

INSPECTION REPORT

Inter Training Services Limited

29 July 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

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

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Inter Training Services Limited is a private limited company. It was established in 1997 and is based in Fareham, Hampshire. It specialises in the provision of work-based learning for young people in retailing, customer service and transportation, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The small number of learners in retailing, customer service and transportation meant that this area was not inspected. The hospitality, sport, leisure and travel programmes are subcontracted from another training provider and were outside the scope of the inspection.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of work-based learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy is satisfactory. The leadership and management of Inter Training Services Limited, equal opportunities and quality assurance issues, are all satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- very effective staff training
- good communications
- good management of training at operational level
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- particularly effective use of development plan to improve programmes
- very effective support for learners with additional learning needs
- good on- and off-the-job training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate arrangements for key skills training
- insufficient use of management information
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities
- weak internal verification strategy
- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater use of performance indicators and measurable targets
- better awareness of appeals and complaints procedures by learners
- more structured self-assessment process
- better co-ordination of training

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Inter Training Services Limited (ITS) in July and August 2002. They met 28 learners and conducted 19 interviews with staff. They visited 17 work placements where they interviewed 12 employers and workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded four learning sessions. They also observed assessments and progress reviews, examined a range of documents including learners' portfolios and files, individual learning plans, business plans, policies and procedures, management information, and reports from awarding bodies. Inspectors studied the ITS self-assessment report, which was produced in March 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Total	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. ITS is a private limited company. It was established in 1997 and is based in Fareham, Hampshire. The company employs 10 full-time staff and 13 part-time staff. Training programmes are funded through contracts with the Surrey and London Central Learning and Skills Councils. ITS currently provides training for 143 learners, who are training as advanced modern apprentices, foundation modern apprentices or for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and 3. All of them are employed in organisations in Hampshire, Surrey or London. ITS staff provide some off-the-job training in key skills, but all other training and assessments are carried out on the job. Most learners, 139, are undergoing training in hairdressing. The remaining occupational areas had too few learners to warrant an inspection.

3. Surrey has a population of 1,015,000. The major employers in the area are service industries, including banking, finance and insurance. The rate of unemployment in Surrey was 0.9 per cent in April 2002, compared with the national average of 3.1 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic backgrounds is 2.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 58 per cent in 2001, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory. The work placements for learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy are of a good standard. Support for learners with additional learning needs is effective. On- and off-the-job training are good. Most learners are not sufficiently aware of the progress they are making towards the achievement of their qualification.

5. Retention and achievement rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy are poor. For the period 1997-2001, the retention rate on modern apprenticeship programmes was 25 per cent. Sixty-two modern apprentices are still in training and the retention rate could rise to a maximum of 48 per cent. On NVQ training programmes over the same period, the retention rate was 45 per cent. The achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks between 1997-2001 was 22 per cent. However, 62 modern apprentices are still in training from this period and the achievement rate could rise to a maximum of 45 per cent. On NVQ training programmes, the achievement rate was 43 per cent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

6. ITS, a private limited company, has been a training provider since 1997, and is managed by two directors. The director of operations acts as the company secretary, with responsibility for financial management and external relations. The director of quality and development is responsible for business planning, development and quality issues. The senior management team includes the two directors and the operations manager for training and assessment. ITS also employs 11 trainer/assessors, eight of whom work on a part-time basis, one part-time member of staff responsible for learner support, and five full-time and three part-time administration staff. The management structure was changed in September 2001 to clarify support for trainer/assessors and to improve the training and guidance provided for learners and employers. The company produces an annual development plan based on the self-assessment report. Managers are responsible for taking the actions necessary to achieve the objectives set out in the plan, and they review progress monthly. ITS has one subcontracting company, which is responsible for training and assessing its employed learners. ITS has written policies and procedures for all aspects of its work. The company has a quality assurance statement which sets out in detail, the procedures and methods used to ensure the quality of training and assessment. The company has produced a self-assessment report for every year since 1998, the most recent produced in March 2002.

STRENGTHS

- very effective staff training
- good communications
- good management of training at operational level
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- good analysis and use of feedback
- effective use of development plan to improve programmes

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate arrangements key skills training
- insufficient use of management information
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities
- insufficient monitoring of training
- weak internal verification strategy

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- greater use of performance indicators and measurable targets
- better awareness of appeals and complaints procedures by learners
- more structured self-assessment process

7. Arrangements to support staff development are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. One of the directors has specific responsibility for staff development. The appraisal process used to identify staff training needs is well-established, and a detailed training plan shows the development needs of each member of staff. The plan indicates how the training required by each member of staff will be given, how it relates to the company's development plan and how it is intended to improve the quality of training. For example, each trainer/assessor has been seconded to work in industry for a period, in order to maintain their industrial competence and keep them up to date with the latest techniques in their area of learning. Regular in-house training is provided to improve staff members' awareness and understanding of key issues, such as standardisation in assessment practice. All training is evaluated to gauge how effectively it meets the needs of the individual and the business. The impact of the training on learners' experience is not evaluated as thoroughly or effectively.

8. Good communication within ITS, and between ITS and employers, contributes to the quality of the training. This benefit was identified in the self-assessment report. The values and objectives of the company are understood and promoted by staff at all levels. Communication between managers and staff is good. Managers are always available to assist staff and provide high levels of encouragement and support. Staff are kept informed about all aspects of the organisation in a cycle of meetings, and through regular, informal discussions with colleagues. The meetings and discussions ensure the development of a strong team approach, have led to better planning and co-ordination of recruitment and training, and help in the sharing of good practice. Suggestions from staff about how to improve the experience of learners are welcomed by managers. Trainer/assessors meet regularly to monitor and review learners' progress based on their individual learning plans. Action points are produced from all of the meetings that take place, but many of the action points are not linked to agreed deadlines. Progress cannot, therefore, be monitored. Trainer/assessors involve employers in reviews of learners' progress and keep them up to date about developments in training and other relevant issues. Employers and the subcontractor also receive copies of the company's monthly newsletter, which provides useful information about employment and training, and includes feedback from questionnaires.

9. ITS has a comprehensive and fully documented range of policies and procedures for all aspects of its work. They are reviewed annually, and most are up to date, reflecting current legislation and requirements. The development plan is an effective mechanism by which managers are able to initiate improvements to the ways in which training is managed. For example, ITS has recognised the need to develop strategies to improve retention and achievement. Several initiatives have been introduced, including the appointment of a learning support mentor to help learners with identified additional learning and social needs. The appointment has been beneficial, and the quality of the work of these learners has improved. In another initiative, a working group improved the quality of information provided for employers at the start of training programmes,

regarding their roles and responsibilities in the learners' training.

10. Arrangements for the teaching of key skills are inadequate. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. ITS developed a strategy for the teaching of key skills in October 2000. A working party of staff has attempted to share good practice and develop programmes for key skills workshops. Until recently, however, this initiative has been largely unsuccessful. Some staff and employers are unclear about the key skills requirements in modern apprenticeship programmes, there is insufficient training and assessment of key skills in the workplace, and opportunities to accredit key skills at the same time as occupational competence are often overlooked. ITS has not yet established how or where the learners' key skills will be tested. Most of the teaching of key skills takes place in a two-day workshop. Diagnostic tests to gauge the levels of learners' key skills are inappropriate. For example, the tests for application of number are set at level 1 and the workshop training is set at level 2, which is above the requirements for modern apprenticeships in hairdressing. The assessment and verification of key skills are not managed well. Assessment briefing documents are not verified effectively. Internal verification of key skills assessment is undertaken at the end of the learners' programmes and does not always identify where learners have submitted insufficient or invalid evidence.

11. The self-assessment report acknowledges that ITS does not use management information effectively. Data are collected, but are not analysed and used for planning and decision-making. Data are collected to meet the requirements of external contracts, but not to set targets to improve performance. Staff are able to talk about individual learners' performances, but they do not know how well groups of learners perform in specific qualifications. The management information system does not provide data in a format which enables staff to evaluate the effectiveness of training. A new management information system was installed in February 2002, but it is not yet fully operational.

12. ITS uses performance indicators and targets to monitor the quality of training adequately. The development plan sets some clear, measurable targets, but too many are written in descriptive terms. For example, there are descriptive statements about improving retention and achievement rates, but they are not accompanied by realistic measurable targets to bring about improvement. In the absence of measurable performance indicators and targets, many staff find it difficult to respond appropriately, measure progress, or know when a target is achieved.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

13. Equal opportunities is promoted effectively. This aspect of the training provision was identified in the company's self-assessment report. ITS has a fully documented range of written equal opportunities policies and procedures, including arrangements for dealing with harassment, appeals and complaints. The policies and procedures meet legal and contractual requirements, are reviewed annually, and have been amended to reflect changes in legislation. Learners and staff are given copies of all equal opportunities policy documents at induction and sign to confirm that they have received and read them. The policy documents are also issued to employers.

14. Agreements with employers emphasise the commitment of ITS to equality of opportunity and outline the employer's responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities. Policies are also promoted in monthly newsletters produced by ITS which are issued to all employers. All staff have attended some equal opportunities training in the past 12 months. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item at staff meetings and is also discussed at other meetings.

15. All learners are required to complete an equal opportunities project for their first programme assignment. Staff at ITS also complete the project as part of their induction to the organisation. This project involves many of the key issues related to equality of opportunity and most learners report that they find the project informative and useful. Some learners, however, are slow to complete the project and need a significant amount of help from their assessors to help them understand many of the issues. The re-emphasis of knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities issues following completion of the project is satisfactory.

16. Equal opportunities is not discussed adequately during progress reviews, but the issues are dealt with satisfactorily during annual reviews of the induction process, which started in May 2002. Most learners display a satisfactory awareness of equal opportunities, but some reveal a weak understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

17. The equal opportunities provision is not adequately monitored. Data are collected about learners' age, gender, ethnicity and whether or not they have a disability. The data are not used in order to identify trends or patterns, to analyse recruitment, the progress learners make and their achievements. No targets are set to improve the recruitment and progression of under-represented groups. Some employers do not have equal opportunities policies and procedures of their own and, in cases where policies do exist, they are not checked by ITS to see if they are appropriate. Some employers do not deal with equality of opportunity issues during induction to the workplace. All employers do undergo an initial check to ensure that their arrangements comply with health and safety regulations, and this initial check is followed by annual monitoring visits. Equality of opportunity is not monitored in a similar way. The self-assessment report identifies a need to improve the monitoring of equal opportunities.

18. There are effective procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints. They are set

out in the learners' handbooks. Learners are aware that these procedures exist, but their understanding of how they operate is weak. Most learners are unable to describe the appeals and complaints procedures in detail and do not know where the relevant documents can be found. All the learners are confident, however, that they would be treated fairly if they encountered any problems. Most employers have satisfactory arrangements to provide access for learners who have mobility problems.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

19. ITS has effective arrangements for ensuring the quality of its documents and their contents by means of six-monthly audits and regular checks of review and assessment records carried out by managers. Any matters requiring attention are given to trainer/assessors and resulting action is monitored carefully. A thorough health and safety assessment of each employer's premises is carried out annually. If health and safety issues are identified in the workplace, an action plan is agreed with the employer and it is monitored effectively. All trainer/assessors have well-written guidelines to help them carry out their responsibilities. The learners' programmes and experiences are consistent. Only three of the trainer/assessors have been observed giving training sessions and there have been no observations for over nine months. The subcontractor was monitored in September 2001. A follow up visit scheduled for February 2002 has not yet taken place.

20. The self-assessment report identifies the effective collection and analysis of learners' and employers' views. Their views are collected regularly using well-designed questionnaires. After a poor response from employers last year, the questionnaire was changed and this year there has been a significant improvement in the response rate from 23 to 38 per cent. The company reacted to feedback from employers by changing the structure of the key skills workshops and arranging transportation for learners from a station to the venue. Feedback from learners is analysed for the company as a whole and in relation to each individual trainer/assessor. Good use is made of feedback in staff appraisals and in the formulation of the development plan. A small number of learners' employers are also their assessors. There are no opportunities for them or any other learners to give anonymous feedback about their training, assessment or support.

21. The development plan is a particularly effective mechanism for improving the learners' experiences, and it is monitored thoroughly every month by managers. In the development plan, ITS has adopted some strategies to improve retention and achievement rates. For example, learners who are at risk of leaving programmes early are now identified on a weekly basis by trainer/assessors. A senior member of staff makes contact with these potential leavers and discusses their programmes with them. It is too early to see how effective some strategies might be for reducing the number of learners who leave programmes early.

22. Assessors and internal verifiers meet monthly to discuss issues, share good practice and standardise particular units. Feedback to assessors from the internal verification process is effective, and a three-monthly report about internal verification and assessment practice is written for one of the directors. The arrangements for dealing with assessment issues from internal verification and following up the actions identified are appropriate.

23. Although ITS produces an appropriate self-assessment report and development plan annually, the process by which they are produced lacks structure. The procedures for undertaking self-assessment are not set out clearly and sequentially in the quality assurance manual. Furthermore, the process of self-assessment does not at present

involve all of the staff. Self-assessment is an appropriately self-critical activity and the report accurately identified strengths, weaknesses and appropriate grades. Judgements are not always based on the systematic evaluation of all available evidence.

24. The quality assurance procedures for monitoring training in the workplace are insufficient and ineffective. Monitoring of the induction, training, support and assessment provided by employers in the workplace, receives insufficient attention. Where monitoring does take place, it tends to be informal and details are not recorded. Where issues are identified by trainer/assessors, however, they are generally resolved quickly and usually to the learners' satisfaction.

25. Some of the internal verification procedures are out of date, containing references to a job role that no longer exists. The internal verifiers do not observe sufficient assessment of learners' competence in the workplace. There is no sampling strategy for interim internal verification. Most internal verification takes place at the end of the learners' NVQ or key skills programmes. The company verifies 100 per cent of all learners' work internally, which is inappropriate as a sampling strategy. ITS has recognised this practice as a weakness in its self-assessment report and has recently appointed a lead internal verifier to manage the process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	139	3

26. ITS provides hairdressing and beauty therapy training for 139 learners. Sixty-four are advanced modern apprentices, 72 are foundation modern apprentices and there are three learners on NVQ programmes, all taking hairdressing NVQs at level 2 and/or 3. At the time of the inspection, there were no learners on beauty therapy programmes. Most of the learners are referred to ITS by their employers. ITS currently has learners with 37 different employers in Hampshire, Surrey and London. All work placements receive a health and safety inspection before training begins. All learners are employed and most vocational training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Key skills training is delivered off-the-job. Most learners receive an induction in the workplace. Assessments take place every three weeks and progress reviews are completed by trainer/assessors every eight weeks. ITS has a learning support mentor to work with learners with additional learning needs. This individual support is delivered in the workplace. In addition, a careers adviser has been appointed. The foundation modern apprenticeship programme is planned to last 12 months for learners aged 16 to 18 years. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme is planned to last 24 months for learners aged 16 to 18 years and 18 months for those aged 19 to 24 years. The NVQ level 2 programme is planned to last nine months for all learners and level 3 is planned to last 18 months for 16 to 18 year olds and 14 months for 19 to 24 year olds.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		72		56		25		7							
Retained*	0		11		18		8	32	0	0						
Successfully completed	0		9		16		8	32	0	0						
Still in learning	21		35		8		0	0	0	0						

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	72		39		34		32									
Retained*	1		8		10		10	31								
Successfully completed	0		6		9		10	31								
Still in learning	53		13		6		0	0								

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4				8		29		3							
Retained*	0				4	50	12	41	2	67						
Successfully completed	0				4	50	11	38	2	67						
Still in learning	3				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

STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- very effective support for learners with additional learning needs
- good on- and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient awareness of progress by learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better co-ordination of training

27. Work placements are good. All the work placements visited during the inspection were well-situated, good quality hairdressing salons. Work placements include nationally recognised salons and salon groups. All the salons visited have the latest modern equipment and facilities, and they have extensive ranges of retail products for use in the salon. Work placements attract a wide range of clients. Learners benefit from observing good standards of hairdressing, which exceed the requirements of the NVQ. Some learners have opportunities to participate in hairdressing shows and to take part in photographic sessions with models. These experiences broaden their knowledge and

motivate them to succeed. There are opportunities within the work placements for learners to advance their careers, and many of the senior stylists in the salons were themselves trained by the employers. Many level 3 NVQ learners demonstrate a good standard of practical skills.

28. Many of the learners benefit from the effective individual support provided by the well-qualified learning support mentor. Initial assessment is effective in identifying additional learning and social needs and learners are offered support at an individual level to meet the needs identified. Twelve learners are currently receiving additional support, thirty learners have benefited from it in the past. All key skills sessions include the additional learning needs support mentor and the trainer/assessor. An example of the role of the support mentor in one of these sessions was given when an excellent explanation by the mentor enabled a learner to overcome a difficulty in drawing a scale diagram. There is a well-prepared bank of learning resources for literacy and numeracy. All learners receive a detailed action plan at the end of a support session and are set homework. Individual learners are given advice and assistance to help them complete projects for the background knowledge aspects of the NVQ. The mentor is permitted to read and scribe for those needing this form of assistance in written tests, in line with awarding body requirements. There is clear evidence of improvements in learners' work in the portfolios of those receiving additional support. Improvements are evident in literacy, numeracy, and personal development. For example, one learner interviewed, who had not been comfortable when dealing with clients at reception, is now able to carry out such duties confidently. Employers are kept informed about support developments in articles written by the support mentor and published in the monthly newsletter. Trainer/assessors also provide additional support when they visit the workplace. They allow themselves sufficient time to help learners prepare for assessment.

29. Salon trainers plan their on-the-job training sessions well. Designated specialists in the salons are responsible for providing good training. They are also responsible for assessing learners' occupational competences. Learners have a clear understanding of the content of each training session. The salons operate a booking system, which helps attract a plentiful supply of good quality models for the learners to practise on. Learners have confidence in their salon trainers, who respond to their questions willingly and support them effectively outside the training sessions. Supervisors in the salons respond to learners' requests to collect evidence of their competences when it occurs in the course of their everyday work. Background knowledge and practice are integrated effectively in training sessions. Most of the off-the-job training sessions observed were judged to be good, and none were unsatisfactory. In one session, learners made good use of simulation. They used a training head to identify various methods of perm winding, as well as possible faults and corrections. In another session dealing with health and safety issues before and during technical processes, the learners carried out tests on hair cuttings and skin tests on each other to satisfy the requirements of the NVQ unit. Off-the-job trainers are very enthusiastic and make good use of analogies to demonstrate points to learners. They also use effective and well-produced visual aids in training sessions. Action plans are agreed at the end of each session to enable learners

to prepare for the next.

30. Retention and achievement rates in hairdressing are poor. Between 1997 and 2001, the retention rate on modern apprenticeship programmes was 25 per cent. Sixty-two are still in learning. On NVQ training programmes over the same period, the retention rate was 45 per cent. The achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks between 1997-2001 was 22 per cent. Sixty-two are still in learning from this period and the current achievement rate could rise to a maximum of 45 per cent. On NVQ training programmes the achievement rate was 43 per cent.

31. Most learners are not informed about the progress they are making towards their target qualification. Targets are set in learners' individual learning plans, but they are not able to relate them to their training programmes or to the process of assessment planning. Learners do not know if they are making satisfactory progress, and do not understand long-term training or assessment plans. Most learners are unable to identify the level of their programme, or of the NVQ, or key skills. They display a poor understanding of the NVQ assessment process, and have a weak understanding of how their portfolios of evidence fit into the assessment arrangements. Prior learning is cross-referenced to the NVQ framework and learners are accredited appropriately. There are some examples of the poor use of the accreditation of prior experience. For example, some learners had up to six months' experience in hairdressing before joining ITS, but their experience was not assessed or accredited by the company. There are no strategies for bringing assessments forward in cases where learners have significant relevant prior experience.

32. On- and off-the-job training is good. The co-ordination of the two is satisfactory, but most work placements have their own in-house training schemes which are not co-ordinated with the NVQ training and assessment. Some learners are unable to gather enough evidence for the NVQ and key skills qualifications.