

INSPECTION REPORT

Oakmere House

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
- **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.

Overall judgement

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

SUMMARY

The provider

Oakmere House is a private company and registered charity, based in Walton, Liverpool. It provides work-based learning for young people, training in Life Skills, and New Deal programmes. Training is offered in a wide range of occupational areas.

Overall judgement

The quality of training is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in construction, retailing, customer service and transportation, and information and communications technology is unsatisfactory. Training in health, social care and public services is very weak. Training in business administration, management and professional, and hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is satisfactory. The leadership and management of Oakmere House are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

Information & communications technology	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

OAKMERE HOUSE

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Health, social care & public services	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

KEY STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- good use of supportive work placements
- clear strategic direction, well understood by staff

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate development of key skills
- poor management of training
- weak communication systems
- insufficient use of feedback

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better training materials
- wider range of performance indicators
- formal adoption of policies and procedures

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 10 inspectors spent a total of 38 days at Oakmere House. The inspection covered work-based learning for young people. Inspectors interviewed the chief executive of Oakmere House and carried out 79 further interviews with managers and staff. They interviewed 60 learners and graded 17 learning sessions. They carried out 20 interviews with employers and work-based supervisors. Inspectors examined 46 portfolios, 57 individual learning plans, and other documents relating to the company's work. They examined data on retention and achievement rates. Inspectors studied self-assessment reports and action plans produced in February and May 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6
Business administration, management & professional	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	6
Total	0	1	2	6	5	3	0	17

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Oakmere House is a registered charity set up in 1981, to provide training and educational opportunities in a broad range of skills for learners in the Merseyside area. The company is based on a single site in Walton. It employs 53 staff and provides training for 96 learners funded by Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Thirty-eight are foundation modern apprentices, 14 are advanced modern apprentices and 44 are following national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes. Oakmere House also provides commercial training.

3. In Merseyside, 79.9 per cent of the workforce is employed in the service sector and 19.8 per cent in the production and construction sector. Twenty per cent of businesses are in property and business services, 20 per cent in retailing and 20 per cent in construction and production. In April 2002, the rate of unemployment in the Greater Merseyside LSC area was 6.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.1 per cent. Twenty-nine per cent of those unemployed were aged 18 to 24, compared with the national average of 25.3 per cent. In 1999-2000, 71 per cent of school leavers in Greater Merseyside continued in full-time education. Eight per cent entered government-supported training and 5 per cent entered other training. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 42 per cent in Merseyside. The national average was 47.9 per cent. According to the 1991 census, 1.8 per cent of the population of Greater Merseyside was from minority ethnic groups, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Learners in construction receive good individual support and coaching, but the quality of their training is unsatisfactory. Retention and achievement rates are poor, and there are too few work placements for NVQ learners. Business administration, management and professional training is satisfactory. There is effective initial assessment, good use of supportive work placements, and progression routes are good for all learners.

Achievement rates for modern apprentices are poor, and key skills development is slow. There is weak target-setting in progress reviews. Training in information and communications technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory. There is effective monitoring of learners' progress and good individual support for skills development. However, retention and achievement rates are poor and there are no work placements for NVQ learners. The quality of training in retailing, customer service and transportation is unsatisfactory. There is good pastoral support for learners, a high standard of workplaces, and supportive employers, but retention and achievement rates are poor. In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel the quality of training is satisfactory. There is a comprehensive induction and initial assessment. Good use is made of supportive work placements, take-up of additional qualifications is high and learners receive good pastoral support. However, there are some poor assessment practices and there is some poor group training. Care training is very weak. Retention and achievement rates are poor. There is no effective initial assessment, and induction is inadequate. Health and safety checks do not meet national standards for care.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**Grade 4**

5. The chief executive has overall responsibility for government-funded training at Oakmere House. He is directly accountable to the board of directors. The senior management team consists of the chief executive, the programme manager, who is responsible for the co-ordination of training, and an executive officer, who is also the company secretary. The company has nine heads of department who are all qualified as assessors and internal verifiers in their occupational areas. A further 30 members of staff are involved in training, and they report directly to the heads of department. There is a range of policies, including those for equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The company holds Investors in People, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, and ISO 9002, an international quality assurance standard. The company's current self-assessment report was produced in May 2002 and is its third.

STRENGTHS

- clear strategic direction, well understood by staff
- good staff development process
- effective induction in equality of opportunity for learners
- good staff awareness of equality of opportunity issues and policies

WEAKNESSES

- poor management of training
- weak communications systems
- poor setting and monitoring of targets for the participation of under-represented groups in training
- failure to comply with quality assurance policies and procedures
- insufficient monitoring of training
- insufficient use of feedback

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider range of performance indicators

6. The company has a clear strategic direction that is well understood by its staff. The company's mission is to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners, and provide access to training for learners excluded, or at risk of exclusion, from learning. Over the past three years, 98 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices recruited by Oakmere House had fewer than five GCSE passes at grade C or above. Thirty-six per cent had no prior educational achievements. Of learners joining NVQ programmes, 99 per cent had fewer than five GCSE passes at grade C or above, and 30 per cent had no qualifications

at all. Many learners have additional learning and/or social needs. Oakmere House's mission and value statements are strongly expressed in the business plan, business strategy and training objectives. The mission and values are reinforced in the staff handbook. Staff at all levels of the company share these values. Action has been taken to support the mission statement. Government-funded training is supplemented by other sources of income. Staffing levels give a high degree of individual support. A financial bonus scheme has been introduced to motivate learners to achieve a range of identified targets such as punctuality, regular attendance, and achievement of qualifications. Learners are made fully aware of the expectations of Oakmere House and their employers. There are clear and firm procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and attitude, and there is a dress code for learners. Good links and effective relationships with employers help disadvantaged learners to progress into permanent employment. The company provides good pastoral support in occupational areas. It has positive links with partners in the community which contribute to its strategic direction.

7. There is a good staff development process. Newly appointed staff undergo a thorough induction and are given a copy of the clearly written staff handbook. Annual appraisal is carried out systematically and staff are reviewed regularly. The appraisal and review process is well documented, and used in individual staff development plans. A new system of team appraisal mirrors the individual appraisal process, and is used to identify team development needs. There are examples of recently completed and current staff training. Staff have had training in dealing with substance misuse and dyslexia. Staff at all levels are helped to study for qualifications in their occupational area, and in some occupational areas, staff have good, current professional knowledge. Recent corporate training includes a successful series of equality of opportunity training days, and courses on dealing with aggression, and anger management, which were attended by most staff. Training has enabled staff to respond appropriately to the challenging behaviour of some learners.

8. Oakmere House collects a wide range of management information. This includes learners' qualifications and status on entry, details of early leavers, targets and achievements, and Oakmere House's performance. There has been recent analysis of some of this data to plan strategies for improving retention and achievement rates. The strategies have not yet had an effect. Performance against targets is regularly reported on at heads of department meetings, but no action plans are made.

9. Management of training is poor. The business plan does not take into account the ability of staff to provide training which will meet the needs of the learners. Managers have not identified the specialist skills, qualifications and experience needed by staff to work effectively with learners who have significant additional learning and/or social needs. Action has only just been taken to improve retention and achievement rates, and the outcomes of reviews of retention and achievement rates are not recorded. Managers did not intervene when a problem arose in an occupational area until it was too late to avoid disadvantage to learners. There is little evidence of discussion at senior management or board level about the development of the training programme to meet

the specific needs of the target group.

10. The company has positive relationships with a wide range of employers who provide good work placements for learners. Relationships are effectively managed, both formally and informally. Contracts are clear and lay down specific requirements for training, health and safety and equality of opportunity. Workplaces are assessed for compliance and contracts are renewed annually. Learners are visited in the workplace by Oakmere House staff at least once a month. Work-placement providers are consulted about the learners' progress. Staff maintain informal contact with employers even when no learners are placed with them.

11. Communication systems are weak. Regular meetings take place at all levels of the company, but there is inadequate recording of discussions at some key meetings. For example, the introduction of key skills into modern apprenticeship programmes was discussed, but was only recorded superficially. Training in key skills has not been fully implemented. Although some meetings are formally minuted, others are not. Minutes do not provide useful records of decisions reached and actions planned. Action points do not always specify responsibility or timescales for completion, nor are they systematically followed up at subsequent meetings. The action decided upon is not always carried out. At occupational team level, there is too much reliance on informal briefings. Team briefings are held at the same time every week. This puts part-time staff or staff who are not normally present on that day at a disadvantage as they do not always receive important information. There are several new focus groups, but they have no clear remit and their effectiveness is limited. Focus groups present their comments as informal notes. This considerably reduces their impact. There has been no collation of themes common to a number of groups and some key messages have been overlooked. Information flows down through the company from senior management level to the teams, but there is no clear structure for conveying information from the teams to senior management, or between teams. The good practice shared at heads of department meetings is not passed on to the rest of the company. Communications systems do not include e-mail, an intranet or newsletters.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

12. Oakmere House has recently updated its policy on equality of opportunity. The policy refers to all relevant legislation, and covers both learners and company staff. There is also a new policy on harassment. The policies are clearly written, and there is a version for learners which explains the measures to protect them, and the procedure for raising complaints or concerns. Work-placement providers receive a copy of the policy when a learner joins them, and must agree to abide by its terms. However, there is no regular monitoring of their compliance. A head of department has recently been designated co-ordinator for equality of opportunity. He works with the equal opportunities officer to promote awareness and good practice. In April 2002, they introduced an effective equality of opportunity learning session for all learners, which takes place during their induction. The session consists of a well-produced video presentation and a guided discussion to develop learners' understanding of the causes and effects of different types of discrimination and prejudice. Because this presentation has only recently been introduced, Oakmere House is arranging extra sessions for learners whose induction did not include it. Learners' understanding is not formally reinforced through the training programme. However, at each progress review, learners are asked a question about equality, and their answer is discussed. This ensures that learners' awareness of equality issues is regularly updated.

13. There is a high level of awareness of equality of opportunity among staff. Inspectors found that staff had a good understanding of the company's commitment in this area and supported it. All staff have a copy of the policy, and it is displayed on notice boards in each building. A successful three-day staff development programme has recently been attended by 20 staff. Staff have also been encouraged to attend one of the learners' induction sessions on equality of opportunity, and many have done so. In November 2001, an equal opportunities group was set up, which included staff from all departments. The group has met regularly in order to identify issues requiring attention. Members of the group act as points of contact for learners who have concerns about equality. There is good access for people with disabilities to the company's training facilities. Equipment such as special furniture or software is available to meet the needs of disabled learners.

14. Oakmere House's policy includes a commitment to promote participation in training by people from traditionally under-represented groups. The company accepts all applicants for training, but has few learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most learners conform to gender stereotypes. The company does not set itself-targets for increasing the diversity of its learners, though some are required as part of its contract with the local LSC. Data on learners' ethnic origin, gender, and disabilities are collected, but they are not used to plan the promotion of training to under-represented groups. The company's promotional materials mention its commitment to equal opportunities, but do not reinforce this message. For example, there are few pictures showing people from ethnic minorities participating in training, and the factsheets on vocational areas do not mention that they are open to both sexes.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

15. Oakmere House has a quality assurance policy and procedures covering training, communication, staff competence and financial control. The policies and procedures were introduced in April 2002 but have not yet been formally adopted. Some procedures are still being written or revised. Many are not being complied with. For example, one policy states that all learners will work in a real work environment. This does not happen in all occupational areas.

16. The management of quality assurance is improving but it is still not effective. There is a new audit system, linked to the policies and procedures, that has identified some of the non-compliance. The audit has not yet examined all the policies and procedures. The programme manager carries out the audits using a checklist linked to the quality assurance policy and procedures. Feedback, and clear statements of action required, are given to staff on a simple, well-designed audit form, which is used consistently throughout the company.

17. There is insufficient monitoring of training. Formal observation of learning has recently been introduced in the training centre. Most staff have been observed training during the past two months and have received formal feedback identifying areas for improvement. The actions required have not all been carried out and checked. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the monitoring system. The monitoring of training does not extend to the workplace.

18. Assessment practice at Oakmere House is generally satisfactory. Most is fair, accurate and reliable. Each occupational area has at least one qualified internal verifier. Internal verifiers' meetings are scheduled to take place monthly. Meetings are well attended and formal records have been kept since January 2002. There is no standing agenda, and the records are brief with some confusion between action points and future agenda items. Action points are not followed up at subsequent meetings. A head of department was designated as the internal verification manager in May 2002. Work has now begun on standardising systems. A revised internal verification system has been introduced, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

19. There is insufficient use of feedback to aid continuous improvement. Prior to October 2001, there was no formal system for collecting feedback from learners or employers. As part of the new quality assurance measures, three learners' questionnaires and one employers' questionnaire have been used to gather facts and opinions on the learning experience. These have not been issued to all learners in all areas. The data collected is analysed but not used in any formal discussion or action-planning. There is no formal end-of-year or half-year evaluation of courses. Learners are not encouraged to put their views, comments or feedback to the management. There is no learners' representative at staff, management or internal verifier meetings.

20. Management data are used effectively in the quality assurance process. The self-assessment action plan sets measurable targets based on centrally held data. Oakmere

House thoroughly monitors achievement of NVQs and learner destinations. The database management software cannot provide all the information required to manage quality assurance, but managers are able to provide accurate data by hand when required. The data are generally well used in self-assessment. The self-assessment report is clearly written, and has identified many of the strengths and weaknesses found by the inspection team. The two managers responsible for quality assurance wrote the self-assessment report and action plan in consultation with the staff. Most staff were involved in the process. No learners or employers were directly involved. Operational planning in the occupational areas is based on the self-assessment action plan. The programme manager monitors progress towards the completion of actions regularly and effectively, using a group appraisal system. However, this is another new quality assurance measure that has not had time to have a measurable effect. Monitoring documents for action plans are not always fully completed, making it difficult to determine when departmental reviews took place and who carried out the review.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	25	4

21. Oakmere House provides training in construction for 25 learners. There are 12 learners in carpentry and joinery, 11 in painting and decorating and two in furniture polishing. One learner is a foundation modern apprentice, the remainder are following NVQs at level 1. NVQ learners attend the company training centre full time, and the foundation modern apprentice attends the centre one day each week. Twenty-three learners have been identified as needing additional learning support. Learners are recruited by the local careers service. Eight joined the programme at Oakmere House after completing a Life Skills programme elsewhere.

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	2		2		1											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	1	100										
Still in learning	0		0	0	0	0										

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		4													
Retained*	0		0	0												
Successfully completed	0		1	25												
Still in learning	1		0	0												

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1994-95									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	94		68		69											
Retained*	0		0	0	2	3										
Successfully completed	8		3	4	19	28										
Still in learning	22		1	1	0	0										

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

STRENGTHS

- good individual support and coaching for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- lack of work placements for some NVQ learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of learners' written work in portfolios
- more use of ICT in learning programmes

22. Learners are trained in small groups, and benefit from individual coaching. Staff are very committed to the wellbeing and progress of the learners, and are keen for them to make progress. Staff are experienced in their craft and they relate the training well to industrial applications. They give encouragement, and readily demonstrate practical skills and techniques. Classroom sessions are well prepared, and tutors make regular checks on learners' understanding and progress. Classroom training sessions are integrated well with practical skills development. For example, carpentry learners have a technical drawing session where they draw a section through a casement window. This is then followed up in the workshop by drawing a full-sized rod for marking out and manufacturing the window.

23. Practical training is carried out in large well-equipped workshops. However, the classrooms used by construction learners for background knowledge training do not have any windows and there is no source of natural light. There are plenty of good-

quality drawing instruments and scale rules for learners' use. Learners undergo a two-day general induction on joining the programme. This includes tuition on health and safety and on equal opportunities. Learners are able to recall much of the content of their induction after nine months. There is a further two-day departmental induction during which the learners' additional learning needs are assessed. Effective learning support is available for those learners identified as needing it.

24. In painting and decorating and in furniture craft, learners produce practical work of a high standard. In painting, they hang wallpaper to an industrially acceptable standard, and in furniture craft, they restore furniture which is then exported. Learners receive good pastoral support, and reviews are carried out regularly. However, these reviews are not vocationally specific enough, and targets are not set to improve the learners' performance. Charts are used to monitor learners' progress. There are copies of the charts in the workshops and in individual portfolios.

25. Construction learners at Oakmere House gain few qualifications. In 2000-01, only 4 per cent of learners achieved the targets in their individual learning plans and completed the NVQ at level 1. In 1999-2000, only 28 per cent of learners achieved the targets in their learning plan and gained the NVQ at level 1.

26. The retention rate for learners on construction programmes is poor. Many learners withdraw in the first month of the programme. For instance, in April 2000, 10 learners left carpentry, in April 2001, the number was 20 and in April 2002, there were 14 withdrawals. The pattern is similar in painting and decorating where there were 13 withdrawals in April 2002, six in April 2001 and 11 in April 2000.

27. Oakmere House has failed to secure work placements for some learners on level 1 NVQs in carpentry and joinery. Failure to present work-based evidence of competence will prevent learners completing their individual learning plan.

28. Learners' portfolios of evidence are satisfactory, but there is insufficient written evidence. The written content is minimal in some portfolios, and amounts to only one half page of written text for each unit. Plain unlined paper is used in some instances, and the end product does not reflect the effort made by the learner. Many struggle with writing and do not gain any satisfaction from the finished portfolio. Little use is made of information technology (IT) in the construction training programmes. New computers have recently been acquired, but these are not yet in use and do not all have printers. There is scant evidence of any use of word processing packages in portfolios.

Good Practice

Tutors at Oakmere House devised a simple aid to help one learner identified as having dyslexia. The learner has had difficulty in reading black text on white paper. Tutors supplied a green plastic film to place over the text, and the learner is now able to read fluently.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	8	3

29. There are eight young people on business administration programmes. One learner is an advanced modern apprentice, six are foundation modern apprentices, and one is working towards a level 1 NVQ. More than half the learners have additional social and/or learning needs. Learners can start at any time of the year. Their occupational and basic skills are assessed before they start their training. These tests are used to determine the level of programme they will follow, and any additional learning support required. All learners have an induction, which covers health and safety, equal opportunities, the requirements of the NVQ and how training and assessment is carried out. Some learners enter training directly from school, or are referred by the careers service, while others are already employed. If learners are unemployed, the company finds them a work placement. Learners attend the training centre for occasional workshops on portfolio-building and key skills. The target completion time for an advanced modern apprenticeship is 18 months, for the foundation modern apprenticeship it is 12 months and for the NVQ, nine months. There is a part-time trainer, and two full-time assessors who are also internal verifiers. Learners' progress is reviewed every two months.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			2		3											
Retained*			0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed			0	0	0	0										
Still in learning			1	50	0	0										

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

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	9		8		5											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	1		1	12	0	0										
Still in learning	6		0	0	0	0										

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		48		33											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	2		21	44	15	45										
Still in learning	1		0	0	0	0										

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

STRENGTHS

- good use of supportive work placements
- effective initial assessment
- good progression routes for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- slow development of key skills
- weak target-setting in reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of training materials

30. The company makes excellent use of the links it has built up with supportive

employers over many years, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Most learners are unemployed when they join the learning programme. Within four weeks, the company matches them to jobs or work placements taking into account the aspirations of the learners and the requirements of the NVQ. Until then, learners attend the training centre, where they participate in teambuilding activities, develop personal skills such as punctuality and self-presentation, and acquire computer, telephone and reception skills. A local public sector employer offers learners practise interviews and supplies them with constructive feedback to help them with jobsearch. Once learners have acquired a job or work placement, the assessor discusses with the employer what training can be undertaken in the workplace. A detailed training plan is then drawn up showing when the on-the-job training will take place. Employers are extremely supportive of learners, providing them with additional specialist training to meet their job roles, and ensuring that they gain appropriate experience to meet the requirements of the NVQ. They allow time for off-the-job training and portfolio-building. Employers value the thoroughness with which learners are screened. They appreciate the frequent contact they have with assessors, who visit learners at least monthly in the workplace. Employers frequently return to Oakmere House for more learners.

31. The initial assessment of learners is thorough and effective. Learners undertake a range of diagnostic assessments at the start of their programme. These are used to determine occupational aptitude, select the most appropriate level of course, and to identify any additional learning or social needs learners may have. The results of the assessments are discussed with learners, who are fully involved in deciding what support they need. Areas which need developing are identified on a comprehensive topic list, which includes basic skills such as punctuation, spelling and fractions, as well as interpersonal and social skills. Arrangements are made for learners to attend workshops at the training centre or to receive one-to-one support from assessors in the workplace. This support is recorded on the learner's file. Learners come to the training centre with a variety of social and learning needs, and many are at risk of social exclusion. They value the continuing individual support given by Oakmere House staff, which greatly improves their self-esteem and helps them to progress on the NVQ by removing barriers to learning. For example, one learner with dyslexia was unable to read the instruction manual on spreadsheets, so the tutor prepared the instructions as a PowerPoint presentation. The learner has now been able to achieve the appropriate units of the NVQ, and his self-esteem has improved so much that he is now embarking on a key skills unit in IT. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

32. There are good progression routes for learners. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Many learners progress from the Life Skills programme to level 1 NVQ. The company helps them to make an informed career choice by arranging work trials with supportive employers. Some learners progress from an NVQ at level 2 in customer service to a foundation modern apprenticeship in administration. Some learners who have joined an administration programme at level 1, progress to a level 2 NVQ and then an advanced apprenticeship programme. Learners who are initially on a work placement are usually offered a permanent job before the end of their training, and many employed learners are promoted during the course of their training.

33. Achievement rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks are unsatisfactory. Between 1999 and 2002, only two modern apprentices out of 27 completed their apprenticeship framework, although 17 achieved NVQs. In the same period, only 41 per cent of learners on NVQ programmes achieved their target qualification. The company has recognised that the achievement rate is poor and has introduced strategies for improvement, including the introduction of financial incentives for learners.

34. There has been slow development of the teaching and assessment of key skills, and this has been a major factor in the poor achievement rate for frameworks. Key skills training has not been sufficiently integrated with the NVQ programme, and evidence has not been cross-referenced. Employers do not understand key skills and do not provide opportunities for learners to practise them in the workplace. The company recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report. Training staff at Oakmere House have recently achieved, or are working towards, key skills qualifications. Regular key skills workshops are now offered to learners. Individual support is available for those who cannot attend. Learners are now benefiting from the good training they are receiving. Learning resources for key skills are adequate, but there is a need to update the administration resources to meet the new standards. Learners are offered incentives to take and achieve the external tests. The results are awaited from the first group of learners to take these external tests.

35. Target-setting in progress reviews and individual learning plans is weak. The purpose of the review is to monitor overall progress on the programme, and agree medium-term action plans. However, no reference is made in reviews to the individual learning plan, and it is not updated to show achievements or learning support given. Targets set are very vague and unchallenging. Learners and assessors confuse reviews with short-term assessment-planning. This takes place at each of the assessors' frequent visits to the workplace. The dates given in the individual learning plan for the achievement of units are also unchallenging. The target date for all units is the end of the programme. This does not motivate learners to achieve units earlier.

Good Practice

Tutors observe key skills sessions delivered by staff in other departments, and share expertise and resources. This is benefiting all learners and raising the standard of training.

Information & communications technology**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	7	4

36. Oakmere House provides training in ICT for seven learners. One is an advanced modern apprentice and the others are following NVQ programmes. Learners attend the company training centre full time. The advanced modern apprentice is employed by Oakmere House. Learners are recruited by the local careers service, and some have progressed from Life Skills programmes. All have additional learning and/or social needs. They attend training sessions on specific topics as appropriate. Progress reviews are conducted every two months. All learners are given an initial basic skills assessment. Their ICT skills are tested using a series of assignments, and the results determine what level of qualification they will undertake.

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				2											
Retained*	0				0	0										
Successfully completed	0				0	0										
Still in learning	1				0	0										

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

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

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24		19		18											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	6		0	0	0	0										

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

STRENGTHS

- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good individual support for skill development.

WEAKNESSES

- no work placements for NVQ learners
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more commercial updating for some members of staff
- further development of learning materials

37. There is good monitoring of learners' performance. Staff are able to identify progress towards learning goals and additional qualifications, the development of skills and background knowledge, and the timing and outcome of reviews, assessments and internal verification sessions. These records are easily accessible to the whole team, and are the basis for departmental monitoring. Learners' portfolios contain copies of the same information, and learners are confident that they know their rate of progress and are aware of any problems. Individual learning plans are drawn up by the recruitment team. They are used by the ICT department to record the dates of review sessions, but not altered subsequently. All units are given the same expected completion date, which matches the end date of the programme. The approach in reviews is relaxed and friendly, but firm in expectations. There is good use of praise and targeted questioning. Equal opportunities issues are raised and discussed. Short-term targets are included in the review document and often concentrate on issues of attendance, punctuality or

behaviour. If learners' attendance is poor, staff contact parents, and negotiate joint action.

38. Staff provide good individual support for learners' skills development. Learners who are in the training centre full time gather evidence by working for members of staff. There is, however, insufficient work available to keep them fully occupied. Although staff try to create a realistic working environment, the learners do not acquire time management skills or businesslike work practices. The atmosphere is like a classroom. Level 3 learners supervise and assess the work of other learners. Clear feedback is given during assessment sessions. Training sessions are used to reinforce background knowledge and key skills. Inspectors observed level 1 learners in a session on formulaic calculations, intended to prepare them for a test on spreadsheets. Most learners struggled to cope with the numerical demands, but benefited from patient and repeated explanations. It was evident that they were making some progress.

39. Accommodation and resources for ICT training are of commercial standard, and learners have access to relevant software, digital cameras, colour printers and photocopiers. There is no Internet access and no working scanner. The advanced modern apprentice is employed part time to conduct level 1 and 2 assessments. The team of three staff are suitably qualified to conduct assessments, and some have recent commercial experience. Induction lasts for one week and includes skills testing and the production of individual learning plans. The ratio of staff to learners is very high and learners benefit from concentrated one-to-one support. Too many young learners remain in the training centre for the entire length of their programme. They lack motivation, as they are not able to generate work-based evidence, or develop their personal skills. The training centre is unable to provide the full range of industrial technology. The company has recognised this, and has very recently appointed a member of staff to attempt to engage employers in offering work placements or enabling current employees to undertake training.

40. Achievement rates are very poor. None of the five modern apprentices recruited since 1999 has achieved all the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. In the past three years, 38 per cent of learners achieved their target NVQ. An additional qualification is used as a progress check but as yet no learner has completed the award. Learners are making satisfactory progress on level 1 NVQ programmes, and their portfolios show an improvement, both in the quality and the quantity of work since they began. Learners on other programmes are making very slow progress in gathering evidence. For example, after 18 months on a level 3 NVQ programme learners have not yet had any units assessed.

41. Retention rates on ICT programmes are very poor. Of the 67 learners recruited between 1998 and 2001, only 23 stayed for the planned duration of the programme. Thirty-nine per cent of recruits left during the first six weeks of their programmes, and a further 15 per cent during the first four months. Of the 24 learners who began their programmes during 2001-02, 10 left within the first six weeks and only six remained at the end of the year. The company has recently introduced bonus payments for learners,

OAKMERE HOUSE

to encourage attendance and increase the retention rate, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness. The ICT department's action plan does not include strategies for improving its retention rate.

42. Oakmere House focuses its marketing and recruitment on social inclusion. However, while there has been some staff training on anger management, there has been none on how to train learners with low levels of literacy and numeracy.

43. ICT learning materials have not been checked by basic skills specialists to determine their suitability in terms of reading level. Handouts are densely typed and difficult to understand. The level of language is too complex for most of Oakmere House's learners. The department has sufficient commercially published materials, but they have not been adapted to make them accessible to learners with additional learning needs. There is new interactive software, but this is not yet available on all the computers.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	32	4

44. There are 32 learners in retailing, customer service, distribution and warehousing. Eleven are advanced modern apprentices on customer service programmes. The 16 foundation modern apprentices are following distribution and warehousing, retailing or customer service programmes. Five learners are on NVQ programmes in retailing. Learners are recruited locally through the careers service and can join the learning programmes at any time. Each learner undergoes an initial basic skills assessment before enrolment. The results are used to determine the level of programme and any additional support required. The target completion time for achievement of an advanced modern apprenticeship is 18 months, for the foundation modern apprenticeship it is 12 months and for the NVQ, nine months.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		23		10											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	0		3	13	1	10										
Still in learning	5		6	26	0	0										

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	28		61		54											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	0		1	2	2	4										
Still in learning	16		0	0	0	0										

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		27		41											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	1		10	37	7	17										
Still in learning	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

STRENGTHS

- good pastoral support
- high standard of workplaces and supportive employers

WEAKNESSES

- very poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider range of assessment methods

45. All learners are given a comprehensive induction which covers health and safety, equal opportunities and additional support arrangements. Unemployed learners then have two days of induction to their learning programme. The duration and content of induction for employed learners varies according to their individual needs. All five NVQ learners are unemployed and on work placements with local businesses to gain practical skills and knowledge. These learners spend the initial part of their training programme at the training centre. This enables the staff to evaluate their skills and match their needs to local employers. Learners are encouraged to identify the area of the industry that they are interested in, so that their learning programme can be tailored accordingly.

46. Learning support needs are clearly identified at the start of training. Some learners have failed to achieve their potential while in the full-time education system. In some cases, emotional issues have affected their ability to integrate into mainstream education. A high level of sensitive pastoral support is made available to meet the individual learning and social needs of these learners.

47. There is a wide range of work placements for learners. Employers provide good support. There are opportunities in the workplace for the learners to develop diverse skills. Most employers have a structured approach to on-the-job training. Learners have access to the latest technology in modern retailing environments. Oakmere House has established strong links with local employers, that are fully committed to training learners in order to raise and enhance the skill levels in their industry. A substantial number of unemployed learners have found jobs whilst at Oakmere House.

48. Learners attend Oakmere House for day-release training in key skills and portfolio-building. The training centre is conveniently located, with good links to public transport. Training rooms have good resources. There is up-to-date retailing equipment, allowing learners to gain practical skills before they start their work placement. The off-the-job training sessions reflect the needs of local employers and learners. The timing for these is flexible, and they may consist of one-to-one coaching or group activity.

49. Retention and achievement rates are very poor. For example, in 1999-2000 and 2000-01, a total of 115 foundation modern apprentices were admitted to the programme. All but three of these learners left without achieving the targets on the modern apprenticeship framework. In the current year, 43 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices recruited have already left. Only seven learners have completed modern apprenticeship frameworks. The retention rate on NVQ programmes improved in 2000-01 to 37 per cent, from 17 per cent in 1999-2000.

50. There are three assessors, two of whom are also internal verifiers. Assessors visit learners in their workplace at least monthly, and review their progress every two months. Good use is made of evidence collected during learners' everyday work. Assessors observe learners at work, and confirm their knowledge and understanding using question- and answer-sessions. They set targets and discuss with learners what evidence they need to collect for assessments. Assessments are fair, reliable and accurate. Where the targets are not met, the action plan is carried forward to the next visit. There is a standard approach to recording assessments. The paperwork is completed properly, with clear reasons given for decisions, and appropriate targets are agreed. Learners are aware of their progress towards their qualification. However, the range of evidence used is insufficiently diverse. The company has recently introduced new procedures for internal verification. Although these are not yet in full use, internal verification is satisfactory.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

51. Oakmere House trains four learners on catering and hospitality NVQ programmes. They have all been identified as having additional social and/or learning needs. There are currently no modern apprentices. The learners are working towards NVQs in food preparation and cooking, three at level 1 and one at level 2. They also undertake a range of additional training, including first aid, basic food hygiene, and basic health and safety. Most learners are referred by the Connexions service, and some progress from a schools programme. Oakmere House provide a week-long induction, which consists of a general induction followed by a three-day departmental induction. There are two assessors and a head of department who manages the programme and is responsible for internal verification. Assessment is carried out on and off the job. The training centre offers a realistic work environment. There are links with a variety of local businesses including hotels, restaurants, and nursing homes, which provide a range of work experience.

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											
Retained*					0											
Successfully completed					0											
Still in learning					0											

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			5		4											
Retained*			0		0											
Successfully completed			0		0											
Still in learning			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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	14		5		10											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	6		1	20	5	50										
Still in learning	4		0	0	0	0										

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

STRENGTHS

- comprehensive induction and initial assessment
- good use of supportive work placements
- good take up of additional qualifications by learners
- good pastoral support

WEAKNESSES

- some poor assessment practice
- some poor group training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- larger sample size for internal verification
- better short-term target-setting for learners.

52. Learners are given a comprehensive one-week induction, which includes an introduction to the learners' agreement, the programme, health and safety, and equal opportunities. The learners complete individual initial assessments from which individual learning plans are devised. The induction consists of a general two-day induction followed by a departmental induction. There are practical assessments of learners' aptitude and abilities. The head of department interviews all learners to establish their backgrounds and their experience to date, and to identify any additional needs. The results of basic skills tests are analysed, and appropriate programmes are identified. Most learners start with a Life Skills programme before moving on to food preparation NVQs. Forty-three per cent of learners recruited in 2001-02 have already achieved their NVQ, and 28 per cent are still in learning.

53. All learners are found work placements after an initial period in the training centre. Oakmere House has access to a network of supportive work-placement providers. Learners can experience a variety of catering environments, and many work placements lead to full-time employment. One learner worked in a Japanese restaurant before moving to a bistro, and another learner had experience in five work placements. The assessors have regular contact with the work-placement providers to link work-based activity with the NVQ programme, and to carry out work-based assessments.

54. Many learners take additional qualifications. Most have achieved basic food hygiene, and health and safety certificates and some have completed first aid courses. The centre has satisfactory resources in the kitchen, which is currently being refurbished. There is a new training room for the sole use of hospitality learners.

55. Learners receive good pastoral support while on the programme. Assessors are sensitive to the personal circumstances of learners, and provide additional support in a discreet way. All the learners have additional social and/or additional learning needs. The inspectors saw a number of examples of additional support given to learners with personal difficulties. The learners are well motivated and appreciate the support they receive. One learner recently contacted the centre about a problem at his work placement and was immediately moved to an alternative placement. Oakmere House staff liaise with parents and specialist advisers where appropriate.

56. There is some poor assessment practice. Some units had been signed off as complete, although the evidence had not been referenced in the learners' logbooks. The evidence was present, but had not been assessed. There were examples of accreditation of prior learning being incorrectly used. A basic food hygiene certificate had been used as sole evidence for a complete unit, although this did not meet the requirements, as it is not a competency-based certificate. A level 1 unit had been accredited for a level 2 NVQ, even though level 2 requires additional competences. Some handouts used as supplementary evidence do not demonstrate practical or knowledge competence.

57. Some group training is poor. The sessions plans are limited, and make little reference to session aims and objectives. The handouts are not appropriate to the client

group, and the pace of training is too fast. One session observed had a group of eight people, four of whom had already attended the same session previously. The group size was too large to enable them to participate fully in the practical session. The quality assurance records identified similar concerns about the quality of training in this occupational area. Most training in hospitality is given individually and the learners' needs are met well. This is manageable because of the small number of learners.

58. The internal verification process for catering and hospitality is satisfactory. It can be followed through the portfolios, tracking sheets and centre records. The size of the internal verification sample is in line with awarding body requirements. However, there are some weaknesses in assessment practice. Individual learning plans give target dates for all units as the end of the programme, with little reference to short-term goals or targets. Learning plans are not tailored to individual ability and pace of learning, and do not include short-term targets.

Poor Practice

During an observed training session on how to clean deep fat fryers, learners were asked to drain the deep fat fryer, although it still contained very hot oil. This was a health and safety risk and could have led to injury.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 5**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	20	5

59. There are 20 learners in this occupational training area. Four are on level 2 NVQ programmes, 14 are foundation modern apprentices and two are advanced modern apprentices. All the NVQ learners and one of the foundation modern apprentices have additional learning needs. NVQ learners are not employed, but all modern apprentices are employed or have work placements in residential and nursing homes. NVQ learners are recruited through the Connexions service. Modern apprentices are recruited through employers, or have progressed from NVQ training. Initial assessment and induction is undertaken by a generic team, with care staff involved at the interview stage. The individual learning plan is prepared by the administrative team. The background knowledge training for NVQ learners takes place individually in the training centre on one day a week. There are occasional half-day sessions on health and safety, equal opportunities, basic food hygiene and first aid. Modern apprenticeship training takes place exclusively in the workplace. There are two assessors. Both are qualified assessors and verifiers, and one has a training qualification. Three work placements have an identified work-based assessor. Progress reviews take place in the workplace every six to eight weeks for most learners. One of the team members attends heads of department meetings and is directly responsible to the programme manager.

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	6		4		1											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	2		0	0	0	0										

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

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	21				1											
Retained*	0				0	0										
Successfully completed	0				0	0										
Still in learning	14				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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			3		11											
Retained*			0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed			2	67	1	9										
Still in learning			0	0	4	36										

*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

- no significant strengths identified

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- no training in key skills
- inadequate staff knowledge and competence
- no effective initial assessment
- inadequate induction
- unsatisfactory assessment and verification
- poor use of individual learning plans and reviews
- health and safety checks do not meet national standards

60. There have been poor retention and achievement rates over the past three years. No modern apprentice has achieved all the requirements of their apprenticeship framework. Seven learners have gained NVQs out of a possible 47. Since 1999, 68 per

cent of learners have left without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. From March 2001 to the end of May 2002, there was only one care trainer. A new staff member has now joined the team. Currently, 70 per cent of learners do not have an appropriately qualified assessor. Individual learning plans are not used to record learners' progress, and prior learning is not identified. Modern apprentices concentrate exclusively on work for their NVQ. Their work fails to meet the occupational standards for care. Progress reviews and individual learning plans are not used to set targets for learners, and there is no effective monitoring of the learning process. Training is uniform, and does not take individual learning styles into account. Many of the learners on the programmes do not know that they have signed up to an apprenticeship, and are unaware of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework.

61. None of the learners interviewed has started training in key skills, and none has plans to do so. One learner who had achieved a basic introductory certificate thought she was exempt from key skills training on an advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Fifteen modern apprentices who do not attend Oakmere House, have had no initial assessment of their key skills. One learner felt that it might be too late to work on her key skills as she has almost finished training. One staff member has achieved a key skills qualification at level 2. No staff are qualified to assess key skills.

62. Staff do not demonstrate knowledge, technical competence or up-to-date expertise at a level consistent with effective teaching, training and assessment. Poor standards in care are accepted as competence. There are no effective partnerships with employers. Some employers provide good in-house training for learners. Training undertaken in the workplace is not included in individual learning plans. There is too little assessment in the workplace. Oakmere staff are unfamiliar with current legislation. The learning process is incomplete, and does not include effective initial assessment, induction, training or assessment. Learners are not involved in the planning process, and individual learning plans are not used. Foundation and advanced modern apprentices do not understand the requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks. There is too much emphasis on copying and writing. Targets and reviews do not challenge or motivate learners. Resources used for learning are out-of-date, of poor quality, and include inaccurate information. Learners and staff do not understand the roles of assessors and verifiers. Some learners are unclear about who is responsible for their assessment. Non-employed learners who gain employment are automatically moved on to a foundation apprenticeship with no further assessment. The teaching sessions observed were poor.

63. There are two systems for initial assessment. Work-based learners are not assessed for key skills or basic skills. NVQ learners who attend the training centre have their basic skills assessed, but the results are not used in the individual learning plans. Nursing and residential care homes are not checked to ensure that they offer a suitable training environment. There is no assessment of learners' preferred learning style or suitability for care work. There is little accurate accreditation of prior learning. Two learners' files showed that they had general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) but this prior learning has not been accredited. Only one example of accreditation of prior learning

was found and this was inaccurate.

64. Induction is general and covers equal opportunities and health and safety. It is not specific to care programmes. Workplace induction is not managed by Oakmere House. Some workplaces have an induction programme which is used by learners, but it is not acknowledged on the individual learning plan. Learners are not given an induction to the apprenticeship framework, NVQ standards, key skills, assessment or verification. Induction is not recorded on the individual learning plan.

65. Assessment and verification do not meet the NVQ standard. Oakmere House does not manage the assessment process. The assessment and verification of learners' work is poorly planned, and their progress is not monitored effectively. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Observation in the workplace and internal verification only take place at the end of the programme. Some work-based assessors lack commitment to the assessment of learners. There have been no meetings of assessors to standardise practice. A first meeting was arranged, but cancelled because the work-based assessors were unavailable. The quality of work in learners' portfolios is poor, with too much emphasis on copying. Learners are not assessed on specific units. Seventy per cent of learners are assessed by someone who is not occupationally competent. In some cases, learners are assessed as competent without proper evidence. For example, a learner was assessed as competent after preparing a dressing trolley incorrectly. Clean, rather than sterile, dressings were prepared. Ten per cent of learners do not have access to an internal verifier for their level of NVQ. Learners do not understand the appeals and complaints procedure. Some staff do not understand the difference between assessors and verifiers. Employers are initiating training, but little or no progress is being made towards achievement.

66. There is no overall plan for learning. Individual learning plans are written by the administration team. Sections on initial assessment, induction, on- and off-the-job training, assessment, attendance and shift patterns are incomplete. Learning plans do not include detailed information on the components of the modern apprenticeship framework, or targets for achievement. They are not issued to, or discussed with, learners or employers. All foundation modern apprentices and level 2 NVQ learners follow the same optional units. These are chosen to reflect trainers' own awards at that level. Some learners have completed background knowledge training for units they cannot be assessed in. Individual learning plans are not used in the review process. All Oakmere House reviews follow a standard format. Staff question learners on equality of opportunity, and health and safety. There is no action-planning, or target-setting. Some learners have had no reviews since December 2001.

67. Health and safety in potential workplaces is checked by the work-placement officer. This check does not relate specifically to the national standards for care. Oakmere House staff are unaware of the care standards relating to young workers which came into effect in April 2002. Some learners are in breach of the legislation. For example, learners under 18 were involved in lifting and handling. Learners are not police checked. Oakmere House gives no guidance to employers, and does not carry

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out assessments for young workers. There is no evidence of learners having had health checks. Some work places are implementing induction standards, but trainers fail to acknowledge these. The self-assessment report identified these weaknesses, but not in the depth found at inspection.