take short courses leading to work-related qualifications, such as basic food hygiene or health and safety. Some clients also take Wordpower or Numberpower qualifications.

91. Jobsearch training is well structured. There are training sessions on different aspects of jobsearch, for example creating a curriculum vitae, discussing barriers to employment, interview skills, and speculative approaches to potential employers. Most training sessions are run well. Each module of jobsearch has a clear plan for the trainer to follow. New trainers are always inducted by more experienced colleagues. Some curriculum vitae are not sufficiently individualised. Some training sessions on barriers to employment are not sufficiently thorough. In every training centre, staff have good links with Jobcentre Plus staff, and post new job vacancies daily on noticeboards. Relevant national and local newspapers are put in the training rooms. Most clients doing jobsearch have access to computers which they use to search the web as well as to compile their curriculum vitae. Staff often have good links with employment agencies, and where appropriate, encourage clients to register with agencies. Staff at programme centres know their clients well, what type of work would suit them, and what employment opportunities there are in the area.

92. A4e provides good practical support for clients. Lunch is free for Gateway to Work clients, and for others who face particular financial hardship. This is managed sensitively. Interview clothing is purchased, if needed, for clients. Trainers help clients resolve personal hygiene problems. Clients on longer training programmes have good working relationships with staff. Trainers help clients deal with their personal problems. They are often helped by staff known as 'compass navigators', who refer clients to specialist help. In most groups, there are fewer than six clients to each trainer. Trainers give their clients good individual help. In training centres where there is particularly good support from trainers, for example in Hull, nearly all clients complete the course. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory. Most instances of personal support are appropriately recorded.

93. Many clients improve their oral communication skills. Many clients attribute their improved self-confidence, and self-esteem to their improved oral skills. Trainers also contribute significantly to clients' improved self-esteem. ESOL clients improve their ability to comprehend spoken English, and their spoken English improves during the training programme. There is insufficient use of telephones by clients in their communication skills training.

94. Equal opportunities training is good. BET and full-time education and training option clients are clear about their rights and responsibilities during the training programme and at work. Many use sophisticated vocabulary to describe equal opportunities. Trainers challenge discriminatory comments in training sessions, and use these to develop teaching points. Trainers integrate equal opportunities into the training programme and reinforce clients' understanding. Trainers show Gateway to Work clients a video to stimulate discussion about racism, harassment and other unacceptable behaviour. In one training centre, trainers combine the training session on equal opportunities with dyslexia awareness, and tell clients where they can gain further advice on this.

95. The Life Skills training course is particularly effective. Clients' personal interests form the basis for some tasks, and they buy their own reading material. A wide range of learning opportunities deal with varied personal needs, including self-harm, drug dependency, debt and social isolation. Close attention is paid to how clients' personal needs might create barriers to learning and achievement. Health and safety issues are dealt with clearly. Group work is used effectively and extensively to develop communication skills and confidence. Clients are set challenging Life Skills tasks and work-related activities and then offered appropriate support to meet those challenges. Work placements are chosen carefully and workplace supervisors are well briefed.

96. Training centres are conveniently located close to large jobcentres, and are clean, tidy and well decorated. Images of recent clients' success in gaining employment are displayed on the walls. Health and safety posters, and equal opportunities policies are prominently displayed in most training centres. Staff are friendly. Most training rooms are adequately furnished and have a whiteboard, flipchart, and in many cases, video

facilities and a computer. Clients can book to use computers in other training rooms.

97. In most training centres which offer BET, full-time education and training, or Life Skills, trainers do not plan clients' literacy, numeracy and language programmes according to assessments of their needs. Trainers rarely carry out detailed assessments of clients' reading, comprehension, writing, or numerical ability. They do not set clear learning targets, regarding clients' reading level, writing ability or numeracy, or their communication skills, social skills, or interpersonal behaviour. Learning targets are rarely linked to clients' ambitions. Records of progress reviews do not show what clients have learned. In some cases, they record the general subjects which clients have been studying, and whether or not clients are making good progress, or enjoying the course. Trainers do not make enough written comments on clients' work. Clients and trainers find it difficult to identify precisely what clients have learned, although they recognise their improved confidence and interpersonal skills. Training in Doncaster and Wolverhampton, however, is good.

98. In most training centres, there are insufficient learning resources, particularly for clients with very poor literacy or numeracy skills. There are insufficient books. Most clients have access to computers, but trainers do not always use computers to develop clients' literacy or numeracy. There are insufficient software packages designed to improve clients' literacy or numeracy skills or learning materials relevant to clients' career aims. Some trainers rely on worksheets. Some clients are given unsuitable worksheets. Many clients are given work which does not deal with their individual learning needs.

99. Although Life Skills clients gain confidence and self-esteem, and overcome many personal difficulties, too few progress to further training. Only one client in four who left this year, continued in formal training on leaving the training programme. Some other clients gained jobs without training, but two-thirds were less successful.

100. Most training sessions are satisfactory or better. There is insufficient discussion in BET and full-time education and training groups of the type of work that would suit clients. Skills learned in the training centre are not always applied at work sufficiently. Most BET and full-time education and training option clients do some work experience, but there is insufficient planning of their duties at work. Some ESOL clients do not have sufficient work placements to improve their English.

101. In some regions, training centre managers and other staff understand the national basic skills strategy, and meet representatives of other training providers, to discuss good practice. In most areas, however, learning materials are not yet linked to the national standards or curriculum.

Good Practice

Managers established a jobclub in the Bristol centre. This is run by staff from a national charity for deaf people (RNID). This helps with the social inclusion of deaf clients. Staff and clients have a good understanding of the issues facing deaf people in their search for employment.

Staff have developed good contacts with a number of large organisations. As a result, many long-term unemployed clients, particularly from the Northeast, gained jobs with a firm which provides catering services for the armed forces. In London, many clients found work with a large national food retailer.