

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **A & R Training Services Ltd Reinspection**

**03 April 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. 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
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

A & R Training Services Ltd is a private training company with sites in Huddersfield and Bradford. It offers modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualification (NVQ) training in retailing, customer service and warehousing. At the time of the final reinspection visit, there were 29 learners in this area of learning. The company also offers training for young people and adults in foundation programmes, care and early years care and animal care. Since the ALI's inspection in August 2001, A & R Training Services Ltd has expanded its Life Skills provision by taking on two subcontractors in the Calderdale region. It has also increased the number of its staff from 23 to 30.

### Overall judgement

The ALI's inspection in August 2001 found that training in retailing, customer service and transportation was unsatisfactory. The provision is now satisfactory.

### Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

## THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection was conducted in three stages. Two inspectors spent a total of nine days reinspecting the area of retailing, customer service and transportation. The first visit was made on 15 November 2002, with the second stage on 15 and 16 January 2003. The third stage was carried out on 2 and 3 April 2003. Inspectors interviewed 13 learners and conducted 10 interviews with A & R Training Services Ltd's (A & R) staff. They made eight visits to work placements and interviewed seven workplace supervisors. They reviewed 23 portfolios of evidence and 13 individual learning plans, and analysed retention and achievement data.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	5
Health, social care & public services	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
Foundation programmes	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	29	3

2. Of the 29 learners, 11 are foundation modern apprentices and nine are advanced modern apprentices. Nine learners are working solely towards NVQs, of whom seven are working at level 2 and two at level 3. All learners are offered the chance to take additional qualifications, such as those in basic food hygiene, first aid, and health and safety. Staff involved in assessment and verification are occupationally qualified and experienced. All staff involved in key skills training and assessment have achieved key skills awards at level 3. Learners are employed or in work placements in the Calderdale, Kirklees and Bradford areas. Learners are referred by the careers service, employers and from local schools.

### STRENGTHS

- good support for learners
- flexible training arrangements
- highly supportive workplaces
- good progression by learners

### WEAKNESSES

- weak retention and achievement rates

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of continuous professional development activity
- better planning of internal verification activities

3. Learners are given good support that is closely matched to their individual needs. A & R's new arrangements for initial assessment, including a variety of diagnostic tests, are being used well to determine the correct training programme and support arrangements for each learner. Support needs are accurately identified and well recorded, with a clear indication of how the support will be given and by whom. Fifty-five per cent of current learners have additional learning needs. A specialist basic skills tutor provides weekly

## A & R TRAINING SERVICES LTD REINSPECTION

individual support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs. These sessions are well received by the learners. A & R's staff visit learners regularly in their workplace, sometimes weekly. Learners who require additional support also receive more frequent progress reviews.

4. A & R is flexible in its training arrangements, ensuring that learners' individual needs are met. For example, one learner who could not work full time because of illness is now placed with A & R on a very flexible working pattern, so that she can continue to work towards her qualification. A & R has introduced monthly evening workshops on key skills and vocational topics for learners who cannot attend the regular off-the-job daytime sessions. Employed learners are invited to A & R's training centre to work on key skills projects, but if they cannot attend because of work commitments, assessors visit their workplace to give individual training. A & R has purchased laptop computers to assist assessors in this work. Assessments are carried out at times that suit learners' shift patterns.

5. A & R has effective partnerships with local employers that are very supportive of learners on work placements. In particular, it has developed a range of good sheltered placements for learners with additional learning or social needs, such as in charity shops and at a national distribution organisation. Many employers offer trial placements to learners with no experience of the sector. All the learners benefit from good in-house training with their employers, which builds their confidence and helps them to become part of a work team. This is particularly important for learners with additional learning or social needs.

6. There is good progression by many learners. Learners who have been on Life Skills or preparatory training programmes have moved successfully to NVQ programmes. Those learners not following a modern apprenticeship framework complete more than one NVQ. One learner whose job role had changed dramatically was moved quickly to a more appropriate NVQ after close negotiation between the learner, employer and local Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

7. Assessment practices have improved since the previous inspection. New paperwork is used effectively to record the planned assessment activity. New evidence recording sheets help to ensure that learners and assessors are clear on what has been achieved. Learners interviewed during the reinspection process understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to complete their qualification. Internal verification activity has been increased in order to monitor the effectiveness of the new assessment paperwork, but so far this activity is confined to verifying documentary evidence and has not been extended to direct observations of assessment. Internal verification is not being planned sufficiently to ensure that slow progress by learners and poor performance by assessors are identified early enough.

8. Staff take part in continuing professional development activities such as awarding body updates, standardisation events and industry refreshers. However, the recording of these activities is incomplete and does not clearly explain how an activity enhances an



individual's personal development. A & R has begun work with another local provider to allow its assessors and internal verifiers to share best practice in assessment and verification.

9. Retention and achievement rates are still weak, but data show that there has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection. All learners are now making good progress towards their intended qualification. A good proportion of learners are gaining jobs each year. In 1999-2000, the proportion was 43 per cent, in 2000-01 it was 69 per cent and in 2001-02 it was 45 per cent.