

INSPECTION REPORT

Norfolk Training Services Limited

24 June 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

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

Norfolk Training Services Limited was originally set up as an association in 1969 and became a limited company in 1974. The organisation's offices and main training premises are in Norwich, with a satellite training centre in King's Lynn. The company offers work-based learning for young people in engineering, business administration, information and communications technology, retailing, customer service and transportation, and foundation programmes. As there were too few learners in information and communications technology at the time of inspection, this area was not graded. The company also contracts with Jobcentre Plus to offer adult programmes for basic employability training, short job focused training, longer occupational training, full-time education and training, the intensive activity period and short intensive basic skills provision.

Overall judgement

The overall quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, work-based learning for young people is unsatisfactory in engineering and business administration. Work-based learning for young people and adults is very weak for retailing, customer service and transportation. Within these areas, work-based learning for young people is very weak and arrangements for adults are unsatisfactory. Foundation programmes for adults are satisfactory. The leadership and management and quality assurance of Norfolk Training Services are very weak. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	5
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	5

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

NORFOLK TRAINING SERVICES LIMITED

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Retailing, customer service & transportation	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	4

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- comprehensive individual support for learners
- effective marketing and recruitment strategy, which promotes inclusion
- good use of work experience for learners in basic employability training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress towards NVQ achievement
- poor progress review practice
- poor understanding of NVQs by employers
- poor management information systems
- poor management of training programmes
- inadequate self-assessment process
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better integration of key skills with vocational training
- better off-the-job training resources
- wider range of evidence in NVQ portfolios
- better use of initial assessment to develop individual learning plans
- further reinforcement of induction

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 13 inspectors spent a total of 52 days at Norfolk Training Services Limited (NTS) in June 2002. Inspectors carried out 73 interviews with NTS's staff and interviewed 123 learners, 66 workplace supervisors and visited 77 employers. They examined 61 portfolios of evidence, 86 individual learning plans, company documents, and documents from the local learning and skills council (LSC) and awarding bodies. Inspectors observed and graded 20 learning sessions. They also studied the organisation's self-assessment report which was produced in August 2001.

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	2	2	4	0	0	8
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6
Foundation programmes	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	6
Total	0	0	8	7	5	0	0	20

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. NTS's managing director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organisation, and reports to the board, which is made up of four shareholders, of whom the managing director is the only full-time member. The organisation has 87 full- and part-time staff and 20 casual staff. There are six departments within the organisation, of which four are involved with government-funded training. NTS has contracts with Norfolk LSC and Jobcentre Plus. There are 332 learners on youth programmes. Of these, 139 are foundation modern apprentices, 37 are advanced modern apprentices and 152 are on other work-based learning programmes. There are two learners on the Life Skills programme and two on preparatory training. Forty-one per cent of learners are employed. There are 143 clients on adult training programmes, 18 are on basic employability training (BET), 74 are on the intensive activity period (IAP), five are on the full-time education and training option, 38 are on longer occupation training (LOT), and eight are on short job focused training (SJFT).

3. NTS operates in Norfolk, North Suffolk, and the Waverney area which is rural. In Norfolk, there are a significant number of jobs in the service industry. In April 2002, the unemployment rate for Norfolk was 2.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.1 per cent. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is less than 1 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 50 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Achievement rates are poor in engineering, business administration and retailing, customer service and warehousing. In engineering, only 5 per cent of advanced modern apprentices completed the framework over the past five years. Less than 1 per cent of learners completed a foundation modern apprenticeship in the past four years. Achievement rates of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are declining from 6 per cent in 1999-2000, to under 1 per cent in 2000-01. In business administration, only 9 per cent of advanced modern apprentices completed the framework over the past five years. Under 4 per cent of learners have completed a foundation modern apprenticeship over the past four years. None of the learners on NVQ training who started after 1998-99 have achieved a qualification. Of those who started between 1996 and 1998, 10 per cent achieved. In retailing, customer service and transportation, none of the 85 advanced modern apprentices, in the past five years, have completed the framework. Six per cent of foundation modern apprentices have completed over the past four years and 1 per cent achieved an NVQ.

5. There is good training and effective observations at work placements for learners in engineering. However, progress for some learners is slow and some learners have been training since 1995-96. The training programmes do not have specific, measurable targets. Progress reviews are inadequate and have insufficient focus on learners' progress towards their NVQ, and targets are not set. Employers' knowledge of the NVQ is poor. There is good support for learners on business administration programmes and there are many examples of good assessment practices. There is also good achievement of additional qualifications by learners who do not have a work placement. Individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed and do not show individual target dates. Co-ordination of training is inadequate and on-the-job training is frequently unplanned and not effectively linked to the NVQ. Learners in retailing, customer service, and transportation programmes are well supported and there are well-matched work placements. There is slow progress on NVQ training programmes and some poor awareness of the NVQ process by learners. The monitoring of learners' progress is ineffective and there are no detailed targets set at progress reviews. The key skills training and assessment are not an integral part of the NVQ for learners in retailing, customer service and warehousing programmes.

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults

6. Training in retailing, customer service, transportation and warehousing is unsatisfactory. Training on the foundation programme, which includes BET and those in the IAP is satisfactory. The organisation collects some information relating to performance, but it does not collect reliable data on which inspectors could make judgements about the retention and achievement rates and those who go into employment.

7. All clients attend an induction and carry out an initial assessment of basic skills. Learners' progress is reviewed by NTS and Jobcentre Plus. Progression routes include employment, work-based learning and further education. In retailing, customer service and transportation, 26 per cent of the 211 clients have progressed into employment, 26 per cent have completed their learning programme and 18 per cent are still in learning. There are good placements which are well matched to clients' needs. Clients also receive a good level of personal and pastoral care. There is slow progress for clients on NVQ programmes. Monitoring of progress is inadequate and targets are not set as part of the review process. There is insufficient jobsearch for clients at one training centre. For those clients on foundation programmes, there is some good teaching and good individual support. For clients on BET, there is good use of work placements, but individual needs are not always met for the clients in the IAP. There are some poor support materials and poor accommodation at one training centre.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 5

8. The managing director has overall responsibility for the management of the organisation and for monitoring quality assurance. He oversees six departments with their associated managers. Four of the managers are directly responsible for the government-funded training programmes. A head of services oversees the administration department and another manager oversees the commercially funded department. Each manager produces an annual business plan and an associated budget. NTS is contracted to offer government-funded training by the Norfolk LSC and Jobcentre Plus. Managers are responsible for the recruitment, training and development of their own staff. NTS is accredited with the Investors in People standard, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The organisation also has external ISO accreditation, which is an international quality assurance standard. The organisation has an equal opportunities policy and procedures. Self-assessment takes place annually, and the current report was produced in August 2001.

STRENGTHS

- good internal communications
- effective marketing and recruitment strategy, which promotes inclusion

WEAKNESSES

- poor management information system
- poor management of training programmes
- inadequate promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity in work placements
- inadequate access for learners with restricted mobility
- inadequate self-assessment process
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements

9. Internal communications are good. The monthly managers' meeting has standard agenda items such as progress on meeting income targets, quality assurance, health and safety, equal opportunities and departmental reports. The minutes have a separate sheet which identifies the key action points arising from the meeting. Data relating to the achievement of the LSC's targets are discussed in detail at the meetings. Reports from the quality monitoring system are discussed and actions are identified. Care is taken to ensure that the staff who are based in King's Lynn are included in all company activities. For example, the King's Lynn manager attends the monthly meetings, and tutors and assessors at King's Lynn meet regularly with their counterparts at Norwich. Managers usually update staff after the managers' meetings and also hold regular team meetings with their staff. There are regular informal contacts with the managing director in Norwich and King's Lynn.

10. The management information system is poor. Regular checks are made on learners' records, but there were a number of instances when reliable learner information was difficult to find. Data relating to achievement by each year's starters are confusing and inaccurate, and are not routinely used to measure performance. The names of qualifications are at times incorrectly recorded, creating confusion as to what programmes the learners are undertaking. Information relating to the amount of learners on different programmes varies between what is held centrally and what is held in departments. Records are not always up to date and some records relating to achievements are unreliable, making them difficult to measure. Learners have changed training programmes but the records do not always show this. The names of workplace contacts are not always correct. Data on employers are not formally shared between the adult and youth placement teams. Local databases have been developed by teams to give better management information relating to learners than that produced centrally.

11. Training programmes are poorly managed. The training process is divided into four departments, each responsible for a different stage, such as recruitment and initial assessment, induction, placement and training. The organisation has two training departments, one responsible for engineering and the other responsible for the remaining programmes. A number of weaknesses were identified during inspection in both departments. Action plans are developed and managed at department level rather than any overall co-ordination of activities to deal with areas such as employer knowledge of, and involvement in, NVQs and ineffective target-setting. There is poor management of equal opportunities in the workplace. Retention and achievement rates on youth programmes have been poor for the past four years. The organisation has produced a strategy document aimed at improving the retention rates but it has been ineffective. It does not contain sufficient targets against which progress can be measured. Target-setting is inadequate. Many of the staff are aware of the need to improve the retention rates but have not been given specific targets. The company is not meeting its contractual target for successful outcomes in the current financial year, with only 29 outcomes against the contracted 220. It is, however, currently achieving the overall contracted number of starts on youth programmes, with 391 actual starts against the contract for 394.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

12. NTS has marketing and recruitment strategies that promote inclusion. They predominately target under-represented learners, such as women in the driving and motor vehicle mechanic occupational areas and those from minority ethnic groups. NTS participates in a number of school careers exhibitions, at which it provides 'taster' sessions in motor vehicle mechanics and offers work experience to pupils. The Norwich and King's Lynn training centres have effective contacts with a unit which offers education for pupils who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Work experience has resulted in recruitment to foundation modern apprenticeships for some pupils. NTS has developed strong links and good communications with Connexions and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that the individual needs of each learner are understood. This is now being expanded to include prospective adult learners. NTS has a flexible approach to its recruitment processes and arranges interviews and induction away from the training centre when required.

13. NTS has produced an equal opportunities policy which is distributed to staff and learners. However, it is not managed effectively and is not fully implemented in some of the work placements. There is insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace. Learners are given information about equal opportunities during their induction programme, but it is not always reinforced when the learner starts work. Monitoring relies on the assessors, but they have an inconsistent approach when checking that employers understand equality of opportunity. Some employers have no recollection of being asked for confirmation that their company has an equal opportunities policy and very few reported that the assessor raised the topic during their visits. There is inadequate monitoring of equality of opportunity for some learners during progress reviews. All assessors complete review documents, but the version for adults does not include a section on equal opportunities. While some learners recall equality of opportunity being discussed during their induction, they do not all recall it being discussed at progress reviews.

14. Access for learners with restricted mobility is inadequate. There is a portable ramp to the entrance of one building, but no dropped kerb for ease of mobility for wheelchair users. A new permanent ramp has recently been constructed, but it is incomplete. There are no adapted toilet facilities at Norwich or King's Lynn. A modernised teaching room is not suitable for wheelchair users. Accessibility was not included in the self-assessment report.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 5**

15. Self-assessment and the production of the report are carried out at departmental level and then compiled into a full report. However, they are not sufficiently linked and trends and company-wide issues are not effectively identified. Staff are consulted, but there is insufficient feedback from employers, learners and other partners involved in the training process. Learner and employer feedback is collected each month and reports are produced using a software package. However, these reports focus on the proportion of satisfied respondents, rather than gathering information from those who are not satisfied. There is a system for checking individual feedback and identifying areas for attention. At one training centre, a manager has recently visited 30 work placements to gather feedback from employers, but this is not a regular planned activity which is managed by the organisation. The organisation has not used feedback to identify trends over time. There is insufficient understanding of the self-assessment process by those responsible. The report is very descriptive and is insufficiently evaluative. It does not contain adequate judgements about performance, on which action plans can be based. The organisation is aware of problems with retention and achievement rates, but they were not identified as key weaknesses by the organisation, and the development plan does not include actions to deal with it. The action plans are the responsibility of individual departments, but staff are not always aware of their existence. There is no overall procedure to ensure that they are regularly updated. Some plans do not have measurable targets and they are undated. The quality of action plans varies between departments. Self-assessment does not effectively contribute to the continuous improvement of the organisation.

16. The quality management system has been in existence since 1993 and the procedures have not changed. Procedures for government-funded training were produced in October 2000. All procedures are out of date as they refer to job descriptions, terms and organisations which are no longer in operation. They are in the process of being updated, but the new procedures, such as management review, are not directly linked to self-assessment. Some procedures are very brief and have insufficient detail to ensure consistency in practices such as internal verification. Individual departments have developed their own systems for internal verification, resulting in some inconsistencies and variations. Procedures, such as those relating to equal opportunities, are not always followed and this has not been picked up by the organisation. There is no system to quality assure the training through observations. Twenty-five per cent of learning sessions were judged as unsatisfactory by inspectors. There is no regular auditing of procedures. Audit documents are not always completed and it is difficult to see if actions are followed up. Audit is not used effectively to improve standards in the organisation.

Good Practice

One learner who had been involved in a local theatre for voluntary work experience, felt unable to visit the training centre for an initial interview or induction. A member of staff arranged to visit the learner at the theatre and carried out an induction there.

Poor Practice

One learner was asked by a visiting assessor if they felt that they were being fairly treated by their employer. The question was asked in front of the organisation's managing director.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	212	4

17. NTS offers qualifications in vehicle mechanical/electrical repair and maintenance, vehicle body repair, vehicle paint refinishing and performing engineering operations. There are 212 learners, 16 on advanced modern apprenticeships, 79 on foundation modern apprenticeships and 117 on NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are two learners on engineering production at level 3. There are also four clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes. Learners are recruited through the careers service, at job fairs, directly by NTS or by employers. Most of the learners are employed or in work placement, but 43 are based in a training centre waiting for placements. Work locations range from small independent businesses to large automobile main dealerships. Learners who are not in placement, attend the training centres for three days each week. Learners are given vocational training one day every fortnight at the training centres and the remaining time is spent with the work placements or employers. Key skills are taught at the training centres and some learners attend for a further half-day a fortnight for this training. The engineering department has a manager, and eight full-time and three part-time assessor/trainers. Most of the assessors are occupationally qualified, have relevant industrial experience and either have, or are working towards, their assessor qualifications. One person has a teaching qualification. There are two qualified internal verifiers and one who is currently training. The assessor/trainers visit learners in the workplace to carry out progress reviews and assessment.

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.	%
Number of starts	2		9		12		17		38					
Retained*	0		0		5		4		5					
Successfully completed	0		0		1		0		3					
Still in learning	2		5		3		5		1					

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	57		85		58		20									
Retained*	0		0		4		6									
Successfully completed	0		0		0		1									
Still in learning	39		30		7		3									

*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		1997-98		1996-97		1995-96			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	90		168		179		114		142		47		6			
Retained*	1		29		53		46		41		20		6			
Successfully completed	0		1		10		18		18		8		1			
Still in learning	39		44		19		7		3		2		3			

*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
- effective observations of work-based activities

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications
- poor progress review practice
- poor understanding of NVQs by employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better integration of key skills with vocational training
- more work placements
- better resources for off-the-job training
- wider range of evidence in NVQ portfolios

18. There is a wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace. Employers range from large multinational manufacturer's main agents to small independent garages and some wood-related companies. Facilities in most motor vehicle workshops are modern and meet current industrial requirements. These facilities range from general-purpose repair equipment to high technology equipment for repairs on modern vehicles. Learners are supervised by experienced tradespeople who have good practical and technical knowledge. Many employers cover a range of tasks from basic operations to complex tasks. Learners progress to more demanding tasks as they gain experience.

19. Most learners are visited by an NTS assessor every four to six weeks. The assessors observe the learner carrying out everyday tasks, question their technical knowledge and give feedback. The actions for the next visit are clearly recorded and cross-referenced to the NVQ units. After the observation, learners write up a job card on the activity observed. The cards are then included in the learners' portfolio of evidence.

20. Retention and achievement rates are poor. Over the past five years, only 52 of the 991 learners have achieved their qualifications and 212 learners remain on the programme. Only five learners have completed a modern apprenticeship framework over the past five years.

21. Progress for some learners is slow and some learners have been training since 1995-96. Assessors have not set specific, measurable targets for learners to help motivation and aid progression. Target-setting has just started, but has yet to make an impact on learners' progress or achievement. Summative assessment does not take place until the end of the NVQ, and unit accreditation is not available. Progress is also affected by a lack of support by some employers that do not encourage attendance at off-the-job training sessions. There is also slow progression into employment for some learners who spend four years in a work placement.

22. Progress review procedures are poor. Most learners are aware of the length of time they will spend training and the overall targets they have to achieve, but they have little knowledge of their short-term training programme and targets. Reviews do not focus sufficiently on learners' progress towards achieving their NVQ. Employers and work-placement providers are not involved in target-setting and this makes it difficult for them to co-ordinate the on- and off-the-job training. Few of the progress reviews mention key skills or additional learning or social needs. Equal opportunities is dealt with in a

superficial way. Reviews are not always carried out at the required intervals.

23. Employers are not given information and guidance on NVQs and how to help their learner achieve the qualification. NTS does not inform employers of any necessary improvements it has identified from observations.

24. Key skills are not always an integral part of the vocational training. Key skills in the wood-related occupational area is just about to start and some learners are approaching the second year of their training programme. They are taught by specialists on a different day to the normal off-the-job training.

25. Forty-three learners do not have a work placement. Geographically suitable locations are not always available to learners who do not have convenient methods of transport.

26. Off-the-job training takes place at both of the providers' training centres. At one site, classroom facilities are small and do not have modern facilities. At the other site, new building work is providing additional classroom and learning facilities. However, workshop space on both sites is limited and equipment and tools are not always adequate. Learners do not have modern vehicles and modern diagnostic equipment. They express worries about the consistency of the workload and the quality of equipment and tools. Some of the handout materials are out of date.

27. A wider range of evidence is needed in some portfolios. Few of the portfolios are individualised or show varying types of evidence.

Poor Practice

One learner who is undertaking an auto electrician NVQ, has been training since December 2001 and has not received any off-the-job training to cover background knowledge.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	73	4

28. NTS offers training in business administration in Norwich and King's Lynn. There are 42 foundation modern apprentices and 13 advanced modern apprentices. There are an additional 18 learners working towards NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3. Three of the modern apprentices are in accounting. In addition, there is a small number of clients on adult Jobcentre Plus programmes, of whom three are working towards units of an NVQ. Learners are employed or on work placements with local employers ranging from large food packaging companies to small partnerships of solicitors and insurance service companies. Those learners awaiting a work placement are trained in the Norwich training centre for three days each week until a suitable work placement is found. Learners are able to start their learning programmes at any time during the year. All applicants are interviewed and their current skills, learning needs and career aims are assessed. Those who show the appropriate aptitude and motivation are accepted for training. The learners who are working towards key skills, attend some training sessions at their local NTS centre at the start of training, and further occasional training is made available throughout their programme. All assessment for the NVQ takes place in the workplace. There are five qualified assessors. Learners have formal progress reviews at least every three months. Learners are visited at their workplaces for ongoing review and assessment and for further individual coaching by NTS'S staff.

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		1996-97					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		9		31		17		23							
Retained*	0		0		11		3	18	4							
Successfully completed	0		0		7		1	6	0							
Still in learning	3		1		7		0	0	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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	46		50		24		18									
Retained*	0		7		5		3	17								
Successfully completed	0		0		2		3	17								
Still in learning	27		12		3		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		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		45		63		75		139							
Retained*	1		6		10		22		33	24						
Successfully completed	0		0		0		9		25	18						
Still in learning	10		3		3		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

STRENGTHS

- good assessment practices
- good support for learners
- good achievement of additional qualifications by in-house learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate target-setting
- inadequate co-ordination of learning opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better links between tutor and assessors to increase effectiveness of the off-the-job training
- better use of initial assessment to develop individual learning plans

29. There are many examples of good assessment practice. Recently, more frequent assessment has been made available and this helps motivation. Assessments are well planned and clear feedback is given to the learners. Documents are used to record oral question and answer sessions to give evidence for the NVQ. Assessment often includes direct observation of performance in the workplace. There are examples of learners making a significant contribution to their employers' administrative procedures by implementing project ideas. One example involved a young learner devising an archiving system which was later adopted by the employer.

30. Learners speak highly of the support offered by NTS's staff. Each learner has a designated person to visit them in the workplace and the visits are often more frequent than required by the training contract. Employers confirm that learners are offered individual coaching in the workplace to meet individual needs. Recent initiatives have improved the levels of support available to those learners who are not meeting their targets. However, it is too early to measure the effect of this initiative. Staff have good relationships with employers, which allows open discussion. Recent changes to staffing have improved the quality of some support available to learners.

31. Many learners benefit from additional qualifications in information technology (IT). Approximately 40 per cent of all learners who are not in a work placement have achieved additional qualifications in word processing, spreadsheets or databases. The learners benefit from well-planned sessions which are adequately resourced. The small group size enables learners to acquire new skills fairly quickly. Business administration and information and communications technology (ICT) learners account for approximately 76 per cent of learners achieving the additional qualifications.

32. Retention rates over the past five years have been poor. Some procedures have recently been implemented to improve the retention and achievement rates, but it is too early to measure the success of these initiatives. Achievement rates are very poor. Only eight of the 87 advanced modern apprentices who started the programme over the past five years, have achieved the full qualification. A further six have not yet completed their time on the training programme.

33. There are insufficient target dates on the individual learning plans. Some learners are given the same achievement date, usually very close to the end of their learning contract. In addition, many learners are not set challenging targets during the review process. There are many examples where progress reviews are vague and do not show

realistic target dates for individual units of the NVQ. Some reviews lack detail and do not include the workplace supervisor in the process. Inadequate target-setting is a key factor in the slow progress of some learners.

34. There is inadequate co-ordination of the learning. NTS provides a programme of off-the-job training for learners already in employment or in placement, but the availability of these courses is limited. There are insufficient topics covered and the training is not directly related to the qualification. On-the-job training is frequently unplanned. Learners undertake their usual workplace duties which are matched, where possible, to the requirements of the NVQ. Employers are generally supportive but they are unable to become fully involved in the training and they do not have sufficient knowledge of the NVQ. Some learners are unable to attend the off-the-job training due to work pressures. NTS is not dealing with these problems with employers.

35. Communication between the tutor providing the off-the-job training and the assessor team is satisfactory, but the links are not good enough to ensure that all learners needing additional training are managed effectively.

36. All learners in business administration carry out an initial assessment. However, while the initial assessment is often comprehensive and includes basic and key skills assessment, occupational tests and other assessments, the results do not always show on the individual learning plan.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 5**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	38	5
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	47	4

37. There are 87 learners working towards qualifications in this area of learning. There are 47 adults on Jobcentre Plus programmes. Twenty-four are undertaking qualifications in retailing and of these two are on the full-time education training option, 18 are on LOT, three are on SJFT and one on IAP. Twenty-three adults are working towards transport qualifications, of whom one is on the full-time education and training option, 17 are on LOT, four are on SJFT and one is on IAP. Numbers of clients on Jobcentre Plus programmes are subject to regular changes and these do not reflect recent recruitment. There are 38 learners on youth training programmes. Seven are advanced modern apprentices working towards level 3, of whom six are in retailing and one learner is working towards an NVQ in customer service. There are 14 foundation modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 2, of whom 13 are in retailing and one is in customer service. There are 17 learners on NVQ programmes. Three of these learners are working towards an NVQ in retailing, two are working towards an NVQ in distribution and warehousing, one learner is working towards an NVQ in customer service, and eleven learners are working towards a level 1 NVQ, of whom 10 are in retailing and one is in distributive operations. At one of the training centres, learners are in work placement for four days and attend the training centre for off-the-job training and jobsearch one day a week. At the other training centre, learners are in work placement for five days a week and attend the training centre as an option, with most of the training for NVQs carried out in the workplace.

38. Learners can join the training programmes at any time of the year. Adults are referred by Jobcentre Plus, and most of the young people are referred by the careers service and a few by friends. Learners who do not attend the training centre are visited by their assessor at least every month and, in some cases, each week. Learners who attend a training centre are visited in the workplace every two weeks and have one day a week in the training centre. Assessments are carried out in the workplace using observations, questions, work-based evidence and witness testimony. Assessors are occupationally competent and have, or are working towards, assessor qualifications.

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	1		11		8											
Retained*	0		2	18	1	12										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	1		3	27	3	38										

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	14		14		17		6									
Retained*	0		4	29	3	18	1	17								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	2	12	1	17								
Still in learning	10		3	21	1	6	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		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		16		20		13		20							
Retained*	2		6	38	3	15	3	23	4	20						
Successfully completed	0		0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0						
Still in learning	13		3	19	1	5	0	0	0	0						

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

New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults										
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	151		60							
Retained*	58	38	37	62						
Planned learning completed	40	26	14	23						
Gained job	32	21	23	38						
Still in training	35	23	2	3						

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

STRENGTHS

- good work placements, well matched to learners
- comprehensive and individual personal support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- very poor achievement and retention rates on youth programmes
- slow progress on NVQ programmes
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress
- poor implementation of key skills training
- ineffective jobsearch training at one training centre

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further reinforcement of induction
- more involvement of employers in modern apprenticeship process

39. Young people and adults are well motivated and enthusiastic about their work placements and jobs. NTS's staff are effective in ensuring that work placements conform to health and safety guidelines, and that the work placement will cover the range of activities required by the qualification. Assessors have a good understanding of employers' needs and are effective in matching learners' job aims and skills to

employers' requirements. Many work placements are in voluntary organisations where learners develop their personal and work skills in a supportive environment. Assessors give good support to learners who feel intimidated by interviews. They accompany the learners to work placement interviews to help them make the most of the opportunity. When problems cannot be resolved in a work placement, NTS takes prompt and effective action to protect the interests of the learners, and to maintain their relationship with the employer. Most learners value their work placements and are enthusiastic and motivated. One supervisor commented that he wouldn't be able to do his own job without the contribution from his modern apprentice.

40. Most of the clients and learners are satisfied with the personal and pastoral care they receive. Assessors visit them frequently in their work placements and staff often help learners to continue training through personal problems. They are sensitive to learners' problems and withdraw them promptly from inappropriate placements. Internal verifiers visit the learners every three months to offer further support. There is a clothes bank where appropriate clothes for interviews can be taken on loan. One tutor drove 35 miles, in his own time, to take a learner to an interview. Another learner was able to extend his training to allow him to deal with a family problem.

41. The retention and achievement rates on youth programmes are poor. For advanced modern apprentices, there have been no framework completions since 1996 and 65 per cent of the learners who started since 1997 have already left the programme. For foundation modern apprentices, only 5 per cent of the 51 learners who started since 1997 have completed and 71 per cent have left the programme early. On the NVQ programme, 79 per cent of the 85 starts have left early and only one has achieved the NVQ. Of the 211 unemployed adults, 26 per cent have progressed into employment, 26 per cent have completed their training and 18 per cent are still in training.

42. There is slow progress by adults and youth learners on NVQ programmes. Some advanced modern apprentices have been training for four years and not yet completed. Other learners have been training for 10 months or more working towards a level 2 qualification, with no units, and in some cases no elements of units, achieved. There is some poor awareness of the NVQ process by learners. They think that they can only gather evidence for the NVQ when the assessor is present and do not collect evidence at other times. The activities are assessor led at all levels and learners do not develop independent learning skills. There is insufficient support for learners who do not meet targets. There are examples of learners with additional learning needs who have been given the same target for six visits over a four-month period. Some of the target-setting is poor, with dates spread over a short space of time.

43. There is ineffective monitoring of clients' and learners' progress. Assessors give a percentage rate of achievement of the NVQ at reviews without any means of quantifying their progress. The internal verifiers check portfolios and produce a list of action points, but, three or four months after the internal verification, the action points have not been dealt with. Progress reviews are ineffective across youth and adult

programmes. They do not set targets for progress and often fail to review previous target achievement.

44. There is poor implementation of key skills training. The key skills are not an integral part of the NVQ and assessors do not explain how the learners' daily tasks can be used as evidence. Assessors are ineffective in promoting the importance of key skills to learners and employers. They are poorly planned and progress reviews do not cover their development. Key skills are introduced late into the training programme, as assessors concentrate on NVQ progress. There is also late recognition of prior achievement and learners are given target dates for key skills which have previously been achieved.

45. There is ineffective jobsearch training for clients at one training centre. Some clients are in a work placement where they have no prospect of a permanent job. Assessors do not include jobsearch in the learning plans or induction and there is no jobsearch training for those on work placement. They do not set targets for jobsearch activity, and do not evaluate the activity during progress reviews. Seventy per cent of the unemployed clients interviewed at one training centre, failed to attend any jobsearch training. For those clients who do attend, the training is good.

46. Induction is generally satisfactory, but some learners cannot recall the health and safety guidelines. Others are insufficiently aware of the meaning of equal opportunities. A minority of learners are unaware of the NVQ process or their modern apprenticeship framework, as the information from induction is not reinforced.

47. Supervisors liaise well with assessors to ensure that learners have the appropriate job roles to meet the requirements of their framework. However, the supervisors do not have a detailed knowledge of the framework and evidence requirements.

Poor Practice

One learner was not wearing the required safety footwear when moving a pallet. This is despite having hurt his feet when carrying out a similar task.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	92	3

48. NTS offers five foundation training programmes, which are BET, IAP, New Deal 25+, Life Skills and preparatory training. The BET programme is designed to deal with the barriers faced by people who find it particularly difficult to get jobs and are in real danger of becoming permanently detached from the labour market. The programme offers clients the opportunity to take part in learning sessions tailored to meet individual needs. These include basic skills support and sessions to improve self-confidence and motivation. The programme lasts for 26 weeks and learners attend for up to 30 hours a week. There are 18 clients on the programme. The IAP programme is aimed at the long-term unemployed who have been claiming jobseeker's allowance for 18 months or more. The programme offers clients the opportunity to take part in work experience for a minimum of 30 hours a week for a minimum of 13 weeks, unless employment is found earlier. Basic skills support is offered to those clients identified as needing additional support. There are 74 clients on the programme. The Life Skills programme is designed to assist young people who lack the skills and attitudes needed to access many learning opportunities and the world of work. Learners attend the training centre for three days a week and take part in a range of activities designed to increase their progression. The programme lasts for up to 12 weeks and there are currently two learners on the programme. The preparatory training programme is designed for young people who need additional support to access mainstream education/training. Learners attend the training centre for three days a week and take part in a range of training sessions which are designed to increase the learners' awareness of employability. The average length of stay on the programme is eight weeks and there are currently two learners on the programme. The organisation collects some information relating to performance, but it does not collect data from both centres in a way that gives reliable information on retention and achievement rates and those who gain employment. Therefore tables have not been included. Learners are referred either by the careers service or Jobcentre Plus. All learners take part in an induction at the start of their programme and carry out an initial assessment of basic skills. Learners' progress is reviewed by NTS, the Jobcentre Plus and the careers service. Progression routes include employment, work-based learning and further education. Many learners take part in basic skills sessions and work towards the achievement of Wordpower and/or Numberpower and a basic computer literacy qualification.

STRENGTHS

- some good teaching
- good individual support for learners
- good use of work experience for BET learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor consideration of individual needs on IAP programmes
- some poor support materials
- poor accommodation at one training centre

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective induction
- more opportunities to gain qualifications during work experience
- wider range of evidence in portfolios

49. There is some good teaching for foundation clients, with four out of six observations being better than satisfactory. Tutors have considerable experience of working with adult groups and are suitably qualified. Sessions are well planned and are at a suitable level for the range of abilities of learners. Tutors are responsive to individual learning styles and needs. There is also good use of team teaching for many sessions and a good mix of whole group teaching and clients working on individual assignments. A supportive atmosphere is generated during learning sessions and clients feel confident and are able to contribute to classroom discussion.

50. NTS's staff offer a good level of individual support for clients. After initial assessment, clients can work towards Wordpower and/or Numberpower. Clients can work at their own pace, on assignments which reflect either their interest or the skills learned during periods of work experience. Clients on work experience are visited regularly and their progress is recorded. Staff liaise with external agencies to organise additional support and guidance. At the main training centre during the year April 2001 to March 2002, 26 clients achieved Wordpower and/or Numberpower, and 11 clients achieved the basic computer literacy qualification. Retention rates are generally in excess of 70 per cent and many clients gain employment after training.

51. There is good use of work experience for BET clients. NTS understands the value of

work experience for long-term unemployed clients and has made it an integral part of the programme. NTS has been successful in recruiting companies which are willing to offer work experience placements and currently more than 60 per cent of clients are taking part. Staff try to match clients' preferences to suitable work experience placements. A wide range of occupational areas are available and include commercial vehicle sales, charity shops, warehousing, heating, engineering and a public house. Learners are visited at their placements every month. A progress review is carried out in conjunction with employers during these visits. Work experience is flexible and clients continue to visit the training centre for jobsearch training and basic skills sessions.

52. Clients' individual needs are not always met on IAP programmes. A work placement is organised as soon as possible for clients and their aims are considered when deciding on the suitability of a particular placement. However, clients' choices are not always catered for. Clients are sometimes placed where employers report a lack of time for training. Also, clients with limited skills are being placed in an environment offering multi-skilled opportunities. Additionally, clients do not leave with a record of the range of work carried out during work placement.

53. There are some poor materials currently in use. Some of the worksheets and handouts are poorly presented and reproduced, and many are out of date. Some worksheets contain incorrect information, while others need explaining as the information is not well presented.

54. There is poor accommodation at one training centre. Foundation clients spend a considerable amount of time at the training centre and use classrooms which are poorly decorated and generally of poor quality. There is no evidence of clients' work displayed and no sense of ownership of the accommodation by the clients. The other training centre has good-sized classrooms, is well decorated and contains resources which are well used by learners. Classrooms contain a wide range of learning resources including ICT.

55. An induction is carried out every week at NTS. However, some of the content is targeted at more able learners. Some of the foundation clients do not understand the rights and responsibilities of taking part in adult employability programmes.

56. Clients do not have the opportunity of gaining occupational qualifications during their work experience. For example, one client has been working in a commercial vehicle sales company and has undertaken many different tasks. One regular task is valeting vehicles before they go on display. There is a level 1 NVQ in vehicle valeting but the client was not offered the opportunity of working towards the qualification. Another client is working in a charity shop and is carrying out a wide range of retailing and customer service tasks, but no qualification was offered.

57. There is an insufficient range of evidence in Wordpower/Numberpower portfolios. Portfolios contain evidence which is suitable for the achievement of the award but little use is made of photographic or other evidence which would make an impact on a

prospective employer.

Good Practice

NTS has an extensive wardrobe of clothes, mainly donated by staff, which is available for learners to use for interviews. Most learners can be accommodated in this way.