

INSPECTION REPORT

Aylesbury Training Group

22 April 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
- **learnirect** 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.

Inadequate provision

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

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

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

SUMMARY

The provider

Aylesbury Training Group is a Group Training Association with charitable status based in Aylesbury, where it has two training centres. It provides work-based learning in engineering, business administration, information technology, customer service and care.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning is good in engineering, information and communications technology, satisfactory in business administration, and unsatisfactory in customer service and care. Aylesbury Training Group's leadership and management are satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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

Information & communications technology	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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

AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- comprehensive staff development
- strong links with employers
- good training support for learners
- unique cycle maintenance and repair programme
- good self-assessment process

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- delayed introduction to key skills training
- poor knowledge of modern apprenticeship frameworks by learners and employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better monitoring of training in the workplace and by subcontractors

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 14 inspectors spent a total of 54 days at Aylesbury Training Group (ATG) during April 2002. They met 137 learners and interviewed 63 of ATG's staff. The inspectors visited 40 work placements and interviewed 57 employers. Inspectors observed six training sessions. They observed assessments and learners' progress reviews and a range of documents including 87 learners' portfolios and files, and learners' personal records. They examined ATG's plans, policies and procedures, management information, reports from awarding bodies and other external agencies. Inspectors studied ATG's self-assessment report and accompanying action plan, updated in January 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	6
Total	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	6

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. ATG was established in 1967 to provide first-year training for engineering apprentices. ATG is a Group Training Association with charitable status. A chief executive appointed by a board of directors manages the company, which is based at two main sites in Aylesbury. ATG provides work-based learning in engineering production and cycle maintenance, business administration, information technology (IT), customer services and care. Three colleges of further education provide day-release courses for some of the training programmes. ATG's head office, located in its technical training centre, accommodates the engineering foundation programmes, IT courses and the cycle maintenance programme. The business centre, situated a short distance from the head office, accommodates the business administration, customer services and health care training programmes. There is a dedicated key skills/learning support unit in each training centre. ATG employs 52 full-time and 44 part-time staff on the two sites, each of which is managed by two managers who report daily to the chief executive. The chief executive is also responsible for quality assurance and equal opportunities issues.

3. ATG has 764 learners, of whom 90 per cent are employed and ATG sponsors approximately half of the remaining 10 per cent. In business administration, customer services and care training most learners are employed. In engineering production and IT many learners start their training programmes without having a job, but find one quickly and go on to complete a national vocational qualification (NVQ) and continue training as modern apprentices. All cycle maintenance learners are employed. There are 469 foundation modern apprentices, 263 advanced modern apprentices and 32 learners doing NVQ training. ATG has contracts with Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (MKOB) Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Berkshire LSC, but most of its training provision is in Buckinghamshire.

4. The MKOB area is a key contributor to the southeast region's economy, accounting for 17 per cent of its gross domestic product. Manufacturing industry, although in decline, is an important contributor, with specialised sectors such as information and communications technology (ICT) and telecommunications expected to grow. Economic activity in the region is higher than the UK average and unemployment averages 1.1 per cent. Local variations can be much higher, for example, High Wycombe has an unemployment figure of 8 per cent. According to the 1991 census, minority ethnic groups comprise 4.4 per cent of the population, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in the region achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 54 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Berkshire has one of the most dynamic economies in the UK, with many significant companies. The achievement rate for qualifications is high, with 35 per cent of the residents/employees qualified to NVQs at level 4 or above, compared with the regional average of 29 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above was

55 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups was 7.6 per cent at the 1991 census, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. ATG provides training in engineering, business administration, IT, customer service and care. In engineering training there are 331 learners, of whom 94 are advanced and 223 are foundation modern apprentices, with a further 14 learners following NVQ programmes. In business administration training, there are 223 learners, comprising 44 advanced and 174 foundation modern apprentices, with a further five learners following NVQ programmes. In IT training there are 70 learners, of whom 34 are advanced and 36 are foundation modern apprentices. In customer service training, there are 78 learners, of whom 58 are advanced and 18 are foundation modern apprentices, with a further two learners following NVQ programmes. In care training, there are 62 learners, with 33 advanced and 18 foundation modern apprentices, and 11 learners following NVQ programmes.

6. At the time of the inspection, 25 per cent of those learners who started the four-year engineering advanced modern apprenticeship in 1998-99 had completed all parts of the framework. Achievement rates for engineering modern apprentices are satisfactory. Achievement rates for engineering NVQ programmes are good.

7. In business administration training, 32 per cent of the learners on the 1998-99 advanced modern apprenticeship achieved all parts of the framework. Of the 56 learners following NVQ training programmes, over the period 1998 to 2001, 32 per cent were successful. NVQ achievement by all learners over the same period is satisfactory, with 56 per cent gaining certificates.

8. In ICT training, it is too early to assess framework achievements after only two years of the four-year advanced modern apprenticeship. Three learners have achieved the foundation modern apprenticeship within its first two years of operation.

9. In customer service training, the achievement rates of modern apprenticeship frameworks are poor. Of the 29 learners starting the advanced programme in 1998-99, only 3 per cent completed all parts successfully. The achievement rate for the 26 learners who started in 1999-2000 is 15 per cent, with only one learner still on the training programme. Of the 37 learners on the 1999-2000 foundation modern apprenticeship, 19 per cent were successful.

10. In care training, no learners have completed the objectives of their individual learning plans in the past four years. The achievement rates for NVQs in all care training programmes are poor. In 1999-2000, 35 per cent of advanced and 23 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved an NVQ.

11. The learner retention rates in engineering training are satisfactory. Retention rates have been low in business administration, but are now improving for modern apprentices. ICT retention rates are good. In customer service, the retention rate for modern apprentices is poor. Of the 63 learners starting training programmes in 1999-2000, 81 per cent left without completing their modern apprenticeship frameworks, but

most did achieve an NVQ. The retention rates for 2000-01 are poor, with only 45 per cent of advanced and 32 per cent of foundation modern apprentices still in training. In care training, the retention rates were poor for the learners starting modern apprenticeships in 1999-2000, but have improved for those who started in 2000-01, with 60 per cent of advanced and 67 per cent of foundation modern apprentices still on their training programmes.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

12. ATG is a Group Training Association with charitable status. A chief executive appointed by a board of directors manages the company, which is based at two main sites in Aylesbury, where ATG employs 52 full-time and 44 part-time staff. Each of the training centres has its own manager who reports daily to the chief executive, who is also responsible for quality assurance and equal opportunities. ATG holds the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, and achieved the ISO 9002 international quality assurance standard in 1995. ATG has been reassessed successfully twice over the past six years. The company has equal opportunities and quality assurance policies with a range of systems and procedures to support them. There are procedures in place to monitor the quality of training and a purpose-designed system to monitor staff, learner and employer satisfaction. A quality assurance team, with representatives from all departments, has been set up in order to carry out self-assessment. This team also monitors the development plan.

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive staff development
- strong links with employers
- effective internal communications
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- effective range of quality assurance processes and procedures
- good self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient analysis and use of retention and achievement rate data
- delayed introduction of key skills training
- insufficient re-emphasis of equal opportunities issues to learners
- poor internal verification in some areas

13. There is a comprehensive staff development programme, which ensures that all ATG's employees have the opportunity to develop their professional competences and personal skills. Effective programmes have been arranged for senior and middle management teams to promote a better understanding of strategic and operational plans, the needs of learners and the personal goals of employees. Good use is made of ATG's commercial training department by using spare places on its external courses for staff members, where this is appropriate to their personal development plans.

14. ATG has very strong links with employers in both of the local LSC areas where it has contracts. Ninety per cent of the learners are employed in companies which provide a

good range of learning opportunities in excess of those required by the modern apprenticeship programmes. Of the remainder, approximately half of the learners are sponsored by ATG. The other learners are unemployed and attend full-time training at the company's engineering training centre. There is also a wide network of employers which supports the cycle mechanics' training programme. There is good matching of learners to employers, and many job opportunities in engineering in particular. Employers play a significant role in supporting ATG.

15. There is good, effective communication between all staff. Although many of the staff within the business centre are part-time, self-employed personnel, they are included in all meetings and staff development activities. Staff often meet informally to discuss training and share good practice, but this is generally limited to meetings within departments, because of the nature of the training programmes and the location of the two training centres. There are weekly senior staff management meetings and regular departmental meetings, all of which are well recorded, with actions monitored at each meeting. All of these strengths were identified by the company in its self-assessment report.

16. There is insufficient analysis and use of retention and achievement rate data throughout the organisation. Targets relating to learners' starts and achievements against contract requirements are negotiated with all staff at departmental level and monitored thoroughly in all areas of learning. ATG uses a purpose-built data management system for recording and analysing much of its data relating to learners. However, the system does not provide useful historical retention and achievement data to enable ATG to establish meaningful targets for continuous improvement of retention and achievement rates. In the past, ATG has focused on contractual requirements for the achievement of NVQs and there has been a significant delay in the introduction of key skills assessment and training. Key skills units have been introduced in the technical training department and the business centre, which are now providing good levels of key skills training to all learners. ATG has made significant efforts to improve the integration of key skills into training programmes. However, there are still a few learners who have been on their training programmes for some length of time who are making slow progress towards the achievement of key skills and the completion of their modern apprenticeship frameworks. Both of these weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

17. ATG has updated their equal opportunities policy, which forms part of a staff handbook issued to all staff. The new policy is comprehensive and contains sections on harassment, bullying and young person protection. The equal opportunities statement is displayed in a prominent and accessible position in ATG's offices. As part of their induction, all learners are issued with a copy of the equal opportunities statement and the appeals procedure, which they keep in their NVQ portfolios.

18. ATG monitors the recruitment of learners by gender, age, ethnicity and disability. Seven per cent of ATG's learners are from minority ethnic groups, which is just above the regional average. ATG's policy is strongly supportive of promotion to groups under-represented in training and the training provider has taken every opportunity to recruit learners from every group in the community, whatever their background or previous achievements. ATG has worked with local community organisations to encourage young Asian women to take up training, and has also developed links with the careers service and local racial equality organisation to widen training provision to the local Pakistani community.

19. ATG has also taken steps to rectify the low take-up of places by young women in engineering by offering a young engineers' club for women. Two female learners on engineering training programmes have won local LSC trainee of the year awards in the past three years. Although the numbers of female learners on engineering and ICT training programmes are low, they are higher than average. In business administration training, nearly one-third of learners are men. ATG has provided specialist support for those learners with additional learning needs including, in one case, a reader. Some employers have good equal opportunities policies which are promoted in the workplace.

20. Some learners are not aware of the equal opportunities statement and how it relates to them. Equal opportunities issues are not discussed routinely with learners after their induction or during review meetings. ATG has recognised the need to raise the profile of equal opportunities and has introduced a programme of equal opportunities training for all staff.

21. There is no wheelchair access to the upper storey of ATG's business centre, but special arrangements are made when needed.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

22. There is a range of quality assurance processes and procedures which support and monitor effectively the quality of the training provision. The quality assurance manual defines clearly the responsibilities of the managers and is reviewed quarterly. This is supplemented by instruction manuals in each department which set out detailed procedures relating directly to training and assessment. New assessors are trained in ATG's procedures as part of their induction. Standardisation meetings for NVQ training are held every three months in each department. Any changes or new documents are sent to the business support manager, who circulates them to all relevant staff. Changes are authorised by the departmental head and the operations manager. Staff are encouraged to download documents directly from the computer rather than keeping copies, to ensure that all staff are using current copies. Quality is monitored effectively through meetings at management and departmental level, performance and departmental reviews, and through quality assurance team meetings. Problems are dealt with at appropriate meetings, or immediately if they are urgent. A range of internal audits is carried out, including training programme reviews, systems, finance and administration audits, and health and safety audits. There are monthly random checks on learners' individual learning plans and weekly checks on learners' progress reviews. If these do not meet the standard required they are returned to the staff responsible. Observations of training staff carrying out training activities are recorded, but this does not yet apply to all areas of learning.

23. There is a well-established self-assessment process which has been in place for four years. A quality assurance team, with representatives from all departments, has been established to carry out self-assessment and monitor the development plan. All staff have been involved in the self-assessment. Although employers were not involved formally, ATG's staff discuss with them ways in which they can improve their training provision. Feedback from learners, staff and employers is collected effectively through the purpose-designed monitoring system. The self-assessment report produced for the inspection was detailed and generally accurate in terms of the strengths and weaknesses and related judgements.

24. There is poor internal verification in some areas. Until recently, verification in engineering training only took place at the end of the programme. ATG has introduced a new, more thorough system, which includes verification throughout the programme, but it has not yet been introduced in all areas of learning. Some learners nearing the end of their training have not had their portfolios sampled. In the care and early years care training programmes, internal verification has not been sufficiently thorough to reveal some poor assessment practices. For example, there are examples of insufficient understanding of the issues concerning equal opportunities and abuse.

25. There is insufficient monitoring of college training provision and workplace training. Practical training in the colleges is monitored by ATG but, because the colleges' own quality assurance policies do not require it, there is little observation of background knowledge sessions. In terms of workplace training, most employers provide good

AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP

training opportunities for learners. ATG's assessors also provide much of the training for individuals. However, the standard of the training is very dependent on individual employers and assessors.

Good Practice

ATG provides a young engineers' club free to local school pupils one night each week. They attend the engineering training centre and learn basic handskills, culminating in the production of a toolbox which they are allowed to keep.

A group of learners from differing ethnic and other backgrounds have been working closely together on a pilot programme to explore citizenship and diversity issues by means of residential workshops and team projects.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	331	2

26. ATG offers NVQ training and modern apprenticeships in engineering production and cycle maintenance. There are 331 learners in training, 94 advanced modern apprentices in engineering, 223 foundation modern apprentices, including 172 on the cycle maintenance training programme and a further 14 on NVQ programmes. Three recent starters are not included in the NVQ table.

27. Most learners on the engineering production apprenticeship scheme receive training at foundation level on a non-employed basis at ATG's engineering training centre. All learners receive an initial assessment and key skills tests. Learners with additional learning needs are identified and offered the required support. Engineering learners complete an induction and then work towards an NVQ in performing engineering operations. After completion of their NVQ, learners are recruited into companies as employees and continue training as advanced modern apprentices. ATG manages the recruitment process and the companies provide training and mentoring of the learners in the workplace.

28. Learners' progress reviews are carried out in the workplace by ATG's review staff every four to six weeks for engineering manufacture learner, and every 12 weeks for cycle maintenance learners. Review staff also provide support for learners to build their portfolios. Additional qualifications, up to first degree level, complement the training programmes.

29. The foundation modern apprenticeship programme in cycle maintenance started in April 2001. Learners can join the programme at any time. They attend the Aylesbury centre for specialised practical training and assessment for four one-week periods during the 18-month training programme. All learners are employed in cycle repair and maintenance establishments throughout the United Kingdom. There are in excess of 140 establishments. Five assessors operate regionally and assess learners' competence on employers' premises. In addition to assessing competences, they also review learners' progress and provide them with general support and guidance.

30. The resources for engineering production training are adequate and those in cycle maintenance are good. Staff in both areas have relevant industrial experience and appropriate qualifications.

AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP

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)																
	2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	64		33		72											
Retained*	36		19	58	42	58										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	18	25										
Still in learning	36		19	58	20	28										

*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)																
	2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	159		32		27											
Retained*	142		31	97	18	67										
Successfully completed	0		1	3	0	0										
Still in learning	102		19	59	2	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																
NVQ Training																
	2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		5		56											
Retained*	11		4	80	36	64										
Successfully completed	1		8	160	36	64										
Still in learning	11		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

STRENGTHS

- good pastoral support for learners
- particularly supportive employers
- strong strategic leadership of training to meet industry sector needs
- well-resourced cycle maintenance workshop
- useful additional qualifications gained by learners

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient awareness by some learners of their progress
- delayed introduction of key skills training for some learners
- lack of understanding by some employers of modern apprenticeship frameworks

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more employer involvement in learners' progress reviews

31. ATG has made good efforts to encourage recruitment to its modern apprenticeship programmes in engineering manufacture, despite strong competition from the local high levels of employment in other sectors and the increasing trend for young people to continue in full-time education. A significant number of learners come to ATG from unemployment. ATG operates a flexible and inclusive entry-level policy for its starters, some of whom in engineering manufacture arrive with low levels of achievement. There is evidence of good pastoral support for all learners, with ATG's training officers making workplace review visits every four to six weeks. These reviews are formal and recorded, with targets set and progressed at the start of the next review. There is a caring culture among all of the training staff, with many instances of support being given to learners, not only to develop their learning skills, but also in developing life skills. Learners and employers appreciate this. Some learners have been relocated to other companies to give them a better learning experience and increased job security. For example, two learners, who were approaching the end of their training with a large company, were likely to be made redundant on completion of their modern apprenticeships. The training officer found alternative employment for the learners with another company.

32. In cycle maintenance training, ATG's assessors visit regularly each modern apprentice in the workplace, where they carry out the learner's induction, conduct skill assessments for the NVQ, and progress reviews. Learners' progress reviews take place at least every 12 weeks, during which learners receive clear verbal guidance on the

training programme's contents and what they have to do to succeed in it. When learners attend off-the-job training sessions at the training centre, they are taught in small groups and receive close tuition and guidance from well-qualified trainers. Assessors conduct extensive initial guidance sessions in the workplace when learners are taken on to the training programme.

33. All the engineering manufacture employers interviewed were keen to assist in the learning process wherever possible. Learners are moved between jobs, which enables them to complete specific training elements that satisfy specific NVO criteria. Facilities within the workplace for the development of learners' portfolio evidence are generally good and learners feel supported by the employers. The company director of one company has given one learner personal tuition in portfolio development.

34. ATG has provided strong strategic leadership to introduce effective and innovative cycle maintenance and repair training programmes that meet the sector's needs. Cycle trade employers are very supportive of their learners and ATG. The cycle industry trade body that endorses the training also promotes it to its members and sponsors the learning programme. Effective consultation with manufacturers about their training requirements resulted in the production of a master training manual detailing the new training programme. The training programme has attracted a great deal of interest and demand within the industry. Numbers of learners on the programme have increased steadily and the programme is now supported by 13 staff, five of whom are assessors. All staff are highly motivated, dedicated to their involvement in cycling and work as a team for the good of the learners. Employers confirmed to inspectors that the training sets the standard for the industry and that newly trained modern apprentices pass on the knowledge they have gained from training to other employees. Employers seek out training opportunities and propose their employees for registration and attendance on the training programme. Some employers themselves attend the training programmes, or visit the training centre, in order to update their skills, for example, in modern wheel-building techniques. Those employers who do so are enthusiastic about their experience.

35. The ATG cycle repair and maintenance training facility is particularly well resourced. The design and equipping of the innovative and unique training facility started in October 2000. The workshop has 10 workstations, which allows each learner to work individually. The training workshop tools are all new and, in many cases, superior to those used in the industry. The equipment is state-of-the art and some employers subsequently purchase similar specialist tools and equipment to those used by their employees during training with ATG. The whole workshop creates an extremely professional image.

36. Cycle maintenance learners receive assessment in the workplace, evidence of which is incorporated in their portfolios. At the end of the programme, there is an assessment of three full cycle services, each of which takes several hours. The assessor gives each learner detailed feedback on these services. The internal verification system is new, but all assessors have been observed carrying out assessment work. A system

for monitoring learners' progress was introduced in January 2002 and is updated regularly, and the results are forwarded to the Aylesbury training centre.

37. In the engineering manufacture training programme, learners at level 2 NVQ benefit from the opportunity to gain an additional NVQ in engineering production to complement their NVQ in engineering manufacture. Some learners have progressed academically and gained higher national certificates and level 4 NVQs in management.

38. ATG monitors learners' in engineering manufacture satisfactorily, using a new NVQ progress tracking system, which indicates the percentage of the NVQ unit completed. Individual learning plans identify the completion target for each of the NVQ units. There was insufficient awareness by some learners of their progress and they were reliant on the training officer to keep them informed. Some progress reviews in cycle maintenance training are not thorough enough and do not set demanding targets.

39. Opportunities for some learners, who started in 1998, to gather evidence for their key skills portfolios were missed in the early part of their programme, with some starting their key skills portfolios after completion of their NVQ. This late introduction of key skills training for these older learners was identified in the self-assessment report. For the past three years, training in key skills has been integrated fully with the engineering training programme.

40. The cycle maintenance framework has been running since September 2001 and arrangements to introduce key skills training have progressed well over the past six months. ATG worked closely in partnership with the awarding body to develop a framework for the foundation modern apprenticeship in cycle maintenance and repair. A specialist adviser produced a composite key skills manual recently, which identifies various assignments for learners to complete for key skills accreditation. These assignments are all related directly to the cycle industry. However, learners have yet to start their key skills training. Some learners are confused about the level of key skills they have to achieve. Most learners have had diagnostic tests and believe incorrectly that this means they have completed the key skills training requirement.

41. In cycle maintenance training, some employers have insufficient knowledge of the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. Generally, employers are aware of both the level 2 NVQ and the cycle trade's own award, but some have no awareness of key skills, the content of the framework, or of the role of the awarding body for the NVQ. Employers do not receive sufficient feedback and are not involved in the assessment or support process. Some believe that the modern apprentices will have achieved the full framework after attending the four one-week blocks of off-the-job training. Because the scheme is so new, no learners have yet completed the full modern apprenticeship framework and employers are unaware of the amount of time and work involved in achieving it. In engineering manufacture, there is also a lack of understanding by some employers of the modern apprenticeship framework and its content, particularly key skills training. Some employers believe that the apprenticeship programme is the sole responsibility of ATG, while others would value greater involvement in the planning and

management of the training programmes.

42. There has been a satisfactory retention rate on the engineering advanced modern apprenticeship over the period 1998-2001 of 58 per cent, decreasing to 56 per cent for the 2000-01 intake. The retention rate for the 27 foundation modern apprentices who started in 1998 was also satisfactory at 67 per cent, with 16 of these learners transferring to advanced modern apprenticeships. The retention rate of learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship in cycle maintenance is good at 83 per cent. An analysis of early leavers by ATG, shows that learners have left for a variety of reasons such as redundancy, transferring to other vocational areas, going to university, moving from the area and other causes outside ATG's control. Achievement rates on the four-year advanced modern apprenticeship are satisfactory. A small number of learners start NVQ programmes. Retention and achievement rates for these learners are good and most learners progress to other programmes.

Good Practice

ATG is developing a new approach to providing cycle maintenance training nationally. The first of a number of mobile training workshops will be introduced, to enable training to be given to learners at or near to their workplace, anywhere in the UK.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	224	3

43. ATG provides training for 224 learners in business administration, management and personnel. This includes 174 foundation modern apprentices and 44 advanced modern apprentices working towards administration NVQs at level 2 or 3 and key skills at level 1 to 3. Three learners are working towards management NVQs at level 3 and 4 with key skills at level 2 and 3 on advanced modern apprenticeships. Three others are completing NVQs at level 3 in personnel with key skills at level 3 and 4 on an advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Three foundation modern apprentices are in work placements and all other learners are employed. Learners are recruited through the careers service, employers, or by individual arrangement. Training is planned over 12 months. Unemployed learners are offered an initial eight weeks' tuition at ATG's business centre in Aylesbury. During this period, learners receive inductions and initial assessments. All learners receive tests in basic and key skills, and are given the opportunity to achieve a range of basic office skills, including touch-typing. Unemployed learners receive training in background knowledge, key skills training and assessment. Learners attend off-the-job training when specific needs are identified in their individual learning plan and for the remainder of their programme stay in their workplaces, which are mainly local commercial enterprises. Assessments are carried out in the workplace by 10 occupationally experienced staff, seven of whom are qualified assessors. There are four qualified internal verifiers. Two more internal verifiers are working towards the relevant qualification.

44. Of the current foundation modern apprentices, 108 are serving members of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and are under training at a local RAF training centre. These learners spend 18 weeks working towards administration NVQs at level 2 and key skills at level 1 and 2 in a simulated RAF working environment. Three phases of training, practice and assessment are used. The learners complete the modern apprenticeship framework a month later in an actual working environment. This is a separate NVQ training centre with its own trainers, qualified assessors and verifiers from the RAF. The scheme was introduced during the last financial year.

AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP

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.	%
Number of starts	11		49		72		62							
Retained*	8		24	49	20	28	28	45						
Successfully completed	0		2	4	14	19	20	32						
Still in learning	8		22	45	6	8	8	13						

*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.	%
Number of starts	154		169		109		59							
Retained*	126		73	43	20	18	13	22						
Successfully completed	0		18	11	20	18	0	0						
Still in learning	126		48	28	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		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		11		13		32							
Retained*	0		4	36	4	31	11	34						
Successfully completed	0		3	27	4	31	11	34						
Still in learning	4		1	9	0	0	0	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

STRENGTHS

- particularly supportive employers
- thorough initial assessments
- frequent and effective contact with learners in the workplace

WEAKNESSES

- some inconsistencies in the development of key skills training
- poor achievement rate of modern apprenticeship framework

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- quicker recognition of previous achievements
- more accreditation of additional training

45. Employers show a good level of commitment to the learners' development. Ninety-nine per cent of learners are employed. Learners are placed with a wide range of particularly supportive employers. Employers vary in size and type from the extremely technical, to service and manufacturing. Learners employed in some placements have specific additional training provided by their employer to enhance their work skills. This contributes to flexibility in their job role and the achievement of qualifications. Some learners also receive commercial training, which increases their job skills. Most learners are given time at work for portfolio-building. Most unemployed learners gain employment within three months of starting work placements. Employers are involved with the training programme and help to match optional units in the NVQ to the learner's job. They also contribute to progress reviews, agree work targets at each visit and allocate the tasks to be demonstrated at further assessment visits.

46. An effective skills evaluation matches the learners' job content to the appropriate qualifications at suitable levels. Learners have a basic literacy and numeracy assessment, with all results recorded on their individual action plans. Initial assessment includes extremely accurate key skills diagnostic testing and individual remedial action where necessary. Learners are matched carefully to specific assessors, with regard to personal characteristics. Good professional working relationships are established between learners and their assessors.

47. Learners have frequent direct contact with their assessors in the workplace, where they are monitored and assessed. All learners are visited at least monthly. In some cases, contact is weekly if the learner has additional learning or support needs.

Challenging short-term targets are set firmly and met by the learners. Workplace visits are recorded thoroughly, detailing learners' progress. Textbooks are provided to the non-RAF learners to help them gain the knowledge and understanding required to support their qualifications. Some very good training is available to unemployed learners at the start of their course, for whom spacious, adequately equipped training rooms are made available. Learners who attend are taught touch-typing, receive outdoor adventure and health and safety training. This is not certificated externally, although this is currently under consideration. RAF learners have access to qualified trainers and assessors and adequately equipped training rooms.

48. There have been inconsistencies in the application of key skills training. This has delayed the achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks for some learners. Key skills were not being assessed concurrently with the NVQ and many learners and employers were unsure of the requirements of the key skills award. Recognition of any previous achievement of key skills was slow and some learners were unsure of their progress. Learners who attend the training centre for the initial eight weeks, now begin key skills training during that period. Staff have received key skills training. RAF learners are trained and assessed for key skills from the start. A member of ATG's staff assists with the achievement of key skills. Communication and the wider key skills are completed during the 18 weeks of training and assessment. Key skills in the application of number and IT are completed through work-based projects after leaving the training environment. Insufficient use is made of work-based evidence. Employed learners who do not attend off-the-job training sessions at the training centre do not have sufficient key skills training.

49. Most assessment of learners' portfolios is of an adequate standard. There are instances of poor recording that are currently being dealt with. Internal verification provides good constructive criticism and informative standardisation meetings have been introduced to improve assessment practice.

50. Of the learners on the 1998-99 advanced modern apprenticeship programme, 32 per cent have so far achieved the full framework. Of the 56 learners following NVQ-only training programmes over the period 1998 to 2001, 32 per cent have been successful. NVQ achievement by all learners over the same period is satisfactory, with 56 per cent gaining certificates. Retention rates are improving in the modern apprenticeship programmes. There is evidence that learners often transfer to other training programmes as their job role changes and this affects the retention rate.

Good Practice

ATG works with a local employer to link the employer's in-house training scheme with NVQ requirements. This enables learners to gain a qualification.

Information & communications technology**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	70	2

51. There are two ICT training programmes, Using IT and IT Services. Four advanced modern apprentices and seven foundation modern apprentices are on the Using IT programmes that are provided in the business centre. Unemployed learners complete a six-week training programme that provides all the off-the-job training needed for completion of the modern apprenticeship framework. During this period, key skills are an integral part of the learning programme. The IT Services programmes offer off-the-job training in ATG's workshops, where there are 30 advanced modern apprentices and 29 foundation modern apprentices. Some of these learners have been transferred to ATG from other modern apprenticeship schemes. Recent starters explain the difference in numbers from those in the table. Unemployed learners complete a 15-week training programme to satisfy the off-the-job learning requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework before moving into employment. This includes the key skills elements of the training programme. ATG operates in partnership with a wide range of employers, ranging in size from a National Health Service hospital to a three-person small company. Learners are recruited mainly from school leavers through the school careers service, by advertising and, in some cases, by personal recommendation. A number of learners have been employed in other occupational areas previously and have opted to change career direction into IT. Initial assessment is carried out using a range of methods, including psychometric testing. Where additional learning needs are identified they are included in the individual learning plan. There is a one-day induction including an interactive project to aid team-building. Employers are selected who can provide good facilities for learners to experience a range of tasks. Details of the NVQ and key skills training programme requirements are provided to all employers. Learners' progress reviews are carried out every two months. ATG's assessor liaises with the learner and employer to provide both vocational and pastoral support. All advanced modern apprentices and foundation modern apprentices are in employment after completion of their initial off-the-job learning at ATG. The planned duration of the advanced modern apprenticeship is four years and that of the foundation modern apprenticeships is two years.

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)														
	2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		13		2									
Retained*	13		10	77	2	100								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	100								
Still in learning	13		10	77	2	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

Work-based learning for young people														
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)														
	2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25		21		1									
Retained*	15		13	62	1	100								
Successfully completed	1		2	10	0	0								
Still in learning	15		13	62	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

STRENGTHS

- good learners' support in the workplace
- very good off-the-job training
- good workplace opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- poor understanding of modern apprenticeship framework requirements by many learners and employers

52. ATG's assessor provides good, close pastoral and vocational support to learners in the workplace. Assessment and internal verification procedures have been updated recently and are satisfactory. The assessor visits learners every eight weeks and provides

effective guidance and individual support, particularly in the gathering of evidence, maintains learners' motivation and helps build self-confidence. Workplace mentors provide learners with effective individual training to improve their skills. Learners are able to achieve additional qualifications, beyond the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

53. Good facilities and learning materials for Using IT training at ATG's business centre provide a sound resource for effective learning. The well-planned training programme enables learners to progress at their own pace and gain skills and confidence. IT Service training at ATG's technical centre is well-resourced and managed. The comprehensive computer systems and learning programmes enable learners to cover the full range of background skills and knowledge required for level 2 and level 3 NVQs. Learners are also given the opportunity to achieve additional IT qualifications that have value and recognition in the occupational sector. There is effective individual monitoring of learners' progress using an on-line proprietary monitoring programme.

54. IT Service learners have good workplace opportunities which provide them with a relevant variety of work experience. The wide range of placements available to learners provides suitable work environments to meet each learner's needs. Learners have access to good workplace resources and opportunities to meet learning requirements. Learners are supervised and supported effectively to fulfil work responsibilities successfully.

55. Many employers and learners are not aware of the full range of achievements required to complete the modern apprenticeship frameworks. The assessor's meetings with employers and learners focus on targets to be completed before the next progress review. Progress towards completion of the modern apprenticeship framework is not discussed regularly. Neither employers nor individual learners understand how much of the modern apprenticeship framework has been achieved or when it will be completed. Individual learning plans are not updated to show changes to the planned training.

56. The IT Service modern apprenticeship framework began in 1998-99 with the first learners starting that year. There have been no framework achievements after two years of the four-year advanced modern apprenticeship, but there have been three foundation modern apprenticeship framework achievements.

Good Practice

Since joining the provider, two employees have progressed from being unemployed school leavers with few achievements to becoming well-established trainers and assessors on the IT programmes.

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

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

57. ATG has 78 learners on customer service and distribution and warehousing training programmes. Sixty-seven are employed in customer service, with the remaining 11 in distribution and warehousing. There are 58 advanced modern apprentices, 18 foundation modern apprentices and two learners working on NVQ programmes, all but one of whom are employed. Advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 3 in customer service, and distribution and warehousing. Foundation modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 2 in customer service and distribution and warehousing. The remaining two learners on NVQ programmes are training in distribution and warehousing at level 2. Learners are recruited through employers or by individual arrangement. At the start of the training programme all learners receive a skills audit, a key skills diagnostic evaluation, initial assessment and induction to their learning programme. These activities are carried out in the learners' workplace, where all learners also receive their training. Many of the modern apprentices are employed by one major national customer service company. Others learners are employed either by the Ministry of Defence or by smaller companies within the customer service and distribution and warehousing sectors. Staff from ATG visit the learners in their workplace every three to four weeks to assess and review learners' progress. Assessments are carried out by 10 occupationally experienced staff. Six assessors hold the relevant assessors' qualifications and the remaining four, who between them assess 10 of the distribution and warehousing learners, are working towards their assessors' qualifications. There are three qualified internal verifiers responsible for these training programmes.

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	26		71		26		29									
Retained*	25		32	45	5	19	1	3								
Successfully completed	0		5	7	4	15	1	3								
Still in learning	25		32	45	1	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																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		18		37											
Retained*	12		6	33	8	22										
Successfully completed	0		3	17	7	19										
Still in learning	12		6	33	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																
	2000-01															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	2															

*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

STRENGTHS

- good on-the-job training for many learners
- good learning resources for level 3 NVQ customer service programme

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- lack of awareness of key skills by some learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of monitoring learners' progress

58. There is good on-the-job training for many learners. ATG has strong links with a number of major national employers within the service and distribution industries. Many learners in customer service, and distribution and warehousing have access to a wide

variety of learning opportunities within the workplace. Some companies also offer an extensive range of additional training courses, covering areas such as manual handling, effective communication in the workplace and equality of opportunity. The workplaces provide good opportunities for gathering relevant, varied evidence. There is effective use of diverse evidence in the learners' portfolios. A number of companies also offer good opportunities for career progression. Learners are visited in the workplace by their assessor every three to four weeks and these visits are well planned. Assessments carried out in the workplace are satisfactory and individual action plans are written at the end of the visit. Learners' progress towards achievement is also recorded on the individual action plans, but this is written as a percentage and a few learners do not understand its significance.

59. All learners working towards the level 3 NVQ in customer service are issued with a candidate's handbook. This is an easily understood book for every learner to keep, both during and after completion of the training programme. It contains useful practical tips, ideas and guidance and is a reference and help for learners as they gather evidence from the workplace. Assessors use the book effectively during visits to the learners, who value this resource.

60. The achievement rates of modern apprenticeships have been poor, but there is evidence of an improving trend. Of the 29 learners starting the advanced programme in 1998-99, 3 per cent have achieved the full apprenticeship framework. The rate for 26 learners in 1999-2000 is 15 per cent, with one learner still on the training programme. Of the 37 learners on the 1999-2000 foundation programme, 19 per cent were successful. Retention rates have also been low, but are improving. Of the advanced modern apprentices on the 2000-01 training programme, 45 per cent are still in training. On the 2000-01 foundation modern apprenticeship programme, 32 per cent are still in training and a further 17 per cent have achieved the full apprenticeship framework.

61. The arrangements for assessing key skills are now satisfactory in customer service, but there is insufficient awareness of key skills by some learners on the distribution and warehousing foundation modern apprenticeships. These learners have been on their training programmes for four months of the 12-month programmes and are still unaware of key skills. Their individual learning plans are incomplete and make no reference to key skills training. Some employers are also unaware of the requirement of key skills training in the training programme. The distribution and warehousing programme is assessed by five members of staff, four of whom are not yet qualified to assess, but are working towards their qualification. The awarding body has approved the arrangements for countersignatures for these assessors. Most learners are unfamiliar with the practical use of the appeals procedure and many do not know the identity of their internal verifier.

62. A minority of employers are not involved fully in the training programme. Some employers are not given sufficient information regarding programme details and learners' progress. Employers are invited to attend the three-monthly learners' progress

reviews. There are some good communication links with employers at senior level, but this level of communication does not always filter down. Some learners are unsupported in their training programme by their employers and are unable to contact their assessors during work time.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	62	4

63. ATG provides advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and NVQ programmes in care and early years care and education. There are 33 learners on advanced modern apprenticeships, 18 learners on foundation modern apprenticeships and a further 11 learners working towards a level 2 NVQ. Of these, 42 learners are on early years care and education programmes and 20 are on care programmes. There are 57 female learners and five male learners. ATG works with 25 employers, consisting of 13 nurseries and 12 nursing homes and residential care homes. All learners are employed. Employers refer learners directly to ATG, who carry out an initial assessment, skills audit, key skills diagnostic audit and agree an individual learning plan with the learner at their workplace. ATG also carries out a health and safety audit of all employers at the start of training. Learners receive an induction from their employer and an induction into their training programme by ATG, which is carried out individually in the workplace. Assessment is carried out by work-based assessors and visiting assessors who work for ATG but are self-employed. ATG provides assessment and internal verification of the NVQ and key skills awards and employers provide the background knowledge and skills training in the workplace. Some nurseries provide background knowledge and key skills training in evening sessions twice a month. In other workplaces, the training is provided through individual mentoring by the assessor and personal study by the learner. Nurseries have their own training plans for all employees, including modern apprentices. In nurseries, learners have access to courses operated by a local early years and childcare development partnership. ATG subcontracts assessment and verification of some learners' NVQ and key skills awards to an assessment consortium specialising in care. Learners' progress is reviewed by their assessor. Key skills assessment and training are carried out in the workplace, although some learners receive training at the ATG business centre for their IT units.

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	14		14		40											
Retained*	0		8	57	11	28										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	14		8	57	11	28										

*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	8		13		28											
Retained*	0		9	69	1	4										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	8		9	69	1	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

STRENGTHS

- good training support for learners
- good links with employers
- good assessment practice in early years care and education

WEAKNESSES

- inconsistent provision of training programmes
- poor achievement rates
- incomplete individual learning plans
- poor assessment recording in care training

64. Learners are well supported by ATG's staff and by their employers to develop skills and self-confidence. One member of ATG's staff is responsible for the initial visits to the employer to sign up learners to the programme and start the induction process. The learner and workplace supervisor are both involved in this meeting, and a relaxed and friendly relationship is quickly established. This member of ATG's staff also plays a role in the pastoral support of learners and liaison with employers, and has counselling expertise. Assessors plan work and set targets with learners that are achievable, which learners understand. They give feedback on learners' progress and achievement. Assessors also provide informal training on knowledge and skills as part of the planning process. ATG ensures that learners in rural areas, who are often a long distance from ATG's office, are also visited regularly. Some employers make flexible arrangements for learners to undergo NVQ assessment during their work time and some provide access to a study/training room for learners. Employers provide good pastoral support to learners to ensure they remain motivated on their training programme and encourage learning and achievement. Learners who have assessors from the assessment consortium are able to receive individual certification for the units they achieve.

65. With the exception of learners in the two nursery groups, which operate their own training, learners receive skills and knowledge training individually. The training required for learners to be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge for their NVQ award is the responsibility of the employer. In childcare, some learners have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications in first aid and food hygiene, dependent on their nursery's training policy. ATG provides all learners with a good quality textbook, which is a very helpful resource for developing knowledge and understanding.

66. ATG has good links with employers. ATG's staff visit learners in their workplace at least monthly and share information on progress and achievement with employers and managers. Learners and employers are aware of the progress they have made and their targets for achievement. Assessors work with employers to ensure that learners have opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in the workplace. The contact and exchange of information between ATG and the employer is not always documented.

67. ATG uses self-employed assessors and verifiers on the care training programmes. Some hold the appropriate assessor and verifier awards, and the rest are working towards achieving them. The assessment consortium has staff with occupational and NVQ experience and qualifications.

68. In early years care and education, there is good assessment practice. Learners have a thorough understanding of the assessment process and have control of it. They are able to plan their assessments confidently, with the support of their assessor, and to gather a range of evidence based on their work practice. They record and reference it efficiently. ATG has devised a recording format, which has been approved by the awarding body, which enables learners to record their evidence effectively.

69. The training required for learners to obtain an NVQ is not planned or monitored by ATG. As a result, the training programmes vary in coverage and development, depending on the employer provision.

70. No learners have completed the objectives of their individual learning plans in the past four years. The achievement of NVQs is poor. In 1999-2000, 35 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved an NVQ as did 23 per cent of foundation modern apprentices. In 1999-2000, 70 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 94 per cent of foundation modern apprentices left their training programme without completing the objectives of their individual learning plans. In 2000-01, the retention rates of learners improved, with 60 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 67 per cent of foundation modern apprentices remaining on their training programmes. One NVQ-only learner started and completed the qualification in 2000-01.

71. Key skills training and assessment are at the end of the learners' programmes and are not integral to the NVQ awards, which has created additional work for learners. ATG has remedied this recently and new learners now have their key skills planned for assessment alongside their NVQs. Assessors are also being trained to assess key skills as part of the NVQ. No learners have completed their full key skills qualification.

72. Individual learning plans contain details of NVQ and key skills units to be achieved. The results of initial assessments are not always recorded. Optional units are listed incorrectly in the plans used for the level 3 NVQ care award and, in many cases, the optional units that learners have chosen are not recorded in their plan. Target dates are not set for the completion of optional units and the same date is entered for the completion of all five mandatory units. In many cases, the achievement of NVQ and key skills units has not been recorded on the plan.

73. In care training, some observed assessments are recorded poorly, particularly in the areas of equal opportunities and abuse. They do not detail how learners meet the standards required. Outdated reporting methods have been used to examine knowledge evidence. Some aspects of knowledge evidence for the NVQ in care are not tested sufficiently, particularly in the area of equal opportunities.

74. Progress reviews are carried out by assessors each month and are shared with employers informally. The progress reviews are not always evaluative and some contain insufficient analysis to provide guidance for the learner.

Good Practice

One assessor encourages two nannies working on their own in private houses to work together. They have been observed while carrying out a range of activities which they provided for the children.