

INSPECTION REPORT

General Physics Corporation UK Limited

02 September, 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

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

General Physics Corporation UK Limited is a privately owned multinational company which employs over 250 staff in the United Kingdom. There are seven regional training centres in Bradford, Newcastle, Stockton, Stockport, Harrow, Halifax and Birkenhead. General Physics Corporation UK Limited provides work-based learning programmes for young people in land-based provision, business administration, retailing, customer service and transportation, health and social care, and foundation programmes. There are 1,759 learners.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, training for learners in land-based provision, business administration, health and social care, retailing and customer service, and foundation programmes are unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are also unsatisfactory, as are equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

GRADES

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

Land-based provision	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

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

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

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good learner support by staff and employers
- good work placements
- particularly effective working relationships within training centres
- good range of staff development activities
- thorough and well-written policies and procedures

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor use of feedback to improve service
- poor retention and framework achievement rates
- ineffective basic skills support
- ineffective initial assessment
- poor management of training
- insufficient understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- inappropriate management information system for individual training centres
- late introduction of initiatives to improve retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better communication between training centres
- more involvement of staff in self-assessment process
- better sharing of good practices in internal verification

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of 21 inspectors spent a total of 105 days at General Physics Corporation UK Limited (GP UK Limited) during September 2002. They interviewed 152 learners and conducted 118 interviews with staff. They interviewed 68 employers and observed 35 training sessions. They examined a range of documents including learners' and staff records and personal files, the provider's business plan, specialist learning resources, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. They examined 126 portfolios of evidence. Inspectors also studied the self-assessment report and development plan, which were produced in January 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	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	4	7	7	1	2	0	21
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	5
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	4
Total	0	5	9	13	4	4	0	35

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. GP UK Limited was founded in 1966. It is a privately owned multinational company which employs over 250 staff in the United Kingdom. There are seven regional training centres in Bradford, Newcastle, Stockton, Stockport, Harrow, Halifax, and Birkenhead. The training centres at Halifax and Bradford have recently combined and provision is now managed from the Bradford office. The head office is in Stockport. There are currently 1759 learners. All learners are employed with the exception of those learners on foundation programmes. Most learners are working towards foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships. Some are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The provider works with large numbers of both national multi-site employers and smaller local employers. The training provision is spread widely throughout much of England and work-based learning is funded through contracts with over a dozen local learning and skills councils (LSCs). The lead local LSC is Tees Valley.

Work-based learning for young people

3. The quality of work-based learning in all five areas inspected is unsatisfactory. Retention and framework achievement rates are low in all areas of learning. There is good support for all learners from staff and by employers. The standard of training is mostly satisfactory or better in land-based provision, retailing and care. There are good work placements in land-based provision and care. Effective working relationships between staff contribute to a strong commitment to improve the overall quality of training. There are some good off-the-job training resources in most training centres. Initial assessment is weak in foundation programmes, retailing and care. The overall planning and management of training is poor. The reviews of learners' progress are ineffective in business administration and retailing. Employers are not sufficiently involved in training and assessment in business administration and land-based provision. Learners make slow progress in retailing. Basic skills support is ineffective in land-based and foundation provision. There are a number of measures recently introduced to improve the service but it is too early for them to have yet had any significant effect.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

4. GP UK Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of GP Strategies. Business Unit 100 is a unit within GP UK Limited which provides government-funded training programmes. It has seven training centres comprising Stockport, Bradford, Halifax, Birkenhead, London, Stockton and Newcastle. There are currently 92 staff of whom 91 are full time. The business unit director has overall responsibility for running this section of the company. The quality assurance manager is employed by GP UK Limited and works with the director. There are two senior project managers, one based in the Northwest and one responsible for the Northeast and London. There are three regional internal verifiers. Each training centre has a project manager responsible for the operation of the centre, and a business development team that works with the employers and administration staff. The assessors and internal verifiers are based at the training centres. A recently appointed key skills mentor works at the training centres in Newcastle and Stockton. Overall responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the business unit director. Handbooks, information sheets and induction packs contain information on the policy and procedures on how to deal with complaints, discrimination, harassment, grievances, appeals and disciplinary action. The policy was last updated in June 2002. The company has quality assurance policies and procedures. The Business Unit 100 produced its own self-assessment report in January 2002. GP UK Limited is accredited with both the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, and also the new ISO 9000, an international quality assurance standard.

STRENGTHS

- particularly effective working relationships within training centres
- good working relationships with employers
- good range of staff development activities
- good access to most training centres for learners with mobility difficulties
- thorough and well-written policies and procedures

WEAKNESSES

- poor management of training
- inappropriate management information system for individual training centres
- insufficient understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- insufficient analysis and use of equal opportunities data
- poor use of feedback from learners and employers
- late introduction of initiatives to improve retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better communication between training centres
- better recording of training centre meetings
- better sharing of good practices in internal verification
- more involvement of staff in self-assessment process

5. There are particularly effective working relationships within the training centres. Weekly meetings of all training centre staff are held when the training programmes and issues relating to the running of the centre are discussed. These meetings are well attended but the recording of the outcomes is not always thorough. There are weekly meetings between individual assessors, the project centre manager and the relevant internal verifier. The progress of every learner is discussed and action agreed, which may include contacting employers. These meetings provide good support for new assessors. The company encourages each training centre to nominate a team player of the month and staff also nominate colleagues who have been particularly helpful. All nominated staff are given points which contribute to cash payments based on the GP UK Limited share value. Although staff attend quality assurance meetings and NVQ development meetings at other training centres, there is insufficient sharing of good practice between the regions. The business plan is thorough but not all staff in some training centres are aware of the development plans.

6. There are good working relationships with employers. When employers recruit new staff they often contact the development staff at GP UK Limited to arrange training. The business development team visits employers to discuss training requirements. When a learner is placed on a training programme, GP UK Limited provides each employer with a handbook and other information relevant to the training programme. At the end of a successfully completed training programme, employers receive a £100 training voucher. Employers provide, at their own expense, additional training for learners and are often involved in progress reviews.

7. There is a good range of staff development activities. Training is available for all staff and the budget for staff development is not limited. New unqualified assessors and internal verifiers are immediately placed on relevant training programmes to work towards qualifications. Teacher training is included in the staff development programme for all assessors and internal verifiers. Training is arranged to suit the staff needs. For example, one member of staff with family commitments was placed on a teacher-training course that can be attended in the daytime. Training is available on the staff intranet and GP UK Limited university. There is also a diversity training programme.

8. The management of training is poor. There is inadequate off-the-job training. In some training centres, there was no off-the-job training taking place until the recent introduction of key skills training sessions. The staff turnover has resulted in a high percentage of unqualified assessors, which has delayed assessment in some areas. In one training centre, learners had no assessor for two months. The replacement assessor was unqualified and assessments were delayed further. The responsibility for induction

and initial assessment is unclear at some training centres. Some training centres have poor monitoring of learners' progress and have no current learner data.

9. The management information system provided by GP UK Limited does not provide data which can be easily extracted and used by GP UK Limited's staff at the individual training centres. Data held on a regional basis are also difficult to use and do not contribute to the planning of the training programmes. The information provided is complex and mainly relates to the whole of the company's UK operations. The Business Unit 100 identified in the self-assessment report the difficulties the training centres have in using the data from GP UK Limited.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

10. GP UK Limited has a comprehensive policy covering all aspects of equal opportunities. The policy includes separate procedures for dealing with harassment and grievances. Staff have good access to information on equal opportunities and diversity. The company intranet and the GP UK Limited university regularly provide news about activities and training. In most training centres, information has now been collected on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) so that learners requiring this help can be referred. Not all staff make sufficient use of this information to keep up to date with current practice. There is an international diversity newsgroup. International feast days celebrating cultures throughout the world are brought to the attention of all staff. All staff are required to complete equal opportunities training during their first year of employment, but many new staff have not received this. Equal opportunities are discussed routinely at staff meetings but mostly in response to issues that arise. Training centre managers are responsible for dealing with any relevant issues.

11. Learners have an insufficient understanding of equal opportunities. Most discussions do not discuss equal opportunities in detail. The policy and procedures are not written in language easily understood by learners with poor literacy skills. Any relevant issues are discussed at progress reviews, but equal opportunities training from the induction is not reinforced during these sessions. Discussions between learners and assessors are not sufficiently detailed. There is an equal access policy for learners which outlines their rights to information, resources, individual support and guidance.

12. There is insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. There are some inappropriate displays in some workplaces. Companies are not asked to sign up to the GP UK Limited equal opportunities policy. Employer practice is not monitored adequately unless issues are raised by learners during their meetings with assessors. GP UK Limited has acknowledged the need to promote equal opportunities training more effectively, and 10 staff from one employer are scheduled to join GP UK Limited's staff in a training day in October 2002. GP UK Limited has started to investigate good practice materials to help improve equal opportunities training.

13. There is good access to most training centres for learners with mobility difficulties. An audit to determine access needs was carried out at the Newcastle training centre. Recent improvement measures at most training centres include the introduction of lifts, ramped access and toilets.

14. There is insufficient analysis and use of equal opportunities data, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Training centre managers have collected learner data but these are not sufficient to influence effectively planning and procedures. Targets to increase participation in training by learners from minority ethnic groups have recently been set.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

15. Quality assurance policies and procedures are thorough and well written and relate

well to learners. They apply to most aspects of the training, including reviewing progress reviews, arrangements for work placements and off-the-job training. They are clearly written and staff use them as working instructions. Some procedures are widely followed by staff, including the use of standardised forms, such as those required for lesson plans and progress reviews. The regional quality assurance managers carry out effective internal audits of course files. Areas for development are identified during these audits, such as weak progress reviews. However, some procedures are not effective. Staff are not always aware of procedures for all aspects of the training for which they are responsible. Managers do not always monitor the extent to which staff follow all procedures.

16. There is poor use of feedback from learners and employers. Learners complete evaluations after induction, midway through their training and at the end of their training programme. Information from these evaluations is not analysed or used to improve training. Employers are occasionally asked for feedback. Response to this feedback is generally poor. The company organises meetings for employers to provide feedback, but these are poorly attended. Evaluations of feedback generally focus only on positive responses from learners. In some cases, learners are only asked to complete the evaluation after induction.

17. There has been late introduction of initiatives to improve retention and achievement rates. However, GP UK Limited has introduced a number of new initiatives over the past six months, including the introduction of key skills training and assessment, a new review process and improved initial assessment. Although retention and achievement rates are improving, it is too early to make a judgement on the effectiveness of these initiatives.

18. Team meetings are held on a regular basis and minutes are recorded. The minutes do not identify actions to follow up decisions. Minutes of previous meetings are not reviewed to ensure that progress has been made.

19. Communications are poor between the training centres. There are monthly training centre meetings, but there are insufficient meetings for staff across or within regions. In each region, there are good examples of training materials, data collection and learner support methods, but these examples of good practice are not shared well between training centres. There are some good practices within the internal verification process, but these are not always shared between the training centres. Where internal verification is satisfactory it is identifying areas for development and improvement.

20. GP UK Limited completed its self-assessment in January 2002. Not all staff were consulted as part of the self-assessment process. All staff were issued with a copy of the self-assessment report. Staff were not always fully aware of the self-assessment report or its contents. An action plan was developed as part of the self-assessment process. The action plan from the self-assessment report is detailed and informative. The timescales for carrying out the actions are good. The report included some good information and identified some of the strengths and weaknesses. However, inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. It included detailed appendices and references to sources of

evidence.

Good Practice

The company has information available on its website and through GP UK Limited university to improve staff understanding of equal opportunities and diversity. International feast days are celebrated and briefing notes give employees relevant information. All staff are able to contribute to special events, such as a competition for writing a Haiku poem or being involved in a women's history month.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	12	4

21. There are 12 learners on work-based learning programmes in horticulture. Four learners are working towards NVQs at level 1, and eight are working towards NVQs at level 2. One learner is working towards the option in hard landscape, and seven are working towards the option of decorative horticulture. Learners are recruited from the local careers service. At the start of their training programme learners have a one-day induction at the Stockport training centre. This covers essential information such as fire regulations, policies and procedures. All current learners are identified as having additional learning needs. All learners are currently unemployed. Learners attend the training centre at Stockport, and the practical training facilities at Brabyns Park Nurseries, each Thursday for off-the-job training. Learners who are unemployed carry out an initial assessment to help determine the appropriate level of NVQ, and also to identify basic skills support needs, which are provided during off-the-job training. No learners are currently working towards key skills qualifications. There are two assessors, one of whom is qualified and one who is working towards relevant qualifications. There is one qualified internal verifier. Assessors carry out assessment visits in the workplace every two to four weeks. Progress reviews are carried out every four weeks during the off-the-job training sessions. Careers guidance and job preparation are carried out by the assessors.

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

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			1		2											
Retained*			1	100	2	100											
Successfully completed			0	0	1	50											
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																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		6		8		13									
Retained*	0		3		4		5	38								
Successfully completed	0		1		4		4	31								
Still in learning	5		3		4		0	0								

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

STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job training resources
- good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- poor planning of training and assessment
- insufficient employer involvement in training and assessment
- incomplete basic skills support for horticultural learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- faster progress towards certification of staff qualifications

22. Resources are good for off-the-job training, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The classroom in the Stockport training centre is well decorated and furnished, and has displays of relevant horticultural posters. A small selection of horticultural books and magazines are available for learners. Computer facilities are provided during training sessions to help learners complete job sheets. There is also a practical training facility at Brabyns Park Nurseries. This is a working garden centre at which learners gain skills in hard landscape and customer service as well as horticultural plant production. It provides a realistic working environment for learners who have recently joined the training programme and are waiting to be placed with a suitable employer, and for learners who have a gap between finishing one work placement and starting at another.

23. Work placements are good, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

Learners are placed with a variety of work placement providers, including landscape gardeners and golf courses. A certificate of partnership is provided by GP UK Limited to work-placement providers that carry out certain requirements, such as provision of recommended workplace induction. Workplace supervisors provide learners with a good variety of work and responsibilities. For example, one learner on a local golf course now operates expensive turf care machinery around the greens, after only a few months on the work placement. Learners frequently gain permanent jobs at their work placement on completion of their training programme.

24. There is poor planning of training and assessment. Although there is satisfactory use of direct observation of learners' work, there is insufficient evidence of assessment planning, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There are no schemes of work for off-the-job training. Lesson plans are not adequately detailed. The horticultural trainer makes good use of his industrial experience to help learners understand topics such as health and safety in the use of machinery and garden tools. Learners are not involved effectively in the training sessions. None of the horticultural training staff has a teaching qualification. However, one member of staff is currently working towards an initial teaching certificate and another is starting training for this certificate in the new academic year. Although all current learners have additional learning needs, no formal observation of horticultural training has taken place to provide relevant advice and support for the trainers. Progress reviews are carried out on a regular basis but do not set good targets. Portfolios of evidence are structured well and contain a useful evidence record. However, this is compiled at the end of the training programme and is not used to monitor learner progress. Learners do not fully understand either the work they have already completed or the work they have to complete to achieve their qualification. Although progress has been made in learner involvement, this is still insufficient to ensure good understanding and ownership of the NVQ process. Some portfolios do not contain a good range of diverse evidence, such as annotated photographs of tasks completed at work. Although there have been some delays in assessors visiting learners in the workplace, these visits are now regularly carried out. These meetings and their frequency, are monitored effectively by the training centre co-ordinator. The numbers of learners on foundation modern apprenticeships is too low to judge the retention and achievement rates effectively. However, retention on the NVQ training programme has improved over the past three years.

25. There is insufficient employer involvement in training and assessment, a weakness not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Although some employers have received copies of the relevant NVQ standards, they do not fully understand the qualification their learners are working towards, or the specific requirements to achieve the qualification. Insufficient use is made of witness testimonies from workplace supervisors. Most assessment of practical skills is carried out through direct observation by the assessor during their workplace visits.

26. There is incomplete basic skills support. Until recently, this support was provided by horticultural staff during their training sessions. The current horticultural trainer does

not have relevant basic skills qualifications and has not been provided with sufficient relevant training. Learners can attend additional basic skills training sessions, but not all learners are able to attend these. Some learners have not received basic skills support for several months. For example, one learner has now completed his NVQ at level 1 but is only now receiving basic skills training.

27. The assessor for horticulture has not received certification of his assessor units. His assessments are being monitored by an experienced, qualified colleague. However, learners' progress is delayed.

Good Practice

A roll of honour is maintained of learners who have achieved their NVQs. This is issued to employers and is displayed in prominent positions around the company.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	84	4

28. There are 84 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration, at training centres in Bradford, Stockton, Stockport and Birkenhead. There are 21 advanced modern apprentices, 49 foundation modern apprentices and 14 learners on other work-based learning programmes. Many learners are full-time employees of local companies before starting their training programmes. Learners are recruited from employers. All learners complete an induction and key skills assessment, which are carried out in the workplace. Training specialists from GP UK Limited carry out all training and assessment in the workplace every two to three weeks and progress reviews every three 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)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2		26		42		47									
Retained*	0		2		16		16	34									
Successfully completed	0		2		15		15	32									
Still in learning	2		11		8		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.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	6		90		42		53									
Retained*	0		21		10		23	43									
Successfully completed	0		15		6		15	28									
Still in learning	6		39		4		0	0									

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		18		17		10									
Retained*	0		13		3		1									
Successfully completed	0		3		1		1									
Still in learning	1		5		7		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

- effective integration of key skills training and assessment
- good learner support by employers
- good short-term action-planning
- particularly good training and assessment at one training centre

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate long-term planning of training
- ineffective communications with employers
- insufficient company support for unqualified training specialists
- ineffective progress reviews
- low retention and framework achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- continue the implementation of the new internal verification system

29. There is effective integration of key skills training and assessment. Key skills are covered at induction and initial assessment of key skills is carried out. Learners begin to work on key skills theory and collect key skills evidence as soon as they start their training programme. Learners have a good understanding of key skills as an integral part of their training programme. Monthly action plans make clear reference to key skills and the vocational programme. There is good use of evidence for the achievement of key skills and the units of their NVQ.

30. Employers provide good learner support. Many employers promote effectively the

training programme in the workplace and most learners are employed before they start their training programme. Employers provide learners with time to complete relevant work and attend off-the-job training. Employers also provide additional resources to help learners' progress. For example, one learner was provided with a laptop computer on loan by her manager so that she could work at home. Employers also carefully schedule learners' workplace tasks to enable the collection of evidence for their portfolios. Many learners are provided with additional responsibility at work. For example, some learners are now working towards promotion to management position.

31. There is a good system for short-term action-planning with learners. An action plan is agreed between the learner and the training specialist, which sets out the work to be completed before the next assessment visit. Learners use these plans to monitor progress and to plan their work. At the next visit, the plans are used to review the work completed and plan the next stage of the training and assessment process. Some action plans are checked and agreed with employers. Learners use these action plans effectively to complete the work set. Some learners are not sufficiently involved in identifying specific training needs on their action plans.

32. Training and assessment are particularly good at on training centre. Lesson plans contain written aims and objectives. The trainers work well with learners and use a good range of teaching techniques, such as role-play and questioning. Progress reviews are also good. For example, during one progress review, the learner, assessor and employer agreed areas for development and produced relevant action plans with target dates. Good practice and performance by the learner is reinforced by the employer and assessor. The learner was actively involved in deciding the required evidence for achievement of NVQ units.

33. Although there is effective short-term action-planning, long-term planning for training is inadequate. Initial assessment is not used effectively to produce individual learning plans. The individual learning plans are not used effectively to plan learners' training or to identify future long-term training needs. There is no medium- or long-term planning of assessment to help the learner identify targets and monitor achievements. The internal verification policy is not yet consistently applied. For example, although there is some co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training at one training centre, there is no planning of on- and off-the-job training at the other centre. Although subjects such as equal opportunities, and appeals and grievance policies are mentioned during induction day, they are not reinforced during the training programme

34. Communications are inefficient between GP UK Limited and employers. Although employers provide good learner support they do not use or refer to the employer's pack provided by GP UK Limited. The employers' pack is too detailed and difficult to understand. There is no reinforcement of the topics covered in the pack. Some line managers do not fully understand the NVQ process or the modern apprenticeship framework, and some do not understand their role in providing learner support. Although a copy of the short-term action plan is passed to all line managers, some do not use it. Most employers do not remember having completed questionnaires or

providing other feedback on the training. One employer had not been contacted by GP UK Limited for six weeks to keep them informed of actions being taken after their training specialist left.

35. There is insufficient company support for unqualified training specialists. At two of the training centres, recently appointed training specialists are working towards their professional qualifications and assessor and key skills qualifications. However, after only three months in post neither of these specialists are accompanied on assessment visits by relevant qualified members of staff. Written assessment decisions are monitored by internal verifiers. However, there is inadequate monitoring of their work carried out in client companies. Incorrect assessment practice is being carried out by some training specialists. For example, during one assessment, a discussion between a learner and a training specialist was incorrectly recorded to indicate that observation of the activity had also taken place.

36. Progress reviews are ineffective. Although some very good progress reviews do take place at one training centre most reviews are poor. There is inadequate involvement by employers in the review process. Many employers only sign the progress review. Many employers do not understand the role of the progress review in planning and recording learners' progress. Some progress reviews are carried out in open offices near learners' colleagues. Target-setting is poor in some progress reviews.

37. There are low retention and framework achievement rates, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. A range of initiatives has been introduced to improve retention and achievement rates, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness. Each manager meets the training specialists every week to discuss the learners' progress and suggest ways to rectify potential or actual difficulties faced by learners. Some learners, however, are making slow progress. Although individual learning plans set target dates for the completion of NVQ units they are not used effectively to monitor progress.

38. Acknowledged weaknesses in the internal verification procedure have led to the development and implementation of a new internal verification procedure. New regional verifier roles have also been introduced to ensure consistency across the training centres and enable the sharing of good practice.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	1209	4

39. There are 1209 learners over the seven training centres on work-based learning programmes in retailing, customer service and transportation. Of these, there are 402 advanced modern apprentices, 788 foundation modern apprentices and 19 learners on other work-based learning programmes. Only six learners are currently not employed. Three learners at one training centre have additional learning and/or social needs. There are 24 assessors, of whom 18 are qualified, and eight internal verifiers, of whom six are qualified. The others are working towards appropriate qualifications. Staff contact employers to promote the training and recruit learners. Learners carry out an initial assessment of their vocational and key skills and individual learning plans are produced. Most training is carried out on the job by employers. Some training centres provide key skills workshops. Assessors visit learners in the workplace every three to four weeks to provide training and assessment. Internal verification is carried out on an ongoing basis. Progress reviews are carried out in the workplace every eight to 12 weeks.

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	51		438		398		227								
Retained*	0		42		89		69									
Successfully completed	0		25		60		49									
Still in learning	51		216		89		46									

*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	112		1220		297		158									
Retained*	0		323		129		58									
Successfully completed	0		104		136		49									
Still in learning	112		629		43		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									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		49		48		50									
Retained*	0		29		26		35	70								
Successfully completed	0		19		24		29	58								
Still in learning	4		9		6		0	0								

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

STRENGTHS

- good learner support provided by employers
- good learner support provided by training provision staff

WEAKNESSES

- weak initial assessment
- weak progress reviews
- slow progress of learners
- poor retention and framework achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective induction
- more learner involvement in assessment process

40. Employers provide good learner support. Most employers have a good understanding of the training programme and their learners' progress. There are good working relationships between the provider's staff and employers in most areas, particularly London, Newcastle and Bradford. Learners are able to gain relevant job skills and collect evidence during their everyday work. Two managers hold additional training sessions outside normal working hours. Many employers promote the NVQ to their staff. Some employers have previously achieved NVQs.

41. Training provider staff provide good learner support. Support and assessment visits are arranged out of normal working hours. Additional visits are also made to help learners, who for personal reasons leave the training programme early, complete their awards. Training programmes are designed according to learners' careers aims. Some learners have been promoted. Pastoral support is good. For example, learners who are unable to travel to work on their own are provided with transport. One key skills mentor visits learners in the workplace to provide additional support. At one training centre, learners are given certificates for each unit achieved.

42. Many learners take part in effective and well-structured training programmes provided by employers, which have key performance indicators and targets. Some employers provide learners with workbooks. These are linked to progress reviews and are used to plan learners' work responsibilities and promotion. These workbooks are not used effectively by training provider staff. There is no systematic monitoring of the training provided by employers.

43. There is a wide range of learning resources, including lesson plans and schemes of work. However, these are not used effectively. A range of publications is available for learners on topics, such as manual handling, first aid, control of hazardous substances and accident reporting. Other internal guidance notes are available, but some are poorly produced. Off-the-job training has only just started in most training centres and many learners are not aware that this is now available.

44. The initial assessment process is weak for most learners. Learners complete an initial key skills test and a questionnaire to check that their job role matches the standards of the NVQ. Accredited prior achievements are also discussed. The questionnaire does not adequately identify individual learning needs, and there are delays in providing appropriate learner support. The key skills test is not used effectively to develop the individual learning plans. Many learners complete this test at home. Some learners have received help to complete this test. This does not provide an accurate assessment of required support. Individual learning plans do not have clear, measurable targets based on the results of initial assessment. Basic skills testing is inconsistent. For example, one training centre tests all learners for basic skills needs but this is not systematically carried out at other training centres. At one training centre, initial assessment is good and the results are used effectively.

45. Progress review are weak and comprise action-planning rather than reviewing progress against preset targets. Most progress reviews take place every eight to 12

weeks. At one training centre, progress reviews take place at less frequent intervals. The content of the progress reviews generally comprises what learners have not achieved. The wide range of experience gained by learners in the workplace is not used effectively as evidence of progress. Targets are not consistently set during progress reviews and there is inadequate use made of the individual learning plans.

46. A large number of learners make slow progress, and many who have been on the training programmes for over six months have not achieved any units of their NVQ. Similarly, many learners have been on their training programmes for over one year and have not achieved any units. Key skills training and assessment have been introduced late in the training programme at six training centres. Most learners start working towards their key skills several months after the start of their training programmes. In one case, a learner did not start key skills training until eight months after the start of their training programme.

47. Retention and achievement rates are poor on both the advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship programmes. In 1999-2000, only 22 per cent of advanced modern apprentices achieved the full apprenticeship framework. In 2000-01, only 15 per cent achieved the full framework and in 2001-02 only 6 per cent achieved the full framework. There is a similar picture on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme with 31 per cent achievement rate in 1999-2000, 46 per cent in 2000-01 and 9 per cent in 2001-02. Retention rates are poor for both training programmes. On the advanced modern apprenticeship programme, retention fell from 30 per cent in 1999-2000 to 22 per cent in 2000-01 and 10 per cent in 2001-02. On the foundation modern apprenticeship programme retention is 37 per cent in 1999-2000, 43 per cent in 2000-01 and 26 per cent in 2001-02. Retention and achievement of learners on NVQ training is better than those on modern apprenticeship programmes but the figures are also less than satisfactory. In 1999-2000, 58 per cent of learners achieved their NVQ. In 2000-01, 50 per cent achieved their NVQ and in 2001-02, 39 per cent achieved an NVQ. Retention has fallen from 70 per cent in 1999-2000 to 59 per cent in 2001-02.

48. In most cases, induction is carried out in the workplace but the length of time taken varies. For example, for some learners induction can take several visits by provider staff and for other learners induction lasts approximately one hour. No account is taken of learners' individual learning needs. Many learners cannot remember the content of the induction. Learners are given a comprehensive induction pack but this is too detailed for some learners.

49. Assessment is generally satisfactory. However, there is a significant number of inexperienced and unqualified assessors carrying out assessments. There is insufficient involvement of learners in collecting evidence. Learners are not encouraged to present their own evidence, and witness testimonies are rarely used. Some learners do not know how to cross-reference evidence or how much additional evidence is required to complete their qualification. Many learners do not understand their portfolios of evidence. The internal verification policy and procedures have only recently been introduced. In some training centres, there is effective internal verification. However, in

some training centres there are insufficient internal verifiers and some are inexperienced.

50. Most meetings do not involve employers, although some are present. If employers do take part, they are not systematically asked to provide feedback on the learners' progress. Equal opportunities awareness is not sufficiently reinforced during the progress reviews. Learners and employers are not systematically given a copy of the review sheet, although a new form in triplicate is currently being introduced.

Good Practice

Learners in one training centre are provided with very clear, well-presented and relevant brochures on additional support from other agencies.

Poor Practice

An assessor had not recorded learners' observations or cross-referenced them to the NVQ standards.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	418	4

51. There are 418 learners on work-based learning programmes in health and social care. Of these, 154 are advanced modern apprentices, 249 are foundation modern apprentices and 15 are learners on other work-based learning programmes. Learners work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care, and early years care and education. One learner is working towards an NVQ at level 1 in housekeeping. Learners work in nursing homes, residential homes and nurseries. Learners are referred for training by their employer or recruited through Connexions. There are nine assessors and two internal verifiers. All work placements are monitored for safety and suitability. All learners are interviewed and complete an initial key skills assessment. Induction takes place in the local training centre or in the workplace. Although some training is carried out at the training centres, most training is provided on the job. All assessment takes place in the workplace.

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	36		148		78		73						
Retained*	0		46		13		25							
Successfully completed	0		3		5		19							
Still in learning	36		86		29		3							

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

Work-based learning for young people														
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	54		257		106		30						
Retained*	0		48		20		10							
Successfully completed	0		12		10		10							
Still in learning	54		149		45		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																	
NVQ Training																	
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts			21		4												
Retained*			12		0	0											
Successfully completed			0		0	0											
Still in learning			15		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

- effective use of good work placements
- particularly effective use of individual learning plans in two training centres

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective initial assessment
- poor provision for developing learners' knowledge and understanding
- poor retention and achievement rates

52. There is effective use of good work placements. The training provider recruits experienced staff from care homes to complete assessor training. Assessors are provided with additional support during their visits to the workplace. The internal verifier visits each employer and learner during their training. Most workplaces provide additional training programmes for learners. Some of these courses require the learners to be released from work for long periods of time, such as courses in wound care, three-day child protection, and a professional certificate in infection control. Learners also attend other shorter courses in relevant subjects, including dementia care, and promoting continence. Other professionals, who give advice and information on patient care, also visit learners in the workplace. These courses are used effectively to provide evidence for NVQ units and key skills. Some learners have access to computers in the workplace. Learners receive additional support in the workplace from staff who have NVQs or who are qualified assessors. Some assessors only provide witness testimonies. Learners are able to meet frequently with provider staff in the workplace. Most workplaces have a variety of good learning resources. Two learners are collecting key skills evidence that is relevant to their workplace. One is compiling a guide on diabetes to be used by other staff. Another learner has developed a healthy eating plan that has been implemented for clients and staff within the workplace.

53. Individual learning plans are used effectively at two training centres to plan and record learners' progress and achievements. At these training centres learners understand their own progress and update their plan accordingly. Assessors visit learners every three weeks to update their individual learning plan and carry out assessments.

54. Initial assessment is ineffective. Only written work produced by the learners during the first few weeks of the training programme is used to identify any basic skills needs. Many learners find it difficult to provide the written evidence for their NVQ and key skills and ask for help from others unconnected with the organisation. Learners complete a key skills assessment during their first visit in the workplace. This is sometimes three weeks after the learner has started their training programme. Learners are not supervised during completion of this key skills assessment and can complete it at home. The results of this assessment are not used effectively to identify individual learning needs. Assessors are not qualified to teach basic skills but are expected to provide relevant support. Progress reviews and action plans do not state clearly what the learners need to do to complete their NVQ. Initial assessment of care skills and key skills, completed in the workplace with the learner and manager, identify relevant evidence. However, the support and action required, particularly for key skills, is not specific. Some action plans for childcare learners are photocopies and do not outline in sufficient detail the individual learner's needs.

55. There is poor provision for developing learners' knowledge and understanding for their NVQ. Although the self-assessment report identifies the learning packs as a strength, most are poor photocopies of textbooks and other learning materials. These learning packs are not systematically given to all learners. A list of resources is distributed to all learners. However, many learners do not understand that it is a list of resources for them to use during their training programme and see it only as a list of activities to complete in order to achieve their key skills. GP UK Limited plans, for future induction sessions, to include information about the use of this resource list. Learners are given a list of training sessions carried out at the training centres, but this does not include dates and times of when the training will be carried out. There are no practical training resources provided in the training centres. Individual learning plans are poor for those learners working towards NVQs in early years care and education. One learning plan is used for all learners, who keep a photocopy of it in the portfolios of evidence. Assessment of learners' work is not carried out according to their own individual learning needs.

56. Retention and achievement rates are poor. In 1999-2000, 33 per cent of foundation modern apprentices completed their framework and 3 per cent are making slow progress. Nine per cent of foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000, have completed and 42 per cent remain in training. In 2001, 5 per cent of learners completed their foundation modern apprenticeships and 58 per cent remain in training. In 2000, GP UK Limited introduced NVQ training. Of the 25 learners who started NVQ training programmes, 60 per cent remain in training but none has successfully

completed their NVQ.

57. There is poor monitoring of on-the-job training. On- and off-the-job training are not co-ordinated effectively. Learners are taught practical skills and some knowledge relevant to each practical task by their workplace supervisors. This is only recorded during the progress reviews, which take place some time after the training has been provided.

Good Practice

GP UK Limited ensures that all assessors keep their occupational experience up to date by seconding them to workplaces for three or four days each year.

Poor Practice

Off-the-job training is not used effectively for the achievement of NVQ units or key skills. This is particularly disruptive to childcare learners who have to move from their usual workroom in order for their assessor to observe other practical work with a different age range.

Foundation programmes**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	36	4

58. There are 36 learners on Life Skills training programmes at the training centre in Halifax. Staff comprise the training manager and three tutors. A fourth tutor is currently being appointed. The programme provides training in basic literacy and numeracy, information technology (IT), confidence building, jobsearch and employability skills. Learners are referred from the Halifax, Huddersfield and Brighouse careers offices. Twenty learners are men and 16 are women. Seven learners are from minority ethnic groups. All learners receive a five-day induction comprising details of the training programme, health and safety, and equal opportunities. An initial assessment of learners' basic skills is also carried out during the induction, and an individual learning plan is developed through discussion with one of the tutors.

The following tables show 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		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			57		100		126									
Retained*			31	54	32	32	59	47									
Successfully completed			0	0	32	32	0	0									
Still in learning			0	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																	
Life Skills	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			145		24											
Retained*			56		14	58											
Successfully completed			29		0	0											
Still in learning			36		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 learner support
- effective working relationships among staff
- good commitment by staff to improving training

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient additional development activities
- ineffective basic skills support
- no structured training
- ineffective initial assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of quality assurance procedures specifically for Life Skills training programme

59. Learner support is good. At induction, each learner is allocated to one of the tutors. The tutor then conducts an individual, confidential interview with each learner during which a health and welfare assessment and a risk assessment are carried out. Learners' individual additional learning and/or social needs are identified during this assessment. Trainers provide good practical learner support. For example, one learner was accompanied by her tutor to an ante-natal appointment, a housing association appointment and to interviews for work experience. Another learner has been provided with equipment to decorate her flat. One learner was placed in a garage workshop to allow her experience of motor mechanic work. There are good links with external support agencies, including the youth offending team, a drug-users support organisation and a well-woman clinic. Tutors carry out progress reviews every two weeks to ensure that any problems are quickly rectified.

60. There are effective working relationships among staff. Tutors work in an open-plan office and informal communication is good. All tutors are fully involved in practical training sessions and work alongside learners in their first morning of work experience. This helps to improve learners' self-confidence. There are frequent team meetings, and all tutors are involved in preparing learning materials. Learners are able to discuss relevant issues and problems with the tutors.

61. There is good commitment to continuous improvement by the training team. Suggestions for improving provision are discussed and implemented promptly. Relevant

paperwork has been extensively revised. There is a forum for learners to provide feedback on the training programme. Training rooms have been recently redecorated by learners following discussions with staff. The training programme manager and tutors regularly attend meetings with local partners. For example there are regular meetings with the careers service on Life Skills provision. The progress of each learner is reviewed by the manager with the relevant tutor at a weekly meeting. Any identified problems are rectified quickly. Staff and resources needs are dealt with effectively by the manager. Learners' achievements are publicised within the training centre and through the company newsletter. The range of activities to learners has been extended following feedback from learners and tutors.

62. During the last contract period, 20 per cent of learners who started the programme left to progress into employment, further education or mainstream training. On average, learners stayed on the training programme for 13 weeks.

63. Initial assessment is ineffective. Many learners have not had a basic skills assessment. Where these assessments have taken place, the results are not used to develop the individual learning plans. Learners' basic skills needs are not identified. For example, one learner's progress review focused on the development and attainment of numeracy skills, but the previous review had recorded that numeracy support was not needed. Information from other assessment processes is not used to help develop the training programme. Tutors discuss individual barriers to learning with each learner at induction but how these barriers are to be overcome is not identified or recorded.

64. Training is not structured. Targets are not clearly identified on individual learning plans. Learners have an inadequate understanding of the requirements of their training plan and of how their achievements are to be recorded. Milestones, recorded on individual learning plans, are poor. For example, milestones are recorded as numeracy or literacy rather than individual, relevant skills. In no cases are they specific, measurable or time bound. There is no structured training programme to develop the whole range of life skills. Jobsearch training is carried out but it is not planned. Work experience is not used sufficiently to develop job skills. There is insufficient relevant training to help learners with other life skills related to independent living. Progress reviews do not focus on how learners' specific skills are developing.

65. There is ineffective basic skills support. Literacy and numeracy support is provided on a weekly basis. There are no experienced basic skills tutors, although all staff have recently completed, or are undergoing, relevant training. Tutors have an inadequate knowledge of learners with basic skills needs. Basic skills training has not been matched to the new curriculum. Learning materials are not developed according to learners' ability levels. Some worksheets are too difficult for learners to understand. Learners have a poor understanding of the skills they are developing during basic skills training.

66. There are insufficient additional learning activities. Most learners have not experienced any external visits as part of their learning programme. There has been very little use of external speakers to provide additional relevant training. One team-

building activity only has been carried out at the local leisure centre. Tutors are currently working with learners to produce a new programme of development activities.

67. Generic company documentation is issued routinely to Life Skills learners. Some learners find these difficult to understand. Certain procedures within the quality assurance system are not suitable for the Life Skills programme.

Good Practice

Each learner receives an individual timetable for the following week at the same time as training allowances are paid, to maintain regular attendance.

Poor Practice

The content of observed literacy and numeracy support sessions are not relevant to the learners' needs.