

INSPECTION REPORT

N&B Training Company Limited

23 June 2003



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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

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

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

Overall judgement

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.

INSPECTION REPORT

N&B Training Company Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. N&B Training Company Limited (N&B) was established in March 1998 to provide work-based learning for young people. It offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships in care, early years care and education, and playwork, across Surrey and southwest London. The company operates from premises in Walton-on-Thames and is managed by two full-time directors and an office/contracts manager, supported by four full-time assessors and one part-time assessor. Apart from the directors, there has been a complete change of staff over the past two years. N&B provides off-the-job training at its premises or at the learners' work placements.

2. N&B recruits most of its learners from Surrey, and the Surrey Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds training. According to the 2001 census, the county has a minority ethnic representation of 5 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent for England and Wales. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Surrey achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 58.2 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent in England.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

3. There are 72 learners following a work-based learning programme for modern apprentices in health, social care, and public services. There are 24 learners following foundation modern apprenticeships, of whom 23 are on early years care and education training programmes, and one is on a care training programme. There are a further 48 learners following advanced modern apprenticeships, of whom 45 are on early years care and education training programmes, two are on playwork, and one is in care training. The expected duration of the training programmes are two years for advanced modern apprenticeships and 13 months for foundation modern apprenticeships. All learners have employed status.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	26
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of employer interviews	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	15

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, N&B's work-based learning in health, social care, and public services, is satisfactory. Its leadership and management, and quality assurance, are unsatisfactory. The company's arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

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

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

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

5. Learners' progress is satisfactory. Many learners are making good progress towards achieving their qualification, but 15 per cent of current learners have exceeded their funding period.

6. **Achievement of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor.** However, all learners who were retained gained their full national vocational qualification (NVQ). Retention on the modern apprenticeship scheme is improving. In 2001-02, 54 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 37 per cent of foundation modern apprentices were retained. The company recognises the poor achievement and retention rates in its self-assessment report and has instigated new processes to rectify the problem.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

7. **Learners receive good support and guidance.** Regular visits from assessors are effective in preparing the learners for assessment. They provide factsheets to extend the

learners' knowledge and understanding of childcare and education, and extend this support further by setting task-based learning activities and providing good pastoral support.

8. The availability of many good work placements provides the learners with excellent training opportunities. Employers encourage their learners to access training programmes and instigate training by approaching N&B directly. Most employers carry out a supervisory or mentoring role and this is effective in assisting the learners' progress towards the completion of NVQ units. Other resources, such as reference books, tools, and materials, are available at work placements, and these are generally suitable and sufficient to extend learning. The employers include the learners in staff training days, which support the requirements for knowledge evidence well.

9. Management of the induction process is weak. Potential learners are given a trial period with the opportunity to complete taster NVQ units, and N&B arranges an induction programme on completion of this period. However, some learners have not attended induction at the appropriate time and some have not attended at all.

10. Literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory. If learners are identified through initial assessment as requiring additional support, they are sometimes referred back to the careers officers, or invited on to the programme and given additional support in the form of extra assessors' visits, and the use of numeracy and literacy workbooks to help develop these skills.

Leadership and management

11. N&B takes good actions to rectify identified weaknesses. The company's most recent self-assessment report accurately identified a number of areas for improvement. N&B has produced a detailed development plan, with specific actions, designated responsibilities, and target dates for completion. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of many of the actions.

12. N&B has effective internal communications. The company's management style is open, with senior managers sharing offices with the other staff. There are frequent informal discussions to rectify any problems relating to the learners. Staff use regular and more formal meetings to monitor and standardise practice.

13. There is a strong, effective commitment to staff development. All assessors are qualified and three of them have also achieved their internal verifiers' award. N&B encourages staff to request particular training and they have access to a wide variety of courses, including basic skills, dyslexia, management, internal verifiers' award, child protection, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), information technology (IT), and updating occupational competency by spending a day in the workplace.

14. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Equal opportunities awareness among learners is good. In addition to coverage at induction and review, aspects of equal opportunities are integral to NVQ units and will form part of the new technical

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certificates, for which the provider plans to start training in August of this year. Equal opportunities and disability statements are clear, supported by appropriate leaflets, and widely distributed among staff and learners. N&B checks the equal opportunities policies at prospective work placements.

15. The quality assurance system is incomplete. N&B is still in the process of producing a quality assurance manual. It is revising some of its policies and procedures, but others have yet to be introduced to cover all aspects of the learners' experience. Existing policy documents are not dated and do not assign responsibility to a designated person. A designated quality assurance manager has only recently been appointed. Processes such as reviews, learners' inductions, and basic skills support are not effectively quality assured.

16. **The quality assurance of training is inadequate.** Employers carry out most training in the workplace, but there is no formal quality assurance of this and N&B does not routinely monitor workplace learning resources. Where there is off-the-job training at N&B's premises, there is some observation of the training, but there are no records of this and no planning or structure to assure the quality.

17. **There is insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.** Most training is on the job by the employer, but employers are not given sufficient specific guidance and there are few records of any training given. Reviews are ineffective in identifying and planning training. Some employers have little involvement in the learners' progress reviews. Some learners attend off-the-job training at N&B but many learners do not. Some learners and employers are unaware of off-the-job training opportunities. There are no key skills training workshops.

18. **There is insufficient analysis and use of data.** Although N&B collects a lot of adequate data, it does not analyse it systematically or use it to improve performance. Historical achievement data are unreliable and cannot be used to set targets or benchmark against other training providers. The company collects data in the form of feedback from learner and employer questionnaires, but it does not analyse these adequately or use them to identify trends. Staff take some action on individual issues, but there is no overview of findings.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good actions to rectify identified weaknesses
- effective internal communication
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

- incomplete quality assurance system
- inadequate quality assurance of training
- insufficient analysis and use of data

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- many good work placements
- good support and guidance for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework
- weak management of the learners' induction process

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT N&B TRAINING COMPANY LIMITED:

- the reliable and easy to contact assessors
- the training sessions
- the regular contact and support from assessors

WHAT LEARNERS THINK N&B TRAINING COMPANY LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- reduce the amount of written work and paper-based evidence in portfolios
- improve the size of the training room at N&B's premises
- provide more opportunities to attend training sessions

KEY CHALLENGES FOR N&B TRAINING COMPANY LIMITED:

- improve the learners' induction process
- make better use of data to contribute to management decisions
- improve co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- improve the quality assurance of training and make it more formal
- develop and implement a quality assurance framework
- raise achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework through improved achievement of key skills

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good actions to rectify identified weaknesses
- effective internal communication
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- incomplete quality assurance system
- inadequate quality assurance of training
- insufficient analysis and use of data

19. N&B takes good actions to rectify identified weaknesses. The company's most recent self-assessment report accurately identified a number of areas for improvement. N&B has produced a detailed development plan, with specific actions, designated responsibilities, and target dates for completion. However, the company has yet to implement most of the identified actions and it is too early to judge their effectiveness. When the company identifies weaknesses, it takes swift action to rectify them. It has introduced a monitoring system which uses a whiteboard, which enables the assessor to identify the learners' chart and indicates their progress against start and expected completion dates. Acknowledging the significant number of pregnancies among the young learners, N&B introduced a family planning practitioner to the induction process. The company has introduced new key skills and basic skills workbooks, and a system of logbooks to monitor issues relating to health and safety, equal opportunities, and complaints. It has also introduced a 'unit of the month' award to celebrate the learners' work. The company is developing links with other training providers to arrange specialist basic skills support.

20. N&B has effective internal communication and a good, open, management style. Senior managers share offices with the other staff and have good working relationships. There are frequent informal discussions to rectify effectively any problems relating to the learners. Meetings are regular and staff use them well to monitor and standardise practice. They review aspects such as key skills, initial assessment and internal verification, to ensure that all staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the training programmes.

21. There is a strong, effective commitment to staff development. All assessors are qualified and three of them have also achieved their internal verifier award. N&B advertises staff training courses internally and encourages staff to request particular

requirements. Staff have access to a wide variety of training courses, including basic skills, dyslexia, management, the internal verifier award, child protection, ESOL, IT, and updating their occupational competency by spending a day in the workplace. There is little staff expertise in relation to key skills and basic skills but the company has action plans to remedy this, primarily through the employment of a key skills specialist and by collaborative work with other local training providers. The company is implementing a new, more effective annual appraisal form.

22. N&B manages its resources satisfactorily. The company's management has limited the ratio of learners to assessors to a maximum of 25:1. The training room is resourced adequately, but unsuitable for large groups of learners to attend training simultaneously. N&B makes good use of laptop computers to support learners during visits to their work placements. Assessor/tutors make weekly visits to those learners needing additional support.

23. Literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. N&B does not have a clear policy for this, but does provide good pastoral support for learners. If initial assessment identifies that learners require additional support, the company sometimes refers them back to the careers officers, or invites them on to the training programme and provides them with additional support, such as extra assessors' visits and the use of numeracy and literacy workbooks. The company has plans to establish links with a specialist training provider to provide the learners with more expert basic skills support.

24. Training is not formally planned, structured, or co-ordinated to meet individual learners' needs. Employers carry out most training on the job, but they are not given sufficient specific guidance and there are few records of their training. Reviews are ineffective in identifying and planning training. Some employers have little involvement in the learners' progress reviews. Some learners attend off-the-job training at N&B but many learners do not. Some learners and employers are unaware of off-the-job training opportunities and some employers are reluctant to allow learners to attend. There are no key skills training workshops. N&B is developing some training plans to help identify training responsibilities, but these have yet to be introduced.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

25. The company has a satisfactory equal opportunities statement, which is updated annually, and a clear leaflet on harassment and how to deal with it. N&B gives these to all learners and staff. The company has also produced a satisfactory disability statement, which defines various types of disability and is supported by leaflets on the assistance available to sensory-impaired learners and those with physical disabilities, dyslexia, or additional learning needs. In addition, N&B is awaiting the production of this literature in large print and Braille, and its translation into the languages of the local minority ethnic groups. The company is carrying out a review of the imagery used in all of its publicity and training material. The effectiveness of these actions cannot be determined until they are completed.

26. N&B checks the equal opportunities policies of all new potential work placements.

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The company covers equal opportunities during learners' inductions and during their reviews. This is largely restricted to equal opportunities as it affects the learner, such as in their treatment by N&B and their employer. The company provides no other equal opportunities training for learners except that required as part of the NVQ framework, which extends to the rights of those people in the learners' care. N&B displays up-to-date and appropriate equal opportunities material in its training room, including a range of material suitable for use in the work placement to raise awareness of cultural diversity and promote positive images of other cultures. Equal opportunities will form part of the new technical certificates, for which N&B plans to start training in August 2003. Appropriate lesson plans are already complete.

27. Equal opportunities reporting procedures are satisfactory. There has been one reported incident of bullying. The learner moved to another employer and did not wish to pursue the matter. However, N&B continued to monitor the action taken by the employer and is now satisfied that the employer would be suitable for further work placements.

28. N&B stores its equal opportunities and disability data electronically and uses the data effectively to analyse the learners' population in terms of, for example, ethnicity, gender, disability and age. However, N&B does not use these data to monitor trends among these various categories in such areas as achievement, progress, or early leavers, in order to further contribute to management decisions.

29. N&B recognises that men are under-represented in health, social care and public services, and is attempting to increase the number of male learners by attending careers events and by advertising outside the trade press. N&B recently recruited its first two male learners.

30. N&B's premises are on the first floor and are inaccessible to wheelchair users. There are no learners with mobility problems and the company has alternative training arrangements, which it can use if necessary.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

31. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The company's most recent self-assessment report was produced in May 2003, immediately before this inspection. It identified many of the strengths and weaknesses found at inspection and the inspectors' findings matched all of the self-assessed grades. All of N&B's staff were involved in the drafting of the report and the associated development plan. The development plan is comprehensive and deals with all of the weaknesses identified in the report. Internal verification is satisfactory and incorporates a thorough sampling plan.

32. N&B is still in the process of producing a quality assurance manual. It is revising some policies and procedures, but others have yet to be introduced to cover all aspects of the learners' experience. The existing policy documents are not dated and do not assign responsibility to a designated person. The company only recently appointed a designated person responsible for quality assurance. There are gaps in the company's

quality assurance process. Processes such as reviews, learners' inductions, and basic skills support, are not quality assured effectively. Audits of learners' files are random, unrecorded, and action points are not followed through. There are sometimes gaps in the completion of individual learning plans. Staff meetings do not always identify actions clearly or reflect on previous issues.

33. The quality assurance of training is inadequate. Employers carry out most training in the workplaces, but there is no formal quality assurance of this and N&B does not routinely monitor workplace learning resources. Where there is off-the-job training at N&B's premises, there is some observation of the training by the learners' colleagues, but there are no records of this and no planning or structure to assure the quality. There are no written procedures and staff are not given guidance as to how to monitor the quality of learning, and no action plans are produced to raise standards.

34. Although there has been an improvement in the collection of data, there is no systematic analysis and use of this to improve performance. Historical achievement data are unreliable and cannot be used to set targets or benchmark against other training providers. There is weak target-setting, with no specific targets set for achievement and vague targets for recruitment and retention. N&B collects data in the form of feedback from learner and employer questionnaires, but the company does not analyse these adequately or use them to identify themes or trends. It does take some action on individual issues but there is no overview of findings. The company does not use data fully in relation to equality of opportunity.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	72	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- many good work placements
- good support and guidance for learners

Weaknesses

- poor achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework
- weak management of the learners' induction process

Achievement and standards

35. Many learners are making good progress towards achieving their qualification but a significant minority is making slow progress. Fifteen per cent of current learners have exceeded their funding period. There has been no unit accreditation, so early leavers have had no certification of achievement to take with them. However, the company recognises this in its self-assessment report and development plan, elements of which N&B has actioned to rectify it.

36. Achievement of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor and declining. On the advanced modern apprenticeship scheme, only 11 per cent of 54 starters in 2001-02 achieved their frameworks and, in the same year, only 7 per cent of 27 starters working towards foundation modern apprenticeships achieved their frameworks. However, all learners who were retained gained their full NVQ qualification. The number of learners following an NVQ-only programme over the past three years is low, but in 2001-02, four out of six starters successfully achieved their qualification. Retention rates on the modern apprenticeship scheme are improving. In 2001-02, 54 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 37 per cent of foundation modern apprentices were retained. In 2002-03, 84 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 74 per cent of foundation modern apprentices are still in learning. The company recognises the poor achievement and retention rates in its self-assessment report and it has instigated new processes to rectify the problem, but it is too early to determine their effectiveness.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	32		54		36		48									
Retained*	0		29	54	14	39	21	44								
Successfully completed	0		6	11	8	22	6	12								
Still in learning	27		19	35	2	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		27		9		27									
Retained*	0		10	37	3	33	10	37								
Successfully completed	0		2	7	1	11	10	37								
Still in learning	20		2	7	2	22	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			6		4		4									
Retained*			4	67	2	50	2	50								
Successfully completed			4	67	2	50	2	50								
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

Quality of education and training

37. Staff are appropriately qualified and have a good range of professional experience. Training materials are satisfactory. Laptop computers are available for assessors to support learners in the workplace. Staff have carried out some training to give them a basic awareness of key skills and basic skills, and to devote extra time to learners with identified difficulties in these areas. However, staff do not have the expertise required to fully support the learners' progress. N&B plans to appoint a key skills tutor and is exploring sources of support for basic skills.

38. Learners receive good support and guidance. Regular visits from assessors are effective in preparing the learners for assessment. The assessors provide factsheets to extend the learners' knowledge and understanding of childcare and education, and extend this support further by setting task-based learning activities. While task-based learning is generally effective, some learners have stated that they would like more opportunity to attend off-the-job training sessions. At each visit, assessors draw up action plans, which are clearly written and enable the learners to plan and understand requirements while working towards unit completion. Assessors effectively guide learners towards alternative methods of gathering evidence. Staff provide good pastoral support and are always easy to contact, including by mobile telephone.

39. The availability of many good work placements provides the learners with excellent training opportunities. Employers encourage their learners to access training programmes and instigate training by approaching N&B directly. Learners work alongside appropriately qualified and experienced staff to develop their practical skills. Staff are able to offer advice and guidance to learners when completing written tasks. Most employers carry out a supervisory or mentoring role and this is effective in assisting their learners' progress towards the completion of NVQ units. Other resources, for example, reference books, tools and materials, are available at work placements, and these are generally suitable and sufficient to extend learning. However, N&B does not take responsibility for monitoring resources to assure the quality of the training provision. The employers include learners in workplace staff training days, which, although often mandatory, supports the requirements for knowledge evidence well.

40. Initial assessment consists of a formal interview with N&B's staff in the workplace to identify the learners' suitability for the NVQ programme. The company gives learners a trial period, with the opportunity to complete taster NVQ units, and the company arranges an induction programme for them on completion of this period. However, some learners have not attended induction at the appropriate time and some have not attended at all. Induction is often carried out in the work placement and is short. The content of the programme covers the role of the training provider, an introduction to health and safety, and equal opportunities. There are few topics relating to, for example, learning styles, time management, the development of portfolios of evidence for key skills and NVQs, or forward-planning relating to training sessions.

Leadership and management

41. There is good communication between assessors, employers, and learners. The outcomes of assessments and reviews are shared and used to identify the learners' course of action. However, employers are not always sufficiently involved in the review process, and use of the expertise within the workplace is not always fully exploited for the learners' benefit. There are also some shortcomings in the monitoring of resources in work placements. The company has introduced some training sessions to support the learners' knowledge for NVQ units and it sends written details of these to the learners and employers. The company does not monitor the response to these invitations effectively to ensure that all of the learners are given time away from the workplace.

Learners receive assistance to key skills during the assessors' visits to the workplace. N&B plans to recruit a key skills specialist in order to offer key skills workshops to supplement its existing training.

42. The company holds monthly meetings to identify learners' progress and any problems, and allocates time to develop the standardisation process. Staff are well supported towards regular and effective professional development.

43. The staff team is relatively new and has established a professional approach to its work. Induction of new staff is matched appropriately to the experience and confidence they bring to their new roles. Deployment of staff is geographically based to minimise travel, maximise contact with the learners, and to ensure regular contact with the office.

44. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Staff are only just beginning to understand the need for a quality assurance system to cover all aspects of their work. Insufficient reliable data, and poor attention to these data to contribute to management decisions, have hampered this process.