

INSPECTION REPORT

PDM Training and Consultancy Ltd

02 December 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
- **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

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

PDM Training and Consultancy Ltd is based in Andover. The company provides work-based learning programmes for the army at the Army Training Regiment Winchester, the Army Training Regiment Lichfield, and the Infantry Training Centre Warminster. Currently, it has 470 learners.

Overall judgement

The quality of training is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of work-based learning in telecommunications at the Infantry Training Centre Warminster is good. The quality of the work-based learning programme in security, safety and loss prevention at the Army Training Regiment Winchester is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good.

GRADES

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

Information & communications technology	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- high achievement rates
- well integrated on- and off-the-job training
- very responsive management of training
- very effective partnership with the army
- good implementation of equal opportunities policies and procedures

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient internal verification

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of six inspectors spent a total of 30 days at PDM Training and Consultancy Ltd (PDM Ltd) in December 2002. The inspectors visited army bases at Winchester and Warminster, where they met 203 learners, individually and in small groups. They carried out 29 interviews with PDM Ltd staff and 15 interviews with army staff. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including learners' portfolios of evidence, learners' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, promotional literature, and internal and external verification documents and reports. They observed and graded six learning sessions. Inspectors studied the provider's self-assessment report which was produced in August 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

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

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. PDM Ltd was formed in 1999 and became a limited company on 23 August 1999. It is based in Andover, Hampshire where it has recently opened a new head office. There are 17 full-time and two part-time staff employed in providing the work-based learning inspected. PDM Ltd provides work-based learning for serving army personnel, in security, safety and loss prevention (SSLP) and in telecommunications. Since November 2001, PDM Ltd has held a contract for learners aged under 25 years with the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide training at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 in SSLP at the Army Training Regiment Winchester (ATR(W)). It has recently been given a similar contract with the Staffordshire LSC to provide training for the level 2 NVQ in SSLP at the Army Training Regiment Lichfield (ATR(L)). It has also had a contract with the Wiltshire and Swindon LSC since May 2002 to provide local initiative funding for NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in telecommunications at the Infantry Training Centre Warminster (ITC(W)) for learners aged under 25 years. PDM Ltd is a training provider for the Directorate of Education Training Services (Army) and provides training under a number of non-publicly funded contracts.

3. Both the ATR(W) and the ATR(L) were created in April 1993 as a result of the recommendations made in the army's report on the restructuring of its training base. A total of five ATRs were established to provide basic military skills training to all new entrants joining the army. On completion of basic military skills training, all recruits move to a different location where they complete the specific skills training to fit them for their trade in the army. Basic military skills training is conducted over a 12-week period and is provided almost exclusively by military instructors. The age range of personnel entering basic training is predominantly 16 to 28, but new entrants can be significantly older for some trade groups, such as the Army Medical Services. New entrants to the ATRs are recruited nationally through schools and colleges, recruiting offices and special events. The army recruits young people throughout the United Kingdom and from overseas. Each ATR has intakes of new entrants arriving on an almost weekly basis subject to the performance of the nationally based army recruiting teams. The army, using its own standardised programme incorporating the assessment of aptitude, literacy and physical fitness, carries out all selection of learners for the ATR(W) and ATR(L) SSLP courses, from new recruits. It is the policy of the British Army that its soldiers will complete civilian qualifications alongside their military training, as additional recognition of their skills and expertise. Additionally, the army's target is to ensure that all new entrants gain at least a level 2 NVQ within three years of joining. There are 425 learners on the SSLP programme at ATR(W).

4. Telecommunications training at the ITC(W) was established in the early 1960s. The ITC(W) runs five regimental signaller courses each year, with an average of 28 learners aged 24 and under attending each course. These learners additionally take an NVQ at level 2 in providing a telecommunications service. There are also three regimental signals

junior non-commissioned officer (NCO) courses each year. The learners on these courses take a level 3 NVQ in operating and maintaining the performance of telecommunications equipment in addition to their military training. All assessors are military personnel and appropriately qualified. PDM Ltd has been responsible for the management of the NVQ programmes and the internal verification since February 2002. All 45 learners on the telecommunications training courses are privates or junior NCOs, generally with a minimum of two years army service, and are employed within the functional area of military telecommunications at their base units. The company facilities in Andover opened in November 2002 and include lecture rooms and administration offices. PDM Ltd does not have any other training rooms or classrooms. All work-based learning for young people is carried out at army training establishments.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Training in telecommunications is good. The achievement rate for the NVQ at level 2 is 86 per cent, and for the NVQ at level 3 is 100 per cent. The NVQs make good use of learners' practical army experience and training. Retention rates are very high, at 95 per cent in 2001-02 and 88 per cent in 2002-03. Learners leave the training programme early only if they do not successfully complete their military signals training course. Learner support is very good, but internal verification is weak. Training is good in SSLP. The achievement rate since the programme began in October 2001 has been 77 per cent. Although the programme is voluntary, only two learners out of a total recruitment intake of 1,708 have chosen not to take the qualification. Learners are able to make good use of their initial army training and practical work as evidence for the NVQ. The retention rate for 2001-02 was very high at 84 per cent, and for the current year it is 88 per cent. Learners are only lost from the programme if they leave the army during their initial military training at the ATR. The induction and initial assessment is weak, and there is insufficient internal verification.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

6. PDM Ltd is a registered company with limited liability. It is managed by a board of directors responsible for overall strategic planning and direction setting. The board comprises the managing director, a business support director, a director of programmes, a director of finance and a director of marketing. The director of programmes works closely with the military liaison officers who monitor the performance of PDM Ltd. There are different line management systems in place for the two NVQ programmes in SSLP and telecommunications, although both report to the director of programmes. The PDM Ltd teams at ATR(W) and ATR(L) are responsible for managing the SSLP NVQ training. At ATR(W) there is a training contract manager who is assisted by two training and assessment team leaders, 10 training and assessment consultants, two internal verifiers and one administration officer. PDM Ltd is establishing a similar team at ATR(L) for the new contract. At ITC(W) there is a project manager who is assisted by a training and assessment consultant. A qualified internal verifier has recently been recruited to join the team. Qualified serving army personnel carry out all assessment of learners on the training programme.

7. The company has comprehensive equal opportunities policies, which have been updated within the past year. These policies cover recruitment and selection of staff, access to training, and promotion. There are separate policies on personal harassment and bullying in the workplace. The army has very detailed and thorough policies which set out learners' rights and responsibilities. For learners, PDM Ltd uses the army's policy to avoid confusion. Both the company and the army have well-established procedures to deal with complaints from individuals, and learners receive a copy of the policy and details of how to complain during their induction. The army requires each establishment to draw up an action plan and monitor progress towards improvements in equal opportunities practice annually. PDM Ltd has quality assurance arrangements that cover all of their processes and procedures. The arrangements are held on the company's computer system and can be accessed by all staff working on the SSLP. Staff working at other locations do not yet have the computerised system but use adequate paper-based systems. As the company has implemented the new system, so the procedures have been reviewed and updated. The processes and procedures have been improved and the company has recently been accredited with ISO 9002, an internationally recognised quality assurance standard. PDM Ltd's first self-assessment report was produced in August 2002 following a consultation process with all of the company's employees.

STRENGTHS

- demanding targets for high achievement rates
- very responsive management of training
- good leadership of training programmes
- very effective partnership with the army
- good implementation of equal opportunities policies and procedures
- detailed and thorough equal opportunities policies and procedures
- effective self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better equal opportunities guidance for learners during provider's induction
- wider use of new quality assurance system

8. Clear and demanding targets for learner achievement and retention are set and monitored closely by all staff. The management of the work-based learning is good at all levels in both occupational areas, and the achievement rates are high for new recruits on the SSLP programme as well as for the older learners in telecommunications.

9. There is very responsive management of all aspects of training. Regular management meetings are held involving senior and line management. These meetings examine in detail an extensive range of parameters, including the company's performance against targets, reports from the contract managers, progress against the action plan, and feedback from all stakeholders. These meetings have resulted in quick and effective improvements to policies, procedures and training arrangements in response to problems or changing external factors affecting learners. Management has responded effectively by changing training arrangements to provide better training locations and also to make more effective use of programme schedules to increase contact time with learners. Flexible working hours are used by operational managers, assessors and verifiers to provide all learners with support and guidance in the evenings and at weekends.

10. There is good leadership of the training programmes throughout the company. The directors have produced clear and demanding company targets. The management style is open and supportive. Communications are effective throughout the company. There are clear and constructive policies and procedures covering all operational processes. The management information system is used well by all staff to monitor and control the training programmes.

11. The company has a very effective partnership with the army. Most of the provider's staff are former serving members of the armed forces and have relevant experience and training in modern military systems and procedures. The partnership is effective at all stages, from the strategic planning of training programmes by the company's directors and senior army personnel, through to the daily scheduling of classes and training resources at the units, by PDM trainers and the senior NCOs in charge of troops and platoons. Learners in particular benefit from the shared understanding of military training and NVQ objectives by company and army staff.

12. Staff personal development is satisfactory. All staff have six-monthly reviews of performance by their line manager and these are used as the basis for personal development plans. Staff occupational skills are updated wherever appropriate and they participate in an annual training programme that was introduced recently.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

13. There is good implementation of equal opportunities policies and procedures, and PDM Ltd and the army are fully committed to protecting learners from discrimination, harassment and bullying. Learners have a good awareness of equality of opportunity as it relates to their status as soldiers. They clearly understand equal opportunities issues and the relevant procedures. There is good support for all learners. PDM Ltd staff work closely with learners throughout their army training and provide them with the opportunity to discuss privately any concerns they have which they do not wish to raise formally with their army tutors. As and when necessary, company staff speak to army tutors on the learners' behalf. Equal opportunities is discussed formally in all learners' mid-course progress review interviews. PDM Ltd staff have good awareness of equal opportunities issues, particularly those relating to young people from a diverse range of backgrounds. Staff successfully maintain a good balance between meeting the needs of each learner and completing the training programmes. PDM Ltd staff receive effective and detailed training in equal opportunities, internally and from external providers. Many have also completed online training and achieved certificates issued by the army. All PDM Ltd staff and army personnel receive training in equal opportunities at least once each year. The training is designed to refresh their understanding and bring their knowledge up to date. The training uses a variety of learning methods, including discussion of situations seen in a video specially designed to show a range of equal opportunities practices.

14. All learners on the work-based learning programmes are recruited by the army. Over the past year, 70 per cent of recruits have been men. It is the army's policy not to recruit women into the infantry, or people with disabilities. Twenty-two per cent of recruits over the same period have been from minority ethnic groups. PDM Ltd collects data on gender and ethnicity of learners, which is collated and analysed within the company's management information system. The management team receives detailed reports on recruitment and achievement by gender and ethnic group for learners on the SSLP, but not yet for other learners. The company has improved the quality of the data and uses the data to monitor the effectiveness of its SSLP programmes.

15. Newly recruited learners on the SSLP receive an induction from the army and another from PDM Ltd staff to inform learners about their NVQ programme. Although the PDM Ltd induction handbook includes a section on equal opportunities, learners receive only superficial guidance from the company during induction. PDM Ltd staff make no explicit link at this stage to any equal opportunities training given in the army induction.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

16. The computer-based processes and procedures are thorough and easy to understand. They provide easily accessed links to current versions of guidance, relevant forms, and training materials. There is good control over paperwork used by the company. Even though the system is relatively new, procedures are being continuously updated and links have been established to other parts of the company's computer system to continuously improve the quality of information available. A company director is responsible for managing the system and local contract managers keep staff informed of changes through their fortnightly staff meetings.

17. SSLP learners are asked to provide anonymous evaluation of the effectiveness of their training programme in the middle and at the end of their training. Army trainers are also asked to comment at the end of each course. The feedback data are analysed and passed to team leaders, who look out for recurring issues. PDM Ltd has identified key issues to improve the effectiveness of the training programme.

18. Self-assessment is an integral part of the quality assurance system. All staff contributed to the self-assessment report. A representative group of staff spent two days drawing up the first report draft, using data from the management information system and feedback from learners, the employer and the awarding body. Although this was the company's first self-assessment, the strengths and weaknesses matched those identified by inspectors. Managers and staff drew up a development plan from the issues contained in the final version of the self-assessment report. The issues are being dealt with effectively and most have been completed by the date set. Those which have not been completed are still being acted upon. Managers report monthly to directors on progress towards completion of the development plan.

19. The internal verification of assessments carried out by PDM Ltd staff and army assessors has not provided the company with sufficient assurance of the quality of learners' work for their qualification. The level of sampling at one location has not been sufficient to recognise some recurring inadequacies of evidence from one course to the next. At the other location, insufficient verification activity has led to quality assurance only when learners have completed their training. PDM Ltd staff have been unable to affect learners' progress towards their qualification during training. The company has identified these issues in its self-assessment report. The level of sampling of learners' work has been affected by insufficient time for verification, and the company has recently increased the time available for verifiers and recruited new verifier staff.

Good Practice
<i>To promote inclusiveness, PDM Ltd includes all members of each group of recruits in the SSLP programme, even if they do not qualify for funding support from the LSC because they are over 25 years of age or have higher-level qualifications. The provider covers the cost of the training and qualification.</i>

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	45	2

20. There are 34 learners working towards NVQs at level 2 in providing a telecommunications service, and 11 learners working towards NVQs at level 3 in operating and maintaining the performance of telecommunications equipment. PDM Ltd is responsible for the assessment and internal verification of the NVQs in telecommunications at the ITC(W). All learners are men serving as army infantry personnel. All are employed within the functional area of military telecommunications. Both NVQ training programmes are contained within courses provided by the army, as part of the training followed by regimental signallers. The level 2 NVQ is totally integrated within the full-time regimental signals course and the level 3 NVQ within the full-time regimental signals junior NCOs course. Army instructors provide all the training and assessment for both courses.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	82		73													
Retained*	72		69	95												
Successfully completed	27		69	95												
Still in learning	45		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

- very good retention and achievement rates
- well integrated on- and off-the-job training
- highly effective learner support

WEAKNESSES

- weak internal verification processes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better initial assessment and support for older learners with basic skills needs

21. Training in telecommunications operations and maintenance is good. Retention and achievement rates are very good. Since May 2002, 91 learners have started the NVQ at level 2, and, of these, 78 have achieved the qualification, an achievement rate of 86 per cent. There are currently 34 learners following the NVQ at level 2. For the NVQ at level 3, 18 learners have completed the course and all have achieved the qualification, an achievement rate of 100 per cent. A further 11 learners are currently following the NVQ at level 3. PDM Ltd took responsibility for the telecommunications NVQ training in February 2002 and since then there has been a significant increase in the numbers of learners participating in NVQ courses.

22. Prior to being accepted on to either course, learners must meet set pre-course standards and must also complete a set programme of revision. On arrival at the ITC(W), all learners take comprehensive vocational entry tests. These are assessed by army assessors and contain elements which the learners must pass if they are to be accepted on to the course. Failure of non-critical elements identifies the learners as being at risk and additional support is provided in order to bring the learners up to the required standard. For example, the vocational entry tests for the NVQ at level 3 cover the erection of HF and VHF antennae, radio operation, installation and operation of mobile radio equipment, and the installation and connection of batteries.

23. On- and off-the-job training are well integrated, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners follow training courses which ensure they are competent to carry out a range of practical tasks, related to the installation, operation and maintenance of telecommunications services under warfare conditions. The courses are designed using the army's systems approach to training, whereby training objectives are determined from an analysis of operational tasks. Learners then follow courses designed to develop their skills and knowledge in operational situations. Learners' skills and understanding are developed through formal lectures and workshop-based activity, where they are also assessed. A number of operational exercises further develop their skills and provide opportunities for assessment. For example, on one exercise, learners spend two days setting up, testing and operating a number of mobile communication networks on Salisbury Plain. There is a good range of workbooks and assignments designed to develop and assess learners' knowledge and understanding. There are good resources and equipment to support learners development. ITC(W) has a range of lecture theatres and classrooms, most of which are fitted with modern computer

projection systems. The range of equipment used on the course, although well used, is extensive and is the same as that used by operational units.

24. Learner support provided by the army assessors is highly effective. Learners speak highly of the support and encouragement they receive from their assessors. All assessors hold appropriate assessor qualifications and have extensive occupational experience in telecommunications within the army. They are all trained army instructors. Lessons are well planned and are sufficiently demanding. Assessors have regular planned meetings with NVQ learners, at which progress is monitored and learners are able to discuss any issues or difficulties. At level 2 of the NVQ, an assignment on personal development planning is set, where learners are required to consider and then write up their individual short-, medium- and long-term aims. A further assignment covers the topic of customer service in a military context, matching the requirements of the NVQ unit to the army's unique situation. Case scenarios within an assignment on health and safety use non-stereotypical examples. For example, one scenario describes a female member of staff within a radio re-broadcasting unit tackling a health and safety issue. All learners are allocated to a tutor group and remain with their assessor for the duration of the course. The ratio of learners to assessors is good. Assessors are in constant contact with their learners throughout the duration of the course. If learners are experiencing difficulties with any aspect of the course, they are able to arrange additional support sessions with their assessor at lunchtimes, in the evening and at weekends. For learners working towards an NVQ at level 3, a duty assessor system operates for the first three weeks of the course, whereby an assessor is available to provide learner support up until 9.00 pm every weekday.

25. The provider is responsible for the internal verification of both the NVQ at level 2 and level 3. The systems currently used for internal verification are weak, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. More development work has been done on the internal verification systems for the NVQ at level 2. Currently, no assessment sampling plan has been prepared for the NVQ at level 3. There is too much reliance on the systems used by the army. Army personnel changes have resulted in a lack of continuity in the internal verification role. There has been an over-reliance on unrecorded internal verification actions. The provider is working to overcome these problems and has appointed an appropriately qualified and experienced member of staff to work at ITC(W) full time, to carry out the role of internal verifier for both courses. It is too early to judge the impact of these measures.

26. Attempts are made to identify learners with literacy or numeracy needs. During the initial induction process for the NVQ, learners are asked if they have any additional support needs and are encouraged to contact their assessor, in private if necessary. There is no formal testing of basic skills needs. There are no special arrangements for providing older learners with basic skills support. Assessors use a written assignment concerning the production of a personal development plan to identify if learners have any literacy needs. Assessors support learners by correcting drafts of written work which the learners then use to produce the final version. Assessors also contact staff at the learners' unit to arrange for specialist support to be provided in the longer term.

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This support is not provided until the learners have left the course and returned to their operational unit.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	425	3

27. PDM Ltd provides training for the ATR(W) in the SSLP NVQ at level 2. The contract for the first intake of recruits started in November 2001. The company has recently been awarded a contract to extend the training programme to the ATR(L) following a successful pilot course. The training programme is open to all new recruits and though voluntary, all recruits participate in the training programme as part of their overall phase one military training programme. PDM Ltd is not directly involved with the army's recruitment process, which is carried out by the army's training and recruiting agency. There is an intake of about 70-80 new recruits every two weeks at ATR(W). PDM Ltd allocates assessors to each new group who remain with them for the duration of their training programme. There are currently 425 learners. Typically, learners are on programme for 12-15 weeks depending upon the length of their phase one military training programme. The company operates an NVQ training centre within the regiment's training centre building. There are 16 PDM Ltd staff permanently based at the Winchester training centre, comprising a training contract manager, two training and assessment team leaders, 10 training and assessment consultants, two internal verifiers, and one administration officer.

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

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training															
	2002-03		2001-02												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Number of starts	577		1131												
Retained*	510		945												
Successfully completed	162		868												
Still in learning	348		77												

*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

- high achievement rates
- good resources for learner support
- good use of learner feedback

WEAKNESSES

- weak induction and initial assessment
- insufficient internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more flexibility in unit certification
- more appropriate locations for some assessment activities

28. Achievement rates are high. All of the learners who remain on the phase one military training programme and in the army, successfully complete their NVQ. In 2001-02, the achievement rate for the 1,131 starters was 77 per cent, with a further 7 per cent still in learning. Some aspects of the NVQ training complement the phase one military training programme, while other aspects provide additional relevant knowledge and practical skills.

29. There are good resources for learner support. Teaching rooms are well equipped with audiovisual resources, including projection facilities, televisions and video players. Specialist equipment is also provided. For example, one room is equipped with a networked telephone system for the telecommunications unit of the NVQ. Room sizes are appropriate for the activity and the group size. There are good paper-based learning resources. Handouts used in theory training sessions are detailed and well presented. Learners are also provided with a personal handbook containing background knowledge. Assessing and training staff are well qualified and have extensive military experience, all having served in the armed forces.

30. PDM Ltd makes good use of and responds well to learner feedback. Learners recently identified the unpopular timing of some practical exercises and assessment activities in the evenings and at weekends. PDM Ltd has collaborated with ATR(W) to identify times within the phase one military training programme when these activities and assessments could be carried out. As a result, increased use of firing range time has been allocated, appropriate activities programmed, and physical resources and accommodation to support these activities are being financed by PDM Ltd.

31. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Training is carried out competently with an appropriate attitude given to the military environment. There are good lesson plans for background knowledge sessions and audiovisual equipment is used appropriately. PDM Ltd's trainer/assessor consultants are available to provide additional support to learners, where necessary, including support during the evening and at weekends.

32. The induction and initial assessment processes are weak. Initial assessment was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Induction does not sufficiently inform some learners of the content of the NVQ programme. Most learners are not aware that the NVQ is a nationally recognised qualification with benefits within the commercial security industry. The structure of the induction is not adequate. Part of the induction process includes the completion of an initial assessment questionnaire. The questions are poorly phrased and completed questionnaires do not adequately identify individual learning needs or learner support needs. For example, one recruit identified himself as having dyslexia, but this was not recorded on the initial assessment questionnaire. The scheduling of the induction process is inappropriate. At induction, all recruits are placed on the NVQ training programme. Recently, ATR(W) introduced basic skills assessment for all recruits, which is carried out by ATR(W) staff. This takes place after the NVQ induction and some recruits are transferred to basic skills training programmes and not to the NVQ training programme. This gives an inappropriate expectation to some recruits wishing to join the level 2 NVQ programme.

33. There is insufficient internal verification, a weakness partly identified in the self-assessment report. Much work has already been completed to improve the process. Although awarding body internal verification guidelines are being followed, there is insufficient internal verification sampling taking place. Some written assessment evidence in learners' portfolios is not marked satisfactorily and insufficient feedback is provided. This is not being adequately identified through the internal verification process. Where issues are identified in the internal verification process, the actions put in place to rectify them are not always effective.

Poor Practice

Most assessments are carried out as group activities. The evidence for observations of individual learners is not recorded in such a way that records can be included in individual learner portfolios. As a result, the portfolio of each learner completing or leaving the programme does not contain all the assessment evidence for that individual.