

INSPECTION REPORT

Associated Neighbour Training

09 December 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

ASSOCIATED NEIGHBOUR TRAINING

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Overall judgement

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

SUMMARY

The provider

Associated Neighbour Training is a private training provider based near Reigate, Surrey. It offers training in land-based provision, business, management and professional, retailing, customer service and transportation, and healthcare. Learners work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and most are modern apprentices.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the leadership and management of the company are unsatisfactory, as are the arrangements for quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The quality of training in land-based provision, veterinary nursing, business, management and professional and healthcare is satisfactory. The provision in retailing, customer service and transportation and horticulture is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Land-based provision	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

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

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

ASSOCIATED NEIGHBOUR TRAINING

KEY STRENGTHS

- good internal communications
- good off-the-job training
- good work placements

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient business planning
- inadequate management of training
- insufficient promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity
- inadequate quality assurance procedures
- weak monitoring of subcontractors
- slow progress by learners towards achievement of their qualifications
- ineffective use of initial assessments

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- better use of self-assessment to improve training

THE INSPECTION

1. Seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days at Associated Neighbour Training in December 2002. They interviewed 35 learners, visited 28 workplaces, spoke to 24 employers and workplace supervisors, visited three subcontractors and carried out 14 interviews with managers and staff. The inspectors observed and graded five learning sessions, examined 24 learners' portfolios and 47 individual learning plans, records, minutes of meetings, management information and other relevant documents. They also studied the most recent self-assessment report, which was produced in September 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Land-based provision	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	5

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Associated Neighbour Training is a privately owned training company with offices in Buckland, near Reigate in Surrey. The company was formed in 1982 in response to the start of the youth training scheme run by the Manpower Services Commission. There are now 105 learners in land-based subjects, business, management and professional, retailing, customer service and transportation, and health and social care. Of the 105 learners, 54 are advanced modern apprentices, 21 are foundation modern apprentices and 30 are working towards NVQs. The owner and one office administrator are the company's only full-time staff. There is one part-time office administrator. The recruitment manager and four assessors are self-employed. The assessors visit learners in the workplace to carry out progress reviews, assessments and key skills training. Much of the training takes place in the workplace and some is subcontracted to local colleges of further education and other specialist providers.

3. Modern apprenticeship and NVQ training are funded by Surrey Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Surrey is one of the most affluent areas in the UK, with a mostly professional and highly skilled workforce. It has a service-based economy, including banking, finance, insurance, distribution, leisure and public sector services. There is a large number of small businesses employing less than 25 people. In 2002, the unemployment rate in Surrey was less than 1 per cent, compared with 3 per cent nationally and 1.7 per cent in the Southeast. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 2.8 per cent in Surrey, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Surrey achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 58.2 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. All learners are employed. Employers and workplace supervisors offer a good range of learning opportunities and many offer further training. Learners' progress reviews and target-setting are weak. Most learners make slow progress towards the achievement of their qualifications and there is poor achievement of targets on individual learning plans. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory, with 75 per cent of learners remaining in learning.

5. In horticulture and veterinary nursing, learners receive well-structured and effective off-the-job training at a specialist training provider. Work placements are very good and learners are able to gain sufficient experience and understanding to complete their NVQ. Induction is effective for most learners. The retention rates are satisfactory, but progress towards completion of the modern apprenticeship framework in horticulture is slow and overall achievement in horticulture is poor. Learners' progress reviews are ineffective and target-setting and action-planning are insufficiently detailed and challenging. There are some weaknesses in assessment practice in veterinary nursing. The monitoring of the quality of training from subcontractors is poor.

6. In business administration, learners have good work placements. Learners carry out jobs which match the requirements of the NVQ and employers ensure that they have the necessary range of experience and support to succeed. Completion rates for the advanced modern apprenticeship framework are good and the retention rates are satisfactory. Learners make slow progress towards the achievement of their qualification. Until recently, learners were not encouraged to achieve individual units of the NVQ. Progress reviews and target-setting are weak. Many employers are given insufficient information about their learners' needs and are unaware of their progress.

7. In customer service, the achievement rates are poor. Target-setting is not routinely carried out. Some parts of the initial assessment are ineffective and the outcomes are not used to develop individual learning plans. Assessment of key skills in the workplace is poor. Employers offer good on-the-job training, but are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the learners' progress. Internal verification is weak.

8. In dental nursing, the subcontractor offers good training and learners are given good support in the workplace. Feedback from the first year of training has led to improvements in the training for the second year. Assessment and verification practice is good. Monitoring of learners' progress is poor. Progress reviews have insufficient detail and do not include clear targets for improvement and completion. Initial assessment is ineffective. Outcomes are recorded on individual learning plans, but they do not result in any differentiation of teaching methods for on- and off-the-job training. Learners make slow progress towards the completion of their NVQ.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

9. The owner of Associated Neighbour Training, as director of training, is responsible for the management of the organisation, including quality assurance and equal opportunities. The recruitment manager is responsible for recruitment, initial assessment and the general induction of learners, including equality of opportunity. There are four assessors, who assess and monitor learners' progress in the workplace, one of whom is also the centre co-ordinator and supervises the internal verification process. All assessors are self-employed but work exclusively for Associated Neighbour Training. There are two administrators. Training in horticulture and accounting is subcontracted to two colleges of further education. Dental and veterinary nursing training is subcontracted to two specialist private training providers. Estate agency and insurance training is subcontracted to the national professional bodies. Business administration and customer service training takes place in the workplace and learners are assessed by Associated Neighbour Training's assessors. The company has an equal opportunities policy and a quality assurance policy. It produced the first self-assessment report in 1999 and the most recent one was produced in September 2002.

STRENGTHS

- good internal communications

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient business planning
- inadequate management of training
- poor promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities
- inadequate quality assurance procedures
- weak monitoring of subcontractors

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of actions from meetings
- larger samples to evaluate learners' feedback
- better use of self-assessment to improve the quality of training

10. Internal communications are good. Team meetings and assessors' meetings are held regularly and are used to discuss a wide range of issues. Meetings ensure that all staff are kept up to date with local LSC and awarding body requirements and any problems with resources. Although minutes are taken, some of the action points have insufficient detail and sometimes they are not monitored effectively. The director of training is readily available to staff and there are regular opportunities for staff to give

feedback to the director of training and colleagues on their work. Frequent informal meetings also ensure that staff are aware of recent developments. Managers are also informed about issues affecting learners.

11. Associated Neighbour Training does not have a formal business plan to set out its strategic direction, objectives and targets for training and resources. Planning is informal and concentrates on contractual requirements. Management is reactive rather than proactive and planned. Management information is not used routinely to monitor performance or to plan future action. There is little analysis of trends and performance over time and across areas of learning. Staff are not set targets for retention, progression and completion of the modern apprenticeship frameworks. There is no overall training plan for the company. Staff appraisals do not take place regularly. Although training takes place, it is not always recorded or evaluated. The self-assessment report identified that appraisals are not regular or systematic.

12. The management of subcontractors is unsatisfactory. Learners' progress on the modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes is slow. Many employers offer good training, but is not always linked to the NVQ. Employers are not sufficiently involved in the review process or the planning of learners' training. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Arrangements to monitor workplace or additional training are inadequate. New arrangements to involve employers more in training and learners' progress reviews have been introduced, but it is too early to judge their impact on the quality of learners' training. Slow progress of learners was identified in the self-assessment report as a weakness.

13. Some of the initial assessment procedures are ineffective. A variety of assessment methods are used including psychometric tests and results from previous examinations. However, some assessments do not identify learners' basic and key skills. While some learners have a key skills diagnostic test, many do not. The system for transferring information from initial assessment to learning plans is ineffective and training does not take account of learners' identified needs.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

14. Associated Neighbour Training has an equal opportunities policy, but there are few procedures to develop the policy into action. Promotion of equal opportunities in training programmes is poor. This was identified in the self-assessment report and action to improve it is included in the development plan. There has been no staff training in equal opportunities, and none is planned. Equal opportunities is not an agenda item at team meetings, or with subcontractors, and minutes of meetings do not include any records of discussions about it. Marketing and recruitment strategies contain few references to equal opportunities, particularly in relation to learners who have special needs or disabilities and information given to learners. Marketing materials do not challenge or counter stereotypes. There is no disability statement to illustrate what arrangements can be made for learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The criteria used to assess learners' performance during the initial interviews are potentially discriminatory. No specific action has been taken to recruit learners from under-represented groups and there are no targets. No plans have been made to meet the local LSC's target of a 3 per cent increase in participation of learners from minority ethnic groups by 2004. The induction for most learners is weak and includes insufficient information on equality of opportunity. Many learners have a poor recollection of the information given and a poor understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity. Little development and reinforcement of learners' understanding takes place after induction. Learners on dental nursing programmes have a better understanding of equal opportunities, as this is an integral part of their training. Complaints and grievance procedures are weak. Learners are given insufficient information on their rights and responsibilities during their training programmes.

15. Monitoring of equal opportunities is insufficient. Data on gender and ethnicity are collected at interview but they were collated and analysed for the first time in 2001-02. Some informal monitoring of learners' gender and ethnicity is recorded for different areas of learning, but there is no formal analysis, such as in the numbers interviewed in relation to those who start training. There are no comparative data to analyse trends over time, or by areas of learning. Subcontractors' and employers' equal opportunities policies and recruitment practices are not evaluated or monitored effectively. Procedures to record and remedy problems raised during progress reviews are insufficient. Feedback questionnaires do not include any questions to identify whether learners are treated fairly or experience discrimination during their training. However, if problems such as harassment at work are identified, the company moves learners to a different employer. Little is done to ensure that individual needs which are identified by initial assessment are met effectively. Some learners take a psychometric test, but the results are not used to plan their training.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

16. Associated Neighbour Training does not have adequate systems for assuring the quality of learners' training. There is a comprehensive operations manual, but it mostly contains administrative procedures. The procedures have few performance indicators and there is no evaluation of their effectiveness. There are no policies or procedures for induction, initial assessment of basic skills, diagnostic assessment of key skills, progress reviews, action-planning or training. The lack of quality assurance procedures was identified in the self-assessment report. The development plan includes actions to remedy this but, they have not yet been carried out. In September 2002, a new system was introduced for the observation of key training processes, but so far only two observations have been carried out. It is too early to judge the impact on the quality of the training programmes. There is no policy or procedure for self-assessment. Informal auditing of progress reviews and action-planning documents is carried out, but there are no written criteria against which quality can be judged. Procedures for assessment concentrate on the administration and completion of paperwork rather than the quality of the assessment. There is no handbook for assessors. There is no overall strategy for the use of internal verification to assure the quality of assessments or for the monitoring of subcontractors' internal verification policies. The internal verification policy has insufficient detail and some paperwork in the operations manual is out of date. Internal verification focuses on the performance of learners rather than the performance of the assessors and the accuracy of assessment decisions. There is an over-reliance on assessors identifying their own needs for internal verification. There has been some observation of assessment. Records of internal verification decisions are kept in learner's portfolios, but there is no systematic collection of information on the performance of individual assessors. Internal verification is not effective in identifying poor assessment practice in one area of learning.

17. The monitoring of the quality of training by subcontractors is weak. The agreement between Associated Neighbour Training and its subcontractors is inadequate. There are no targets and no description of how specific activities should be carried out. Associated Neighbour Training relies on the subcontractors' own procedures to assure the quality of their training and does not monitor assessment and verification. The twice-yearly meetings with the subcontractors are effective, but there are no minutes taken and they do not result in clear actions for improvement. Often, Associated Neighbour Training does not identify problems with subcontracted training or take effective action to bring about improvements. Problems with one subcontractor were not identified until the learners were near the end of their training.

18. Feedback is collected from learners three times during their training programmes. Questionnaires are used and action is taken to remedy problems. However, the response rate to the questionnaires is often too low to allow meaningful analysis of the results. Some sample sizes are as low as 5 per cent of the total number of learners. Although feedback is very positive, it not possible to judge if this accurately reflects the views of all learners.

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19. Self-assessment is not carried out at regular intervals. Self-assessment is not an integral part of business planning and is not carried out often enough in promoting effective continuous improvement. An action plan was produced after an inspection in 1999, but since then there has been no further self-assessment until February 2002. A detailed and comprehensive self-assessment report was produced in September 2002. It is self-critical and accurately identifies many of the weaknesses reported by inspectors. However, the resulting action plan is incomplete and does not fully deal with the weaknesses identified.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	30	3

20. There are 30 learners in land-based provision, all of whom are employed. Learners in veterinary nursing are recruited from veterinary practices throughout Surrey, where they are employed before they start training. Most learners in horticulture are recruited directly and placed with employers, and some are referred by their employer, Connexions or their parents. Off-the-job training in both areas is subcontracted to specialist training providers. Learners attend training for one day each week during their programme. Associated Neighbour Training does not have staff who have expertise in either veterinary nursing or in horticulture.

21. Associated Neighbour Training offers training in veterinary nursing for 16 learners, nine of whom are working towards NVQs at level 3, and seven are working towards NVQs at level 2. An external awarding body regulates the training programme and assessment. All learners are employed in approved veterinary training practices, which are linked to an approved veterinary nursing assessment centre. Learners attend off-the-job training at a specialist veterinary nursing provider to prepare them for external examinations twice a year. In September or January each year learners can start the off-the-job training, which covers the background knowledge of veterinary nursing and prepares them for the NVQ level 2 and 3 written and practical examinations. The external awarding body requires veterinary practices to allocate three hours each week to formal on-the-job training in addition to the off-the-job training. All assessment of on-the-job training is carried out in the workplace. There is no modern apprenticeship framework for veterinary nurses and no requirement for them to complete key skills.

22. There are 14 learners in amenity and decorative horticulture and one learner in horticultural machinery. Twelve learners are foundation modern apprentices, nine are following a programme leading to an NVQ at level 2 in sports turf, three are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in decorative horticulture, and one is following an NVQ at level 2 in horticultural machinery. One advanced modern apprentice is studying an NVQ at level 3 in sports turf and the other is studying an NVQ at level 3 in commercial horticulture. Modern apprentices also study key skills at appropriate levels. They also attend short courses leading to externally awarded certificates in basic first aid and safe use in pesticide application. All learners are employed, most on local golf courses. Learners can start at any time of the year but most enrol in September at the start of the college year. Off-the-job training and core key skills training are subcontracted to local agricultural colleges. Associated Neighbour Training and the colleges carry out induction and initial assessment either individually or in small groups. Most of the assessment takes place at work. Assessors carry out the learners' progress reviews in the workplace, every 13 weeks and offer training for two additional key skills. Most of

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the employers' staff are qualified assessors. College tutors also carry out assessments and internal verification.

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

Work-based learning for young people															
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	1				4									
Retained*	0				2										
Successfully completed	0				0										
Still in learning	1				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)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2		2		10		12							
Retained*	0		0		6		5								
Successfully completed	0		0		0		1								
Still in learning	2		0		6		4								

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

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99						
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2		6		7		7		1					
Retained*	0		0		0		5		1						
Successfully completed	0		0		0		4		0						
Still in learning	2		6		6		1		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

STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job training
- very good work placements
- effective induction in veterinary nursing
- good retention rates in veterinary nursing
- good integration of key skills with vocational training in horticulture

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress by learners towards achievement of their qualifications
- insufficient practical assessment in the workplace in veterinary nursing
- poor monitoring of subcontractors
- poor achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks in horticulture
- weak progress reviews and action-planning for learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- more detailed planning of on-the-job training
- more effective use of learners' information in learning plans
- more veterinary nursing textbooks to support independent study

23. On- and off-the-job training in veterinary nursing is good, but this was not identified in the self-assessment report. All veterinary practices offer the full range of veterinary nursing duties. This includes helping veterinary surgeons with routine and complex surgery, dealing with clients and their pets, reception duties and the daily care of sick animals. The subcontractor offers good off-the-job training to prepare learners for the background knowledge examination. Detailed lesson plans link training sessions to the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Learners participate through working in groups and discussions. The teaching of background knowledge is closely linked to practice in veterinary surgeries and learners are able to understand the tasks they carry out at work and this allows them to put the knowledge gained into practise. Homework is set frequently and marked promptly. Individual tutorials with the tutor take place each term and detailed progress reports are sent to employers and the provider. Learners know where to go for help and those interviewed felt that any concerns they have are listened to and acted on.

24. Learners' induction to the provider and to veterinary nursing training is good. An

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initial interview includes the detail of the training programme and ensures that learners understand the job of a veterinary nurse. Induction to the specialist training provider is good and learners are given a useful handbook which explains their course, employee rights, health and safety, equal opportunities and action to take if they encounter problems. Learners and employers find the handbook helpful. The first review of learners' progress includes the completion of a detailed induction checklist to ensure that all aspects of training and employment are in place and fully understood by learners. Initial assessment ensures that learners have the appropriate practical skills and GCSE grades to meet the awarding body's requirements. It also includes an assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. When additional support needs are identified, Associated Neighbour Training works with the employers to improve learners' skills and to support those who have specific difficulties such as dyslexia. Additional individual support sessions and revision courses are available and Associated Neighbour Training helps employers to develop techniques to support learners, such as frequent checks on understanding and the careful marking and feedback of written work. Any problems at work are quickly identified and acted on with employers.

25. The retention rates are good. The retention rate for the learners on NVQ level 2 is 100 per cent. Overall retention rates have improved from 71 per cent in 1999-2000 to 100 per cent in 2001-02. Only three learners have left the training programme early in the past four years.

26. Learners are slow to achieve their full veterinary nursing qualification. Most learners who took the nationally set examinations in 2001 were successful, but the results of the 2002 examination are not available. However, despite finishing the final examinations, the portfolios for a significant number of learners are incomplete. Often, learners portfolios are not completed until after they have passed their examinations, which prevents them from progressing to the next stage of the qualification or achieving the NVQ. Learners are not encouraged to bring their portfolios to the three-monthly progress reviews. Neither Associated Neighbour Training, nor the learner, are aware of the progress that has been made since the previous review. Some targets are set, but they are insufficiently detailed and challenging to encourage learners to progress and complete their portfolios. The targets are not monitored or reviewed. Work-based assessors comment on learners' progress before the reviews, but they are not always involved in the target-setting process. Some assessors have too many learners to assess and portfolios are often signed off late. Learners do not always have enough time with their assessors to plan assessments and receive feedback.

27. There is insufficient practical assessment in the workplace, but this was not identified in the self-assessment report. Work placements have a particularly good range of resources, which are used effectively to teach practical skills. For example, some work placements carry out advanced orthopaedic operations. However, while learners are able to assist at these events, evidence from such activities is often not collected. Individual practical assessment in the workplace is poorly planned and infrequent. Often, it only takes place during visits by the internal verifier and records of progress are not available for other visits, and learners are insufficiently prepared for their practical

examinations. Some of the assessors do not attend the termly assessors' meetings and they are not always up to date with changes in assessment practice.

28. The range of information which Associated Neighbour Training holds about learners is satisfactory, but it is not always used effectively. Off-the-job training programmes are not always shared with employers or assessors. Most employers rely on learners to explain what is covered at the training centre. Results from the initial assessment of learners' preferred learning styles and off-the-job progress reports are copied to work placements, but sometimes they are not used effectively at learners' progress reviews and do not lead to changes on the individual learning plans. Some ongoing needs of learners are not effectively supported and they often lose motivation as the 12-weekly review cycle is not adjusted to reflect the different rates of progress. Associated Neighbour Training's staff have little practical experience of veterinary nursing and do not always fully appreciate the context in which learners are working.

29. The quality of on- and off-the-job training is not monitored effectively. There is good informal communication between Associated Neighbour Training and the subcontractor, but there are insufficient safeguards to ensure effectiveness. There are no structures at management level to ensure consistency in training, no off-the-job training observations, and no copies of internal and external verifier reports are received. Internal verification action points are not always dealt with by work-based assessors or followed up by the internal verifier, and Associated Neighbour Training is unaware of quality assurance problems.

30. Access to essential textbooks and learning materials at the training centre is adequate, but learners are not able to borrow them to study at home. Often, single copies of books are available at work but, particularly where there is more than one learner in a work placement, this can make it difficult for learners to complete their assignments and portfolios effectively.

31. Off-the-job training for learners in horticulture is good. The training programme is well-planned and matches learners' specific interests in the study of sports turf and green-keeping. Learners are given a copy of the weekly programme, but some of the employers are not aware of its content and this limits opportunities to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training and reinforce learning in the workplace. Lessons are well organised, with gradual development of all the background knowledge needed to achieve the NVQ. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in their subjects and learners find the lessons interesting and are able to relate what they learn in lessons to their work on the golf course. Learners can develop some good horticultural skills on the college golf course and can develop their competence and be assessed in elements of the programme they cannot cover in the workplace. All learners demonstrate good understanding of the knowledge and practice of horticulture and their coursework is satisfactory. Individual tutorials with the college tutor take place each term, where clear targets are set for the completion of work, but learners often do not share the outcomes with their assessor from Associated Neighbour Training. Those learners who do not attend college have good training in background knowledge at work. Each month the

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employer identifies seasonal activities and prepares a detailed programme of background knowledge and practical training to complete elements of the NVQ. At the end of the period, learners' understanding is tested and the learner with the best result receives a prize. Learners like this approach as it encourages them to learn and receive recognition when they do well.

32. Work placements for horticulture are very good, but this was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Most learners are employed by golf clubs or leisure parks and they carry out jobs which match the requirements of the NVQ. All work placements offer a good range of learning opportunities and learners develop good personal and employment skills. Learners are involved in the full range of green-keeping and horticulture duties, including helping head green keepers with routine and complex operations, working with specialist machinery and meeting with clients. Learners have good support from their workplace supervisors, who are well qualified and experienced. Learners are able to develop competence in all aspects of green-keeping and are given good informal feedback on their progress. Workplace supervisors make good use of witness testimony and help learners to recognise opportunities to record evidence for assessment. Throughout learning, health and safety is promoted and reinforced continually. All learners are trained and assessed before they use complex machinery unsupervised. Some golf courses have their own training programme, but often the planning and the collection of evidence are not linked effectively to the NVQ. Pressure of work allows learners little time at work to complete their portfolios of evidence.

33. Training in key skills is well linked with vocational training. An assessor from Associated Neighbour Training visits learners at work each month to help them achieve two additional key skills of working with others and improving their own learning. Through discussion, learners are encouraged to identify activities which take place in the workplace. A detailed plan to gather evidence is agreed and clear targets for work to be completed by the next visit are set and progress is monitored effectively.

34. Achievement rates for the modern apprenticeship frameworks are poor. Retention rates are satisfactory. Only one learner has completed the foundation modern apprenticeship framework in the past three years and none has completed the advanced modern apprenticeship framework. Some learners have achieved the NVQ, but few have passed the key skills tests. Four learners have completed all elements of the foundation modern apprenticeship and are waiting for final verification of their work. Most learners who take the additional qualification of safe use in pesticide application are successful. The arrangements for teaching key skills by the subcontractor are insufficient. Learners are unsure about how they will gain their key skills and opportunities to accredit key skills at the same time as occupational competence are frequently overlooked. Staff are unclear about how they can link key skills and vocational training, and this does not allow learners to complete their modern apprenticeship framework in the required timescale. Learners have an initial diagnostic assessment with Associated Neighbour Training and the college, but insufficient detail is recorded on individual learning plans about how specific needs will be met. Additional

learning support is available at college, but learners rarely make use of this facility.

35. Many learners make slow progress towards achieving their NVQ. Out of the seven of the 15 learners continuing, four have achieved the NVQ, but not the key skills in the planned period of training and three have the NVQ and key skills to achieve beyond the planned period of training. Learners' progress reviews and action-planning are weak. Employers carry out progress reviews with the assessor from Associated Neighbour Training, but learners make little contribution to the process. Progress since the last review is not identified. Neither the learner nor the provider is fully aware of the progress that has been made since the last review. Few clear targets for progress and achievement are set and when they are, they are insufficiently detailed and challenging to encourage learners to progress. Associated Neighbour Training's staff have little practical experience of horticulture and do not always fully appreciate the context in which learners are working. The slow achievement rate and the poor quality of progress reviews were not identified in the self-assessment report.

36. Monitoring of the quality of on- and off-the-job training given by employers and the subcontractor is poor. Informal communications are adequate but there are insufficient safeguards in place to ensure effectiveness. There are no structures at management level to assure the quality of training. There are no observations of training or other key processes and copies of internal and external verifier reports are not received. The provider has identified the weaknesses in the teaching of key skills by the subcontractor, but little action has been taken to improve the situation.

Good Practice

On one golf course the learner was given responsibility for the annual maintenance and repair of a practise green. The learner was able to carry out all the operations of good husbandry, collect evidence and be assessed on his own green. The learner gained considerable confidence and pride in his work, in addition to the acquisition of vocational skills.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	45	3

37. Associated Neighbour Training offers modern apprenticeships in business administration, management, accounting, estate agency, insurance and information technology (IT). There are six foundation modern apprentices and 39 advanced modern apprentices. Twenty-three learners are working towards business administration NVQs, two in management, three in accounting, three in estate agency, four in insurance and 10 in IT. All learners are employed and most work for companies in Surrey. Most of the learners were employed before their first contact with Associated Neighbour Training. Some are referred by Connexions and after an interview, they are found a work placement by the training provider. All learners attend an induction with their employer and by Associated Neighbour Training's staff. Accounting learners carry out off-the-job training one day each week at a local college. Those following NVQs in estate agency and insurance, carry out distance learning offered by the relevant external professional bodies. For other learners, training is provided in the workplace by their employers and through individual coaching by an assessor. Staff visit learners in the workplace every month to carry out assessment and progress reviews. There are three members of staff working in the business area, all of whom are qualified assessors and two of them are qualified internal verifiers.

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)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	7		29		34		35								
Retained*	0		1		18		24									
Successfully completed	0		1		10		23									
Still in learning	7		19		11		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)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		3		18		8									
Retained*	0		1	33	9	50	3	38									
Successfully completed	0		1	33	9	50	3	38									
Still in learning	3		0	0	3	17	0	0									

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

STRENGTHS

- good achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications
- insufficient awareness of learners' progress by employers and learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective communication by employers

38. Overall, completion of the advanced modern apprenticeship framework is good. For 1999-2000, 66 per cent of those who started successfully completed. Achievement rates in business administration are particularly good, and have been maintained for the past three years. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices are satisfactory. Of those learners who started training in 2000-01, 50 per cent completed the full modern apprenticeship framework and a further 17 per cent are still in learning. Retention rates on both training programmes are satisfactory. On the foundation programme, the retention rate improved between 1999-2000 and 2000-01, when a significant number of learners started training. On the advanced programme, the retention rate has been satisfactory for the past three years.

39. Work placements for business administration learners are good. Learners carry out jobs which match the requirements of their NVQ and are able to complete all elements at work. Employers make every effort to ensure that their learners have the necessary

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range of experience and support at work to allow them to achieve the NVQ. Resources and learning materials are good and textbooks are available from Associated Neighbour Training. Many employers allow their learners a certain number of hours each week to work on their NVQ. The self-assessment report did not recognise this strength. Learners enjoy their training and appreciate the support that is provided by Associated Neighbour Training's staff and by their employers. Most learners already have a job before approaching the training provider, but some are helped to find a suitable work placement. Most learners are placed on programmes which reflect their previous academic achievements and complement their roles at work. Assessors visit every month to review learners' progress, carry out assessments and provide training. Action-planning is carried out and the plan is reviewed at the next visit. Learners take an active role in these sessions and after the review, the assessor meets with the workplace supervisor to discuss the outcomes.

40. Many learners are making slow progress towards completing the modern apprenticeship framework, and many of those who have completed it, did not do so until well after their planned end date. This is despite the fact that many of the learners have academic qualifications well in excess of Associated Neighbour Training's minimum entry requirements. Reviews of learners' progress do not set clear targets for assessment and learners are not challenged to complete units by the target dates. Until recently, the provider has not encouraged learners to achieve individual units of the NVQ and this has resulted in slow progress. Also, if learners leave the training programme early, none of the units are accredited. The self-assessment report recognised that achievement rates are good on some programmes, but did not acknowledge slow progress as a weakness.

41. Employers and learners are not fully aware of their progress towards achieving the NVQ. With the exception of learners taking NVQs in insurance and accounting, all training takes place in the workplace, either by the employer or by the assessor in individual coaching sessions. Most employers are keen to be involved in the training process, but there are few procedures to let the employer know what specific training the learner needs. Much of the training given by employers is related to the learners' job rather than to the requirements of the NVQ. Most employers rely on the learner to request training rather than having the need identified by the assessor. Employers are given insufficient information about the learners' training needs by Associated Neighbour Training. Most of the learners do not have a clear idea of their progress and whether they are on schedule to achieve their qualification by the target date. Most employers are in a similar position and rely on Associated Neighbour Training to inform them if problems arise. A formal review takes place every three months. Some learners have had their learning plan extended in order to allow them to achieve their modern apprenticeship framework. The self-assessment report identifies that assessors may be contacted at any time on any day, and learners confirmed that they received good support from their assessors. Many learners carry out key skills diagnostic tests, but the results are not used to help develop the learning plan, nor are they used to help employers identify evidence which contributes towards key skills assessments.

42. Assessment practice is satisfactory and almost all of it is carried out in the workplace. Learners' portfolios of evidence contain a wide range of evidence from their everyday work including observation, witness testimonies and discussions. Assessors encourage the learners to think about their evidence requirements. In the early stages of the programme, assessors help the learners to cross-reference their evidence, but as the learners progress they are encouraged to do this themselves. Internal verification procedures have recently been changed and internal verification is more frequent. However, although assessors are now given written feedback by the internal verifier, there is no procedure for them to respond to the feedback.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	4

43. Associated Neighbour Training offers work-based learning for 15 customer service modern apprentices in Surrey. Thirteen are advanced modern apprentices and two are foundation modern apprentices. All the learners are employed in local businesses. Learners can join at any time and are usually recruited from existing employment, by advertisement or referral from Connexions, employers or other learners. Some skills analysis and psychometric testing is carried out during the recruitment process, the results of which are recorded on individual learning plans. The provider has a team of three assessors, two of whom are also internal verifiers. Induction, key skills and vocational development all take place at work. Assessors visit learners regularly each month to monitor progress, provide training, carry out progress reviews and to plan and carry out assessments.

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)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	2		7		19		10						
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0						
Successfully completed	0		0		3		7	70						
Still in learning	2		6		5		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)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts			2		2		5						
Retained*			0		0		0	0						
Successfully completed			0		0		2	40						
Still in learning			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

- well-developed short-term action-planning process
- good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications by learners
- poor achievement rates
- weak internal verification practices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more formal involvement of employers in assessment planning

44. There is a well-developed monthly action-planning process which is followed by assessors when they visit learners in the workplace. The plan records all the detailed actions agreed between the employer, the learner and the assessor. Action plans are used effectively to review short-term objectives, plan future assessments, identify opportunities to collect evidence for NVQs, agree monthly tasks and activities, highlight required modifications to behaviour and record any special training sessions. The plan is copied to all parties and Associated Neighbour Training. This practice helps communication and provides a detailed history of learners' experiences and progress at work.

45. Good work placements effectively support the development of customer service skills for learners. Learners work in a range of local businesses, including call centres, insurance operations, information services and property management. Employers offer excellent customer service development opportunities and a wide variety of support to learners to cover all elements of the modern apprenticeship framework. All employers invest significantly in training and development to ensure learners can deal effectively and efficiently with internal or external customers. Some employers have extensive in-house training programmes. Others arrange external training or education during working hours. Employers use a good range of external courses, including development in software packages, hardware applications, graphic design and presentation skills. Other courses focus on the development of a wider range of skills, including the ability to analyse and use information effectively. Learners are also offered a range of opportunities to develop specialist, technical and team-leader skills. Employers encourage their learners to seek promotion and many achieve this goal during the course of their modern apprenticeship. Some learners negotiate particularly challenging learning goals with their employers, which include project and events management.

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46. Learners' progress is slow and units are achieved much later than agreed on individual learning plans. Initial assessment is not used to identify learners' basic skills needs or to identify individual learning styles. The results from initial assessment are not recorded effectively on individual learning plans, nor are they used to set targets for each learner to achieve the NVQ units by the end of their training programme. The self-assessment report identifies the early integration of key skills, but does not recognise the weaknesses in its provision. These include the failure to use alternative qualifications, inadequate number and communication training for some learners, and the ineffective timing of key skills assessment. Employers are undoubtedly committed to the modern apprenticeship programmes, but some do not participate in learners' progress reviews. They are unaware of learners' progress, of goals for the next review, or of any additional support learners need. Some employers have a limited understanding of the customer service qualifications. They are insufficiently involved in the planning of work-based learning or assessment to understand what learners need to do to complete their modern apprenticeship framework. There are no systems to quality assure training at work.

47. Achievement rates are poor. None of the foundation modern apprentices has completed the framework since 2000. In 2001, the achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices were poor and declined significantly from the previous year.

48. Internal verification is weak. Internal verifiers do not adequately manage the assessment process. Sampling across assessors and learners takes place, but some of the units are sampled far more frequently than others. There is no planned sampling of assessment methods or practices. There is also an over-reliance on internal verification of learners' achievement rather than assessors' performance. The provider has recently introduced standardisation meetings, but none has been carried out for customer service as yet. Some poor assessment practices are not being remedied. In particular, assessment is not well planned or discussed in advance with learners and employers. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Although some good assessment practice takes place, assessors are not sufficiently flexible in their approach to fill gaps in evidence. These gaps are often very small, but can delay learners' achievement of their qualification significantly. There is no combined assessment, using evidence for NVQs and key skills from everyday work activities.

Good Practice

Associated Neighbour Training has designed two useful documents to help increase employers' involvement in the modern apprenticeship frameworks. One confirms the components of an individual learner's framework and the other records training given by the employer. Both documents are used in consultation with the employer.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	6	3

49. There are six learners working towards an NVQ at level 3 in oral healthcare. The NVQ in oral healthcare was introduced as a new qualification in January 2001 and Associated Neighbour Training recruited its first learners in September 2001. Before this, learners worked towards the certificate in dental nursing. All learners are employed and work full-time in local dental practices. Most learners are recruited on to the training programme following direct marketing activities with their employers. An initial assessment, induction and ongoing pastoral support is given to all learners by Associated Neighbour Training's staff. Responsibility for off-the-job training, assessment and internal verification is subcontracted. Learners attend off-the-job training for one day each week over two years. Reviews of learners' progress take place every 13 weeks and are carried out in the workplace by the training provider. Learners have to be successful in an externally assessed examination to become fully qualified dental nurses. The examinations take place twice a year. If learners fail one section of the three-part examination, they can resit that section at the next available date.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training	2002-03		2001-02												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			9											
Retained*			0												
Successfully completed			0												
Still in learning			6												

*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 off-the-job training
- good support for learning in the workplace

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective use of initial assessments
- slow progress towards achievement of qualifications by most learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of learners' progress reviews
- more focused target-setting
- more involvement by dentists
- more varied teaching methods for off-the-job training
- simpler methods for recording NVQ evidence
- better co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training

50. Off-the-job training is good. It is subcontracted to a specialist provider of dental training and takes place at times to suit learners' working patterns. The subcontractor's premises are centrally located for most practices, with good access by public transport. The premises provide a stimulating environment for learners, which include well-equipped laboratories, teaching rooms, a well-resourced library and a computer suite. Attendance and timekeeping are mostly good. These strengths were partially recognised in the self-assessment report. Staff have a wide range of relevant qualifications and experience, and include a qualified dental surgeon, assessors and teachers. The syllabus is well planned into modules which cover two academic years and meet all the background knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Some of the dental practices are not aware of the content of off-the-job training and are not able to develop background knowledge effectively at the practice. All learners demonstrate good understanding of the background knowledge and practice of dental nursing and their coursework is good. Detailed feedback enables learners to remedy weaknesses in their background knowledge and practical skills. Occasional guest speakers are brought in to teach specialist subjects, such as oral hygiene and radiography. Learning materials are good and clearly written but there is a narrow range of teaching methods. Learners can study for further relevant vocational qualifications, when they have completed the NVQ in oral healthcare. Each learner has an individual tutorial each term. A report on their progress is passed to Associated Neighbour Training and their employers twice a year. Communications between employers, trainers and training provider staff are good. Feedback and discussion have led to improvements in training during the second year.

51. Employers ensure that the individual support for learners in the workplace is good and contributes effectively towards their learning. Many dental practices provide additional on-the-job training. Learners are able to develop and become proficient in a wide range of practical skills, some of which are complex and technically demanding. Associated Neighbour Training holds in-depth discussions with dentists and practice

managers before learners enrol on the course to ensure good awareness of the course requirements. However, there is often little contact with the dentists during training and they do not become involved in the training programme. Practice managers and senior nurses are encouraged to become qualified assessors. Most assessments are carried out by the subcontractors' staff and assessors ensure that they are available to learners at all times. Many work with learners in their homes in the evenings and at weekends to build their portfolios so they can work in a less-pressured environment. Assessors meet regularly to standardise assessment methods and discuss the progress of individual learners. They visit learners in the workplace to observe and assess them working with dentists and patients. Observations are well recorded and used as evidence across a range of units. Internal verification is thorough. Regular reviews of learners' progress, involving a three-way discussion between the learners, the practice manager and a tutor from Associated Neighbour Training are constructive and lead to improvements in the learners' experience. Written records of reviews are mostly satisfactory, but some have insufficient detail and targets for improvement. Learners are able to contact tutors and assessors at any time for pastoral and learning support. Regular newsletters are sent by the training provider to employers and learners. Learners are encouraged to give feedback on all aspects of the training process and changes and improvements are made as a result of this dialogue.

52. Initial assessments are ineffective. Learners have a number of initial assessments by the training provider and the subcontractor, but none of them are used as a basis for the individual learning plans. Learners complete a psychometric test to determine their preferred learning styles, but there is no differentiation in teaching methods for either on- or off-the-job training. Learners complete a skills and abilities assessment, but most of the questions have little or nothing to do with the skills and abilities they will need to become a dental nurse. The initial assessments do not determine if the learner may have health or social barriers to learning. The subcontractor arranges for each learner to complete a piece of writing to determine their level of literacy and to identify problems such as dyslexia. Learners are enrolled onto the course each September. Some work in dental surgeries for many months before the start of their training, but their previous learning and experience are not assessed at the start of the course. Every 13 weeks, learners complete a performance appraisal, but poor scores are not recorded on the learning plan and actions or targets are not set to remedy problems. There is no systematic process to assess the suitability of the workplace to ensure that learners can gain all the necessary experience to achieve the NVQ. Some learners have not completed the basic requirement of recording details of clients' teeth on official charts in the surgery.

53. The progress of learners is slow. Associated Neighbour Training recruited the first learners onto the NVQ course in September 2001, so everyone involved in the course, including tutors, assessors, verifiers and training provider staff, are new to the qualification. Many improvements have been made during the first year, but for learners recruited in September 2001, progress has been slow. Recording of information in the portfolios has been simplified, but learners still find the process complicated and time-consuming. Most learners have only completed two units and are working on three or

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four of the 14 units to be completed by August 2003. Some have completed more, but none of the learners have completed 50 per cent of the NVQ requirements. Learners are preparing for the external assessment in May and this causes further delays in completing the units. Most learners are unaware of the exact time they have to complete the mandatory and optional units. One learner is under the impression that five years is the timescale for completion. Monitoring of learners' progress is poor and target-setting is often insufficiently focused to ensure completion within the two years' planned duration. Trainers, assessors, learners and workplace supervisors are aware of the situation but the amount of additional support to ensure completion by the planned end date is insufficient.