

INSPECTION REPORT

Mobile Care Qualifications Limited

29 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
- the University for Industry's **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

Established in 1994, Mobile Care Qualifications Limited is a private training company providing work-based learning programmes in health, social care and public services and early years care and education. Training is also provided in business administration, management and professional, customer service, retailing and transportation. These areas were not inspected.

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 in health, social care and public services is satisfactory. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory and equality of opportunity is good.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective support for employers
- open and consultative management style
- positive action to widen participation in training for all sectors of society
- particularly good support for individual learners
- good off-the-job training
- wide range of additional qualifications and resources for learners

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient strategic development planning

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- inadequate monitoring of the workplace
- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor opportunities for learners to attend induction and off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better internal verification sampling
- better practical training resources in early years care and education
- greater sharing of analysis of learners' and employers' feedback among staff
- more effective use of individual learning plans
- better identification of strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Mobile Care Qualifications Limited (MCQ) in Newcastle from 29 April to 2 May 2002. They met 56 learners, interviewed 21 of MCQ's staff, and one subcontractor, visited 18 work placements, interviewed 14 employers and workplace supervisors, inspected 36 learners' portfolios and 11 individual learning plans. Inspectors observed four training sessions or progress reviews and inspected a wide range of documents, including learners' records, management files, audit reports for other quality assessments, evaluation questionnaires on learner and employer satisfaction, publications, letters from learners, training programme schedules, training session plans and evaluation sheets, training observation reports, data sheets, minutes of meetings and procedures manuals. They examined the resources available for the training programmes and studied MCQ's most recent self-assessment report and action plan, which was produced in February 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	4
Total	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	4

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. MCQ is a private training company based in Newcastle, which was established in 1994 by its current managing and training director. The senior management board comprises the managing director, company secretary and the training and development officer. There are 10 full-time and two part-time staff, and two subcontractors provide training in first aid and fire safety. The company contracts with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and has a franchise arrangement with a local college for training in care, promoting independence and early years care and education. Although established originally to provide training to those employed in the care sector, notably care for the elderly, three years ago MCQ introduced training in early years care and education. Learners are mainly working towards modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs). However, MCQ also provides short courses in food hygiene, first aid, manual handling, fire safety and clinical activities. These courses support the professional development of those working in care. Learners can work towards additional qualifications and some go on to nursing or management training. Other training programmes in business administration, management and professional, and retailing, customer service and transportation, together with commercial training programmes, are also provided.

3. Tyne and Wear is divided into the five local authority districts of Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and North and South Tyneside. Unemployment in these districts is between 3.8 per cent and 10.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.9 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 1.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportions of young people achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, in Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland, were 49.3 per cent, 36.7 per cent, 46.6 per cent, 39.1 per cent, and 39.2 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Retention and achievement rates are poor in health, care and public services for foundation and advanced modern apprentices. For example, of the 58 learners who started the advanced modern apprenticeship training programme in 2000-01, four achieved the full framework and 46 left the training programme early. Of the 75 learners who started the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme in 2000-01, five completed the full framework and 61 left the training programme early.

5. There is good individual learner support. Training centre staff have a good understanding of the learners' personal circumstances, and respond quickly and effectively to any difficulties experienced by the learners. Off-the-job training is good and meets the requirements of the NVQ. There is a good range of practical resources and learners are able to use realistic workplace equipment during their off-the-job training. Good individual guidance is provided for learners in portfolio-building, with optional training sessions held at the training centre each week. Learners are able to work towards a wide range of additional qualifications, including first aid, manual handling, fire safety, food hygiene and health and safety. Assessment of learners is poor in some areas. Planning of assessment is not sufficiently detailed and many assessors do not attend relevant meetings. Induction for some learners is poor. Some learners are not released for their off-the-job training by their employers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

6. MCQ is a private training company, owned and led by a managing and training director. A management board, comprising the director, company secretary and the training and development officer has responsibility for the strategic planning of the company. A management team reviews learners' and employers' issues and progress towards the business plan. The management team comprises of all the members of the board and the modern apprenticeship co-ordinator. There are monthly meetings of the management board, management team and all staff. Teams of assessors, trainers and internal verifiers meet weekly to review learners' progress, discuss targets, staffing issues and assessment practice. The work-based learning programme is managed by the training and development officer. MCQ employs 10 full-time and two part-time staff. Additionally, two subcontractors give learners training in first aid and fire safety. The company has an equal opportunities policy and a complaints and appeals procedure. MCQ has written procedures for most of its activities, held in a manual in each office. These are quality assured through an internal audit system. In 2001, MCQ was accredited as an Investor in People, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The company holds ISO 9001, an international quality assurance standard. The first self-assessment report was produced in 1998. Self-assessment has been carried out annually and was last updated in February 2002 in preparation for inspection.

STRENGTHS

- effective support for employers
- open and consultative management style
- good staff appraisal and development
- effective initiative to widen participation in training
- good staff involvement in prompting continuous improvement
- particularly effective process for evaluating training sessions

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient target-setting
- inadequate strategic development planning
- weak recording and monitoring of identified actions
- inadequate monitoring of learners in the workplace

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better staff induction process through observation of experienced trainers
- better identification of strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report
- more effective sharing of analysis of learners' and employers' feedback among staff
- more opportunity for learners to give anonymous feedback

7. Employers receive good support from MCQ, which includes updates and information through newsletters and regular visits from trainers. This strength was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Many employers have attended training seminars about legislation changes, management training and health and safety. The director of MCQ encourages employers to join industry and professional organisations. Learners benefit from on-the-job training by workplace supervisors and managers who have up-to-date knowledge of industry, health and safety and legislation changes. Many workplace supervisors have taken assessors' awards through MCQ and are encouraged to continue with internal verifier and teaching qualifications. One employer uses the MCQ training rooms to train its own staff. An annual newsletter informs managers about training events, dates of work-based assessors' meetings, staff news, new awards and updates to qualifications, funding and external verifier feedback.

8. The management style of MCQ is open, with frequent staff meetings. Managers consult staff when making decisions and staff are well informed.

9. There is good staff appraisal and development. Managers annually appraise all staff on their performance. A wide range of documents is used, including the staff member's self-assessment, learners' evaluations, and observations of training. The appraisal process enables staff to agree targets and training and development needs for the following year. Training for staff includes assessor and internal verifier training, NVQs, degrees and counselling certificates. One day each month is set aside for staff training and development.

10 MCQ has a computerised management information system. The company secretary informs staff of achievement of LSC targets at staff meetings. The company does not set its own targets for the number of learners starting training programmes, retention or achievement rates, but bases its targets on the LSC contract. While teams are assessed on their ability to achieve these targets, staff do not understand how these targets relate to them individually.

11. Strategic development planning is inadequate. Objectives are identified in the business plan, but there are no specific strategies identified to achieve them. There are no mechanisms to evaluate successful achievement of the objectives. The self-assessment development plan is used for this purpose, but is inadequate for all of the company's activities. The development plan does not contain all development activities. Where necessary actions are identified at an operational level, there is

insufficient consideration of basic skills issues and the timing of training sessions, at strategic level.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

12. Equality of opportunity is good. The company works well to effectively widen participation in the training programmes. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively and complies with a nationally approved disability standard. The company funds the appropriate check when potential learners require police clearance before starting employment in the care sector. Recruitment procedures are good, however, targets are not set for the recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups or learners with additional learning and social needs. There is an equal opportunity policy statement in the staff handbook, learners' induction pack and the employers' information pack. All promotional material carries the statement that the company is an equal opportunities organisation. The learners' induction includes clear guidance to prevent bullying and harassment in the workplace and explains the complaints and grievance procedures. Most learners understand these procedures. Learners and staff receive good pastoral support. Staff are able to be involved in management decisions and learners express good support from staff.

13. MCQ provides all employers with a copy of its equal opportunities policy. It does not confirm or record if employers have their own equal opportunities policy statement. Although staff visit learners in their work placements to routinely check that learners are aware of their entitlements, this is not recorded. There is no formal procedure to reinforce learners' understanding of equal opportunities or record when this is carried out. Equality of opportunity is monitored during observation of training. Training resources use appropriate images of learners. There is an effective network of contacts to provide appropriate support for learners with additional learning and social needs. Training sessions can take place on the ground floor training rooms for those with mobility problems.

14. Recent initiatives to widen participation in training include involving year 11 learners, with a history of not attending school, in short courses on food hygiene, first aid and manual handling techniques in a learning environment different from school. MCQ awarded certificates for regular attendance and completion of courses. A workshop was also held on recruitment and training for employers, to improve recruitment procedures for learners from under-represented groups. There is effective use of advertisements on the backs of local buses, in commercial address and telephone directories and the company's newsletter, to encourage wider recruitment of both men and learners from minority ethnic groups. Learners on training programmes with MCQ comprise a higher than sector average of men and learners from minority ethnic groups. The ratio of men starting with MCQ for the current year is 15 per cent, compared with the a national average of men working in care of 8 per cent. The proportion of minority ethnic learners starting training was 1.6 per cent, compared with the Tyneside average of 0.95 per cent.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

15. MCQ has a quality assurance policy, which states clearly the purpose and systems

for its procedures, paperwork, internal verification and resources. Although issues relating to learners are discussed at meetings, quality assurance is not an agenda item. The company secretary, who is responsible for quality assurance, annually updates the system. There are regular, bi-monthly audits which effectively monitor internal procedures and paperwork. In 2002, the company secretary has reviewed and developed the sampling system for audits to one focused on the paperwork and systems used by learners during their training programme. Health and safety and the learners' induction to the workplace are monitored thoroughly by one of the subcontractors. There is, however, insufficient quality assurance of other aspects of the learners' training programmes, in the workplace. The written procedures do not describe how quality assurance takes place in the workplace. Key aspects provided by employers, including on-the-job training, supervision and support, are not systematically monitored. There is no established process by which MCQ monitors workplace supervision and learner support. The modern apprenticeship co-ordinator, who visits up to 20 learners in one day, identifies problems and reports these to the management team. This system is inadequate. There is insufficient monitoring of the tasks carried out in the workplace by staff from MCQ. MCQ did not identify learners' concerns relating to their on-the-job training for early years care and education until a member of staff had left their employment. The company has recently devised a system for staff to report any poor practice observed in the workplace to the management team.

16. There is good staff involvement in promoting continuous improvement. Staff regularly discuss issues, identify solutions and make recommendations for change during meetings. Actions are implemented quickly, and staff can easily identify changes they have implemented that impact on systems and training. Staff initiatives have improved induction, progress reviews, internal verification and resources. The minutes of meetings do not always contain sufficient details of the discussion of improvements. Although meetings are generally well attended, when staff are absent, the discussions in support of recommended changes and agreed actions are not well recorded. Actions for improvement are also identified through self-assessment, the business plan, training evaluations, learners' questionnaires, internal audit and reviews by external organisations. There are insufficient recorded action plans used by the company. Once an action is agreed, there is insufficient follow-up or monitoring of the progress towards its completion.

17. There is a particularly effective process for evaluating training sessions. A well-designed list is used to evaluate each trainer's preparation and presentation of training sessions. Trainers self-evaluate every training session and collect and evaluate learners' feedback as part of this process. Trainers also observe colleagues' training sessions, to develop their own training and industry skills. The director of MCQ observes all trainers annually.

18. Learners complete detailed feedback questionnaires at the start, during and at end of their training programme. Analysis of the results of the questionnaires is not readily available and many staff are unaware of the findings. Learners are requested to give their name and company so that staff can follow up any specific comments. Learners are

unable to give anonymous feedback about the support they receive from staff during their training programme.

19. MCQ has many work-based assessors that support their own team of assessors and internal verifiers. This team is co-ordinated by the training and development officer, with standardisation of assessment through the weekly assessment board meetings. Although assessment practice is generally satisfactory, some unsatisfactory assessment is carried out by the work-based assessors. The company internally verifies all NVQ units for each learner, rather than having a sampling strategy and plan.

20. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and have written individual reports on the training provided by MCQ. These are incorporated by the company secretary into the company's self-assessment report, supported by a development plan.

Good Practice

Most learners are employed when they start their training programme. The company holds a recruitment and selection seminar for employers to encourage a good, consistent and fair recruitment process. The content is linked into the management charter initiative standards. Topics covered throughout the day include advertising, person specifications, selection processes, interview techniques, making a decision, the law and discrimination.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	178	3

21. There are 178 learners on training programmes in health, social care and public services. Of these, 88 learners are foundation modern apprentices and 73 are advanced modern apprentices. Thirty-seven learners are on training programmes in early years care and education. There are also 17 learners on other work-based learning programmes in care. Most learners are employed and come to MCQ through their employer. Seventeen learners were referred to MCQ by Connexions or recruited by recommendation from current learners or employers. Care learners are employed in home care, residential and nursing homes for the elderly and people with physical disabilities. Early years care and education learners are employed in primary schools, play groups and nursery settings. MCQ covers a wide geographical area around Newcastle and Durham. Learners are assessed in the workplace by staff from MCQ or work-based assessors. Internal verification and training are carried out by staff from MCQ. A member of staff is responsible for key skills training and assessment. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. There are three optional, informal training sessions each week where staff are available to offer learners additional help. All training is carried out at the training centre in Newcastle or on the employer's 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		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	33		58		58		43		62							
Retained*	0		12		12		18		17	27							
Successfully completed	0		4		5		11		14	23							
Still in learning	30		27		14		2		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	53		75		62											
Retained*	0		14		24												
Successfully completed	0		5		9												
Still in learning	47		30		11												

*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		1994-95														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	24															
Retained*	0																
Successfully completed	0																
Still in learning	17																

*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 individual learner support
- good off-the-job training
- good range of practical resources
- good individual guidance in portfolio-building
- wide range of additional qualifications and courses for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor assessment practice by some work-based assessors
- poor induction and off-the-job training for some learners
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective use of individual learning plans
- better communication of initial assessment results to learners
- better internal verification sampling
- better practical training resources in early years care and education

22. There is good individual learner support, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Training centre staff visit learners in the workplace each month to carry out progress reviews. They have a good understanding of the learners' personal circumstances, and respond quickly and effectively to any difficulties experienced by the learners. Off-the-job training is provided according to the individual needs of learners. Learners are provided with their assessors' mobile phone numbers if they need additional advice. Staff visit learners at home, in the workplace, during holiday periods, or during night duty, to carry out assessment or provide additional guidance. Many learners state that they have received particularly effective help with personal issues. Staff provide transport to learners to attend the training centre. Learners value this support, which is enhanced by the good working relationships between staff from MCQ and employers. Some learners, who have completed their training programmes, are assisted with additional professional development and training.

23. Off-the-job training sessions are well planned and well structured and meet the requirements of the NVQ. Learners and employers receive a weekly training programme schedule. Learners from a variety of work placements attend the training sessions and are able to effectively share their knowledge and experience with each other. Learners are encouraged to identify how they can learn more effectively. Key skills training and assessment is an integral part of the vocational qualification and the collecting of key skills evidence is a planned part of the off-the-job training programmes. Staff have shared good practice by writing a CD-ROM programme to help those working in care and early years care and education. Specific training sessions are arranged to cover the individual requirements of learners. MCQ also provides work-related training for employers. Learners enjoy the training and gain confidence in their jobs.

24. There is a good range of practical resources. Training sessions are integrated thoroughly with workplace practices. Off-the-job training, in practical subjects for care, uses realistic workplace equipment, such as moving and handling equipment, furniture, resuscitation equipment and clinical products, to improve learners' understanding of good working practice and develop their practical skills. Training rooms are good and there is a designated information technology (IT) room with eight computers and Internet access. There are, however, fewer resources for learners on early years care and education training programmes.

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25. Learners are given effective, individual help and guidance in portfolio-building and developing their knowledge. There are three optional, informal sessions at the training centre each week. One session is in the evening, for those learners unable to attend during the day due to work commitments. MCQ also provides transport to the training centre. Staff are available to provide individual help with both the NVQ and key skills. Learners also receive effective support in the workplace from staff who visit during late shifts, as well as during the day. Staff working towards their assessor qualifications are also offered this service. Learners are also able to work towards a wide range of additional qualifications, in first aid, manual handling, fire safety, food hygiene and health and safety. This training, which is mandatory for the care sector, is provided at the training centre or in the workplace. Learners are also encouraged to achieve additional qualifications, which enhance their professional development and personal confidence.

26. There is poor assessment of learners in some areas. Planning of assessment is not sufficiently detailed. Some learners are not observed for units where this is a requirement of the qualification. Many assessors do not attend assessor standardisation meetings and there are differing standards of assessment. Some learners near to completion of their NVQ have no records of observation of practice.

27. Some learners have not received a formal off-the-job induction. These learners are not adequately prepared to start their training programme and make slow progress. Some learners do not attend training sessions. Many learners are not released for off-the-job training by their employers. Some learners are not aware of the availability of transport. Some learners are only assessed by an assessor at the training centre. These learners do not have sufficient meetings with their assessors and make slow progress. Some learners who have been on their training programme for two years or more and have completed only one or two units of their NVQ.

28. Retention and achievement rates are poor for both foundation and advanced modern apprentices. Of the 43 learners who started the advanced modern apprenticeship training programme in 1998-99, 11 completed the full framework and 25 left early. Of the 58 learners who started in 1999-2000, five completed the full framework and 46 left early. Of the 58 learners who started in 2000-01, four achieved the full framework and 46 left early. Of the 62 learners who started the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme in 1999-2000, nine completed the full framework and 38 left the training programme early. Of the 75 learners who started in 2000-01, five completed the full framework and 61 left the training programme early.

29. Learners carry out an initial assessment during their induction. This includes literacy and numeracy skills and an assessment of their learning style. The results of initial assessment are not recorded sufficiently on individual learning plans. Staff have not been provided with effective training in interpreting basic assessment results. Learners do not receive detailed results of the initial assessment but do receive additional basic skills support where this is identified. Learners complete an individual learning plan at the start of the training programme. Most learners do not see this plan again during their training. There are effective monthly progress reviews. There is insufficient

recording of on- and off-the-job training. Internal verification procedures are currently being developed to introduce a sampling system. At the time of inspection, no sample plan was available as internal verifiers were considering all assessment options. There is observation of assessment by assessors, but this is not recorded.

Good Practice

One learner, who started on New Deal, was offered an additional qualification resulting in full-time employment, transfer to a modern apprenticeship and progression to level 3.