

INSPECTION REPORT

Paragon Training (Dorset) Ltd

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

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

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

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Paragon Training (Dorset) Ltd was formed in April 1998 as a private limited company. The company has training centres in Weymouth, Bournemouth and Taunton and provides work-based learning programmes for young people in engineering, administration and information technology, retailing and customer service, catering and hospitality, hairdressing, health and social care, foundation programmes, and prevocational training. Paragon Training (Dorset) Ltd has a contract with Jobcentre Plus to provide programme centres in Weymouth, Dorchester and Blandford. It is also a subcontractor as part of a delivery consortium for a local further education college to provide work-based learning programmes for adults. In January 2002, Paragon Training (Dorset) Ltd entered into a franchise agreement with another further education college to access funding for the provision of learning not funded under work-based learning for adults. Paragon Training (Dorset) Ltd also carries out a range of training activities with commercial customers and schools outside the scope of this inspection.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, training is satisfactory in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, hospitality, hairdressing, health and social care, and life skills in the foundation programmes area. Retailing and customer service, and job clubs in the foundation programmes area, are unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are satisfactory and quality assurance is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

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

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	3
Programme Centres	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good internal and external communications
- robust partnership arrangements
- good strategy for promoting equality and diversity
- good individual learner support
- good training in engineering, hospitality, business administration, hairdressing and care
- very good Life Skills portfolios

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ineffective verification process
- inadequate observation of training
- insufficient action to tackle slow progress by many learners
- insufficient involvement of employers in learning programmes
- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities with learners and employers
- poor training and resources for clients attending programme centres

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective business planning process
- better monitoring of subcontractors
- better use of feedback by learners and employers
- better written materials for background knowledge training in hospitality
- additional practical off-the-job training in hairdressing
- better recording of support for clients attending programme centres
- more reference materials for learners in care

THE INSPECTION

1. Thirteen inspectors spent a total of 52 inspector days at Paragon Training (Dorset) Ltd (Paragon Training) in March 2003. They interviewed 178 learners, visited 63 employers' sites, spoke to 52 employers and workplace supervisors, visited five subcontractors, and carried out 69 interviews with managers and staff members. They observed and graded 19 training sessions. Inspectors examined 129 portfolios of evidence and 127 individual learning plans, a range of records, minutes of meetings, management information and other relevant documents. They also looked at documentary evidence connected to leadership and management and the current self-assessment report, which was produced in September 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
Health, social care & public services	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
Foundation programmes	0	0	1	4	2	0	0	7
Total	0	4	4	9	2	0	0	19

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Paragon Training operates from newly converted commercial premises in Weymouth. This site contains its administrative and financial operations as well as training rooms and information and communications technology (ICT) training resources. The Life Skills workshop and associated learning areas used by the foundation programmes are also located on this site. Recent structural changes to the site have ensured access for those with mobility problems. There are two additional training centres, with one in Taunton and one in Bournemouth. The Bournemouth site is on two floors with a Life Skills workshop and associated learning areas on the ground floor, and an ICT training resource, training rooms and office accommodation for staff, with toilet facilities for the disabled. Paragon Training uses a commercial kitchen environment for the training and assessment of catering learners in Dorset, at Winfrith Technology Centre. In addition, Paragon Training's staff also use premises in Bridport for interviews and individual sessions with clients, and Connexions offices and Jobcentre Plus facilities across the region. The Taunton centre is situated in the centre of the town and has ICT facilities, office accommodation and a dedicated hair salon. The facilities are on the first floor.

3. Paragon Training has a board made up of four executive directors. There is a chairman, a chief executive, a finance director and an operations director. The operations director has overall responsibility for the work-based learning provision. The senior management team comprises the quality assurance and staff development manager, the recruitment and business development manager, the operations director, and the chief executive, who oversee the day-to-day running of the organisation. Off-the-job training for learners in engineering and accounting is subcontracted to a specialist training provider and local colleges. Paragon Training employs 81 staff. There are 570 learners on vocational training programmes. There are 58 learners in engineering, manufacturing and technology; 62 in business administration, four doing accounts, 116 in retailing, 54 in customer service, 76 in hospitality, 121 in hairdressing, 31 in social care, seven doing the preparatory training, and 45 in foundation, on the Life Skills Learning Gateway. There are also 49 clients currently attending programme centres.

4. Dorset has a mix of urban business and development, based in Bournemouth and Poole, with a well-established rural economy in the area known as new Dorset. Tourism is one of the main industries, particularly along the coastal strip. Dorset has a high proportion of small businesses with 95 per cent of employers having less than 25 employees. The main employment areas are finance, tourism, and care. Somerset is essentially a rural county which has not attracted many direct inward investments in recent years, despite improved transport links. Somerset is lower than both regional and national levels for average earnings, workforce qualifications and the rate of business and job creation. Unemployment rates in Dorset and Somerset are 1.6 per cent and 1.7 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Dorset and Somerset achieving five or more general

certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, was 56.4 per cent and 54.5 per cent respectively, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally. Minority ethnic groups comprise less than 1 per cent of the population in Dorset and Somerset, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Training is very good in engineering and resources for off-the-job training are good. Learners are visited frequently in the workplace by assessors who use a wide range of assessment methods. Employers and learners have a poor understanding of equal opportunities and additional support for basic skills is ineffective. Off-the-job training is good in business administration and accounting and learner support is good. There is poor involvement of employers in planning the learning process and many do not take part in the progress review. There is good development of learners' occupational and personal skills in retailing and customer service. Learners receive good support from their assessors who visit them frequently in the workplace and provide good careers advice. Retention rates are low. Many learners make slow progress. Initial assessment is ineffective and assessment practices are inconsistent. In hospitality there is a good range of employers and work placements. Learners receive good support and there is good training on the food preparation programme. Assessments for chef learners are poor and retention rates are low on catering and hospitality programmes. There is good background knowledge training in hairdressing. Employers are good and are fully involved in their learners' progress. Learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme make slow progress and learners have a poor understanding of key skills. Pastoral support for learners on care training programmes is good and off-the-job training is planned well. However, the review process is ineffective and learners are making slow progress towards completion.

Life Skills

6. Individual learner support is good. Learners are visited at least weekly in the training centre and every two weeks in the workplace. They produce very good portfolios of evidence. Progression from the Life Skills programme to employment or training is poor.

Programme Centres

7. There is good individual client support. Clients are provided with a range of workshops that help them to progress. Training is poorly planned and organised for clients, with weak target-setting and action-planning and inadequate resources.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

8. Paragon Training has a board of four executive directors. There is a chairman, a chief executive, a finance director and an operations director. The operations director has overall responsibility for the work-based learning provision. The senior management team comprises the quality assurance and staff development manager, the recruitment and business development manager, the operations director and the chief executive, who oversee the day-to-day running of the organisation. There are 43 staff involved directly in the provision and monitoring of work-based learning and programme centres. Nine are qualified teachers, three have basic skills training qualifications, five have done core curriculum training and one other member of staff is working towards this. Twenty-eight staff have achieved assessor qualifications. Off-the-job training in engineering and accounting is subcontracted to a specialist training provider and local colleges. Paragon Training has quality assurance procedures and an equal opportunities policy that covers work-based learning, and has recently been acknowledged as maintaining their Investors in People status, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The current self-assessment report was produced in September 2002, and is the third by Paragon Training.

STRENGTHS

- good internal and external communications
- strong partnership arrangements
- good strategy for promoting equality and diversity

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient reinforcement of equality issues with learners and employers
- ineffective internal verification process
- inadequate observation of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective business planning process
- better monitoring of subcontractors
- clearer human resources role in the organisation
- better use of feedback from learners and employers
- further development of quality assurance manual
- better access to some training sites

9. Internal communications are good. There are regular team meetings, across management and in other specialist staff groups. Further discussions related to learning happen regularly, but are not always recorded. Most formal meetings are minuted,

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although action and follow-up is not always clearly identified. The formal board meetings are scheduled quarterly. Despite a period of rapid growth and significant change, most staff feel well-informed about the organisation's activities and understand their role in the organisation. Management information systems are used effectively to inform decision-making. The management style is open and staff feel involved effectively in the business. Most staff have a good detailed knowledge of the learners. Management and staff work well together and issues relating to learners or their training are dealt with quickly and effectively.

10. Communication with employers and work-placement providers is also good. Most employers and workplace supervisors support their learners' training and provide appropriate learning opportunities for them. Paragon Training carefully matches the needs of employers with the needs of the learners. Employers are provided with information packs comprising relevant information relating to Paragon Training and the work-based learning programmes. Paragon Training carries out assessments of employers premises for health and safety. Partnership agreements are adequate in setting out minimum requirements from the employers and work-placement providers who work with Paragon Training. Telephone contact with employers is frequent with regular, constructive and informative face-to-face discussions and visits by Paragon Training's staff.

11. There are strong partnership arrangements and Paragon Training has good links and networking arrangements with a wide range of external organisations. There are effective working relationships with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the local careers service, and the local authority. The company has representation on a variety of local agencies and is actively involved in discussions and initiatives that relate directly to work-based learning. There is involvement in a county-wide care training partnership that involves local colleges, higher education and private training providers who are developing care provision across the county. Paragon Training has recently been involved in activity being led by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) relating to citizenship for school learners. The organisation is fully involved in school work-experience programmes and is actively developing good working relationships with a substantial number of schools across the county. Paragon Training is an active member of the education business partnerships in both Dorset and Somerset. The recruitment and business development manager plays a key role in developing these partnerships.

12. The current business plan is the first business plan of its kind developed by Paragon Training. It is largely narrative and there are no specific financial costs attached to the business objectives. The completed business plan is not shared with employers, subcontractors and other key partners and is largely for internal purposes. Some staff do not have a copy of the current business plan, and there is no copy at one of the sites. Subcontractors are required to sign an agreement that covers the minimum requirements of their relationship with Paragon Training. Paragon Training completes an annual summary report on subcontractors monitoring the training arrangements, but the paperwork used is not sufficiently detailed. Monitoring arrangements are currently

informal and rely on the good communications and frequent visits by Paragon Training's staff.

13. Paragon Training has gone through a period of substantial growth recently and has more than doubled the number of staff employed as a result. A satisfactory staff appraisal process is currently in place and appropriate staff development has been identified and provided. The quality assurance and staff development manager co-ordinates the staff development needs, but the overall human resources responsibility is currently shared across the directors.

14. The overall strategy for literacy and numeracy support for learners is satisfactory. However, the implementation of the strategy varies in some areas of learning and there is sometimes no recording of the support provided. The availability of specialist support staff varies across learning programmes, and learners are not fully aware of the support available. A pilot project relating to development plan targets in this area took place recently for learners in Weymouth, where literacy and numeracy support sessions were made available to learners at fixed times throughout the week. This pilot activity is currently being evaluated.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

15. Paragon Training has recently updated its policy and replaced it with an equality and diversity policy statement to incorporate new legislation. It also established an equality and diversity committee in November 2002, with representatives drawn from every group of employees, staff and training sites. This committee has a high profile across the organisation and is chaired by the quality assurance and staff development manager. A member of the local LSC contributes to the work of the committee. The committee updates and implements the policy to raise learners', employers' and staff awareness of equality and diversity issues, monitors the review process, and monitors the regular data reports. Members of this committee are all working on projects to ensure that equality and diversity are established in the company's practices. The equality and diversity committee meets monthly and minutes of the meetings are displayed on notice boards at all sites together with details of training and other development activities.

16. Satisfactory staff training is provided across a wide range of related areas including anger management, providing accessible e-learning for the disabled, helping ex-offenders to apply for jobs, working with different learning styles, gender mainstreaming workshops, team-working, drug awareness training, and workshops involving the local police. Although some of this training is relatively recent, there is a history of working with disadvantaged clients within Paragon Training.

17. There is a good strategy for the promotion of equality and diversity. Paragon Training works through a range of networks involving the equality and diversity team, the local LSC, schools, trusts, and local business partnerships. Some particularly effective work is done with local dairy industries where some learners have been helped to have their prior experiences in work accredited, and to enroll on modern apprenticeships. School work-experience programmes bring excluded and marginalised learners onto modern apprenticeships. A well-designed and well-written equal opportunities and diversity leaflet is currently being published as a guide to fair treatment in the workplace. It explains clearly the equality of opportunity policy, what clients can expect from Paragon Training in terms of equality of treatment, and what their responsibilities are. Posters are also being produced to reinforce these messages. Local radio and the website are being used to attract learners. Articles are published regularly in the local newspaper, celebrating learners who are choosing work-based learning as an alternative to more traditional academic courses and learners who are challenging stereotypes in engineering.

18. Most learners and employers have a poor recall of any coverage of equality and diversity by staff at the start of the national vocational qualification (NVQ) and modern apprenticeship programme, despite coverage in induction and signed agreements by all parties. Current learners largely reflect the gender stereotypes within their areas of learning, with female learners in care and business administration and mainly male learners in engineering. The learner and employer handbooks do not contain enough information about equality and diversity other than a summary of recent legislation and the appeals and disciplinary procedures. Equal opportunities issues are not discussed

during the review process. Paragon Training does not ensure that employers have their own policy or induction procedures relating specifically to equal opportunities. Plans are in place to rectify this. New publicity materials and equal opportunities leaflets for learners, staff and employers are being produced. Questionnaires collecting feedback from learners and employers include questions on equal opportunities, but are not analysed effectively. This feedback is not currently used to improve provision. Learners in some occupational areas carry out work examining discrimination at work, valuing diversity in teams, disability awareness and racial discrimination. This generally happens later in the learning programmes as part of their NVQ unit modules. There is no equal opportunities training for employers.

19. Access to some training sites is inadequate for learners with mobility difficulties. The training rooms and facilities in Taunton are on the first floor of the building with no lift available. However, the provider does have the use of rooms in the nearby Connexions ground floor premises, by arrangement. The Bournemouth site also has poor access to its first floor, although the provider is moving to purpose-built accommodation. The Weymouth site has a wheelchair ramp. Both Bournemouth and Weymouth training centres have adapted toilet facilities for those with restricted mobility.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

20. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Internal verification is ineffective. Previous practices relating to verification, sampling and observing assessors are being reviewed by the organisation. Most of these activities have not happened in a planned or systematic way. In some cases, actions identified through internal verification are not followed up or clearly recorded. Internal verification plans are frequently not followed. The first meeting of internal verifiers across the organisation was held in March 2003. Currently there is no internal verification policy and procedures within the quality assurance manual. The newly devised policy was circulated to internal verifiers in February, and is subject to further ongoing development.

21. There is no systematic observation of training within Paragon Training or at subcontractors. Some of the subcontractors have their own effective quality assurance arrangements in place. However, Paragon Training has no detailed knowledge of the monitoring arrangements and is not fully involved in sharing best practice with those who have more established arrangements in place. Paragon Training has many new staff involved in work-based learning. The staff are given time to familiarise themselves with the organisation and provided with good support, but are not observed carrying out training. Some observation of training has taken place and although feedback has been given in some cases action points are generally not followed up. Paragon Training plans to incorporate a more fully developed approach to observation of training within the internal verification policy and procedures currently under development.

22. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and all teams produce their own self-assessment reports that are combined to create the company's report. Learners, employers and subcontractors are not involved in the self-assessment process. Paragon Training used a consultant to assist with the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report used for the inspection was produced in September 2002. This is the third self-assessment report produced by Paragon Training. The organisation regards the development plan as the key document for continuous improvement. This plan is generated as a result of the self-assessment process, and tackles the weaknesses identified. There is no indication of how strengths will be maintained, or how other improvements needed may be turned into strengths. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses and gave the same grades as those given in the report. Feedback questionnaires are issued regularly to learners during their training programmes and the results are analysed. Employers are also requested to respond to a questionnaire. The questionnaires used are complex and there is a relatively low rate of return.

23. The current quality assurance manual is under review and some gaps in the quality assurance procedures are currently under development. Policies and procedures generally cover most of the relevant aspects relating to the training process, but some of the documents have not been reviewed or revised for some time. Paperwork is generally not in a consistent style or format and the provider has identified areas for development.

Good Practice

Life Skills learners are currently producing posters to highlight some of the difficulties experienced by learners and to signpost where they can get help locally. The best of these will be produced professionally and used to advertise the names and phone numbers of those who can help across the organisation. A prize will be awarded for the best design.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	58	3

24. There are 58 learners on work-based learning programmes in engineering. Of these, 22 are advanced modern apprentices, 15 are foundation modern apprentices and 21 are NVQ learners. Paragon Training provides engineering courses leading up to NVQ at level 3 in engineering design, electronics, general engineering, production engineering, technical services, engineering maintenance, and manufacturing. Recruitment to these programmes is through Connexions, school open days, the provider's own marketing or from general enquiries. All applicants are offered interviews at one of a range of sites throughout Dorset. Initially, all learners work towards an NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations, performing manufacturing operations or engineering manufacture. Most of the learners are employed by engineering companies within the county. Learners who are employed attend day- or block-release training for the level 2 NVQ, depending on the requirements of their chosen learning programme and of their employers. This training is subcontracted to a local charitable engineering training centre. Where appropriate, learners also attend one of three further education colleges to carry out craft or technical certificates. Assessment is carried out by the provider's staff or appropriately qualified staff at the subcontracted training centres.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	1		8		24		8		6						
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0	0							
Successfully completed	0		1		1		4	50	1							
Still in learning	0		7		12		0	0	3							

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		8		6		23		13							
Retained*	0		0		0		0		0							
Successfully completed	0		0		0		5		6							
Still in learning	7		3		3		1		1							

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		15		35		1									
Retained*	0		0		0	0	0									
Successfully completed	0		2		22	63	0									
Still in learning	17		3		0	0	1									

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

STRENGTHS

- very good training
- well-resourced off-the-job training
- good assessment practices

WEAKNESSES

- poor understanding of equal opportunities by learners and employers
- ineffective additional literacy and numeracy support

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of employers in progress reviews

25. There is very good training from employers and subcontractors. Paragon Training contracts with a wide range of employers covering a wide range of engineering and

manufacturing processes and practices. Employers provide good learner support and assist in the learning process. Learners are moved between jobs, to help them complete specific training elements that satisfy all of the NVQ criteria. On-the-job training resources are very good and employers' sites are well equipped. Learners are encouraged to learn new skills on a wide range of modern machinery. Most employers update machinery and equipment on a regular basis and update the skills of learners on this equipment. One learner has been trained to use specialist design software. Paragon Training's assessors are helping two learners to complete their qualification early by making additional assessment visits before their employer closes down.

26. Resources for off-the-job training are good. Subcontractors' staff are well qualified and have very good occupational competence. The engineering workshops for off-the-job training are well equipped with industry-standard machinery and hand tools. Computer equipment is available for learners to use. There is a good computer-aided manufacturing system in place that learners are also trained to use although this is beyond the requirements of their framework. Subcontractors providing technical certificate qualifications are also very well equipped.

27. Assessment practices are good. Staff visit learners frequently in the workplace. They carry out progress reviews and assess the learners' workplace skills. The assessors use a wide range of assessment methods including observation, written and oral questions, and witness testimony. Most assessments are thorough and learners receive constructive feedback.

28. Employers and learners have a poor understanding of equal opportunities. Relevant training is provided during learners' induction, but there is poor reinforcement and monitoring during assessments and progress reviews. Most employers do not have equal opportunities policies in place. They do not routinely update their knowledge relating to their equal opportunities obligations. At some employers' sites, inappropriate images are displayed in areas where learners work, prepare portfolios and receive progress reviews.

29. The internal verification process is inadequate. Many learners are not aware of the verification process and most have not been visited by an internal verifier. Most internal verification is completed at the end of the learning programme.

30. Additional basic skills support is ineffective. All learners take an initial basic skills test but most learners do not receive the results of the tests. Some learners are identified as needing additional support. Paragon Training has not provided some learners with effective additional support. One learner has failed the key skills communications examination twice and has not received appropriate additional support. Another learner with similar problems is receiving help from a subcontractor, but no formal support has been arranged by Paragon Training.

31. Retention and achievement rates have varied considerably from year to year with no particular trends emerging. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices fell

from 62 per cent in 1998-99 to 35 per cent in 1999-2000. In 2000-01, 78 per cent of the learners are still in learning while only 38 per cent of the 2001-02 intake are still in learning. Achievement rates for these learners follow a similar pattern. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices rose from 30 per cent to 50 per cent between 1997 and 1999 but data for subsequent years are not available. Retention and achievement rates for NVQ learners also vary considerably from 97 per cent in 1998-99 and zero per cent in 1999-2000. The proportion of learners still in training varies between 20 per cent to 89 per cent.

32. Employers and workplace supervisors are not fully involved in the progress reviews. No discussions take place with the workplace supervisor present. Some employers are unaware of their learners' progress.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	59	3

33. There are currently 59 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration and accounts. Four learners are working towards accounting qualifications and the rest are taking business administration qualifications. There are 20 advanced modern apprentices and 38 foundation modern apprentices, of whom 33 are employed and five are on work placements. One learner is on an NVQ training programme, working towards a technician-level accounting qualification. Learners are based throughout Devon and Somerset and most are employed in small or medium-sized enterprises in the financial services sector. Those learners not in full-time jobs are found work placements with one of two borough councils. Learners are recruited from and based at Paragon Training's offices in Weymouth, Bournemouth and Taunton. Off-the-job training is available for business administration learners at these offices for one day each month. Administration learners are visited by Paragon Training's assessors in the workplace each month and a progress review is conducted within the workplace every 12 weeks. There are two full-time and two part-time advisers/assessors who carry out workplace visits and off-the-job training. Two qualified verifiers carry out internal verification, one of whom is external to the administration team. The recently appointed administration programme team leader is also working towards his internal verifier award. Learners working towards accounting qualifications attend a local college to which training and assessment are subcontracted. Advisers from Paragon Training visit these learners every 12 weeks to carry out progress reviews. Learners are recruited throughout the year by Paragon Training. Most learners are referred by their employers to Paragon Training. Other learners are found employment or work placements by Paragon Training, having been referred by Connexions or having made direct contact in response to advertising or personal recommendation.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		12		11		19		28							
Retained*	0		0		0		0		0							
Successfully completed	0		1		1		4		7							
Still in learning	7		8		3		0		2							

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	18		48		39		23		9							
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0	0							
Successfully completed	0		5		12		10	43	3	33						
Still in learning	16		19		3		0	0	0	0						

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		2		2				14							
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0			0	0						
Successfully completed	0		2	100	2	100			3	21						
Still in learning	1		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 off-the-job training
- very good learner support

WEAKNESSES

- poor involvement of employers in planning learning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better retention and achievement rates
- better use of initial assessment in setting key skills levels

34. Off-the-job training is good. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives, and are supported by good handouts. A range of appropriate visual aids is used, including presentations delivered using a computer projector, whiteboards and flip charts. There is a high standard of accommodation and equipment in the training rooms. Trainers have good relevant subject knowledge and are aware of current developments in business practice. Learners actively participate in the sessions and there are some checks on their understanding. Some particularly good training takes place that develops learners' understanding of equal opportunities issues. Most learners are making satisfactory or good progress towards achieving their qualifications. However, many of those learners who started learning programmes before 2002 made slow progress until the implementation of changes in personnel and improvements in assessment practice that took place in 2002.

35. Learner support is very good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Some individual training in application of number is particularly good. One member of the foundation and Life Skills team, who is training as a basic skills teacher, has developed her own resources. Individual learning plans do not include sufficient detail of their individual needs and abilities. However, they are amended as the learning programme progresses. This is particularly evident in relation to key skills targets. At the start of their programmes, most foundation modern apprentices sign up for five key skills at level 2. This includes some learners who have an advanced level qualification in mathematics. Key skills targets for these learners are eventually amended, but this takes place after they have started working towards their original key skills targets. These issues were not identified in the self-assessment report.

36. Retention and achievement rates are generally satisfactory. Of those learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships in 2000-01, 31 per cent achieved their framework and 18 per cent remain in learning. Nine per cent of those advanced modern apprentices who started in the same year achieved their frameworks with 27 per cent still in learning. However, the progress of modern apprentices currently in learning shows clear signs of improvement during the last year. Many learners have made rapid progress completing vocational and key skill units in 2002-03. The Basic Skills Association initial assessment is used to diagnose learners' needs for additional support on starting the programme and the review process supports this information.

Administration learners requiring additional support are normally identified and are offered additional individual coaching at one of the three training centres.

37. The planning of assessment and the diversity of evidence used has improved significantly within the duration of most of the current modern apprenticeships. Until this time, assessment planning did not support learners with effective action-planning. This has now been improved and reflects the feedback made to assessors by internal verifiers. Learners better understand the role of assessment. A good range of evidence is now used by learners who are also given sufficient independence in organising and referencing their portfolios.

38. There is poor involvement of employers in the planning of learning. Although employers are well informed of the progress of learners, most are not present during the review process. Although they receive a written summary, most rely on the learners to tell them of their progress and the content of the review. Some employers have an inadequate understanding of the qualifications. Employers have a poor awareness of learners' future needs for work experience to provide relevant learning experiences and evidence of competences.

39. Learners and employers work well with the assessors. The review process is very effective in supporting learners' integration into the workplace and any problems are dealt with effectively. For example, one learner who reported a problem in the workplace was visited the same day by her assessor and the problem was successfully resolved. One employer which had to make redundancies worked with the assessor to find the learner new employment. Paragon Training makes practical arrangements to help learners, including those with travel difficulties. One learner has her travel by taxi paid to enable her to attend off-the-job training.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	162	4

40. There are 162 learners on work-based learning programmes in retailing, customer service and transportation, in Dorset, Somerset and Hampshire. In retailing, there are 108 foundation modern apprentices and eight advanced modern apprentices. In customer service, there are 23 advanced modern apprentices and 22 foundation modern apprentices. There is one learner working towards NVQs in warehousing and distribution. Most learners are recruited directly from employers and some through the local careers service. All learners have an initial interview to determine their learning programme and any literacy and numeracy needs. All learners receive an induction which includes health and safety, equality of opportunity, complaints procedures, their rights and responsibilities and an explanation of the NVQ process. Prior accreditation of key skills is credited where appropriate. Progress reviews are carried out in the workplace. There are nine assessors, of whom five are working towards assessor qualifications. Of these, three are qualified internal verifiers. Key skills and literacy, numeracy and language support is provided at Paragon Training centres. All occupational training takes place in the workplace.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	22		21		41		62								
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0								
Successfully completed	0		0		2		4	6								
Still in learning	19		9		3		0	0								

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	88		166		113		38		45							
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0	0	0						
Successfully completed	0		12		47		12	32	13	29						
Still in learning	64		62		4		0	100	0	0						

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		5		16		7		13							
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Successfully completed	0		2	40	14	88	3	43	9	69						
Still in learning	1		0	0	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 development of learners' occupational and personal skills
- good support for learners by assessors

WEAKNESSES

- low retention rates
- slow progress by many learners
- ineffective initial assessment
- inconsistent assessment practices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more participation by learners in programme induction
- better access to specialist support for literacy and numeracy
- more involvement of employers in planning the learning process

41. There is good development of learners' occupational and personal skills, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Many learners are given additional responsibilities and progress within their work placement during training. They develop a wide range of skills in retailing and customer service. Some learners progress from shop assistant to supervisor and to assistant manager. Some learners have progressed from the Life Skills programme to a modern apprenticeship and their level of confidence has increased significantly. Many learners benefit from good on-the-job training programmes. Some employers provide good learner support.

42. Learners receive good support from their assessors. Assessors visit learners frequently at work and the length and frequency of visits is adjusted according to individual need. Assessors provide learners with good careers advice. One advanced modern apprentice who wanted to move into sports coaching has been put in touch with a specialist sports training provider. Paragon Training's staff work well to match learners' interests to relevant jobs. One learner who wanted a career connected with the cycling industry is now employed in a company which builds and sells bicycles. Paragon Training makes transport arrangements for learners who have difficulty in reaching a training centre for key skills tests. It also arranges alternative locations for key skills tests such as rooms at local careers offices or jobcentres. Assessors have the use of laptop computers to help learners to develop computer skills and to produce evidence.

43. Retention rates are low. The proportion of retail learners who left their training programme without achieving their target qualification in 1998-99 was 68 per cent. Although this had improved to 56 per cent by 2000-01, in 2001-02 and 2002-03, 56 per cent and 25 per cent of learners respectively, left their training programme early. In total, of the 378 learners who started modern apprenticeships between 1998-2002, only 20 per cent have achieved the full framework. The provider had introduced some new measures to improve retention rates, including a network of regional providers to work with national employers. The assessor is now a part of the employer's team. A learning support officer has also been appointed to tackle issues relating to retention. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these measures.

44. Many learners make slow progress towards achievement of their qualification, particularly on retailing programmes. Many learners do not complete NVQ units during their first months on programme. They collect evidence across several units but do not complete individual units. Those leaving the programme early receive no credit for the work they have done. There is weak target-setting during progress reviews. Assessment of key skills is started later than NVQ assessment. Recently, however, learners have been entered for key skills tests early in their programme. Evidence of competence for the NVQ is not routinely used towards the achievement of key skills. There is a reliance on standard key skills projects for all learners rather than encouraging them to present individual evidence from their own workplace. Some learners have had several changes of assessor. The order in which the NVQ units are assessed is set by the assessor.

Assessors set action plans for learners. Learners are not encouraged to take responsibility for collecting evidence, although recently some have started to complete the NVQ evidence log sheets independently. There is no effective system to identify and tackle slow progress by learners. Employers are not sufficiently involved in planning the learning process.

45. Initial assessment is ineffective. Initial assessment comprises a personal interview. From this, staff decide whether to carry out a literacy and numeracy assessment. There are no clear criteria on which to base this judgement. For example, one learner with good GCSE grades in English and mathematics had to complete both assessments, but a learner with poorer grades did not. Where learning needs are identified, basic skills support is given in the workplace by assessors, but none has appropriate specialist qualifications. Not all learners are able to take advantage of the specialist support that is available in the training centres either for time or geographic reasons. Self-assessment of key skills is not routinely used and is generally completed several months after the learner has started training. Where learners already have some occupational competence when they start, this is not sufficiently identified by assessors. There is no initial exploration of their job role to identify work which would provide good evidence. Some learners are on the wrong qualification level. There is no investigation of individual learning styles.

46. Assessment practices are inconsistent. Observation by assessors of learners in the workplace are not always planned. There is sometimes insufficient time to complete the feedback to the learner. Some trainee assessors use an inadequate range of assessment methods. Some portfolios do not have enough variety of evidence. The evidence collected for NVQ units which have been signed as complete by their assessor does not always meet the evidence requirements. There is too much reliance on personal reports by learners. These are not systematically authenticated by a witness from the workplace. Some assessors are unaware of how evidence of a confidential nature can be used to show a learner's competence. Portfolios contain some evidence which does not demonstrate learners' competence, such as the company's policies, marketing and training materials. Some assessors make good use of photographs to record evidence. Learners complete written answers to background knowledge questions when these have already been answered orally. Some learners have an inadequate understanding of how they will complete the key skills requirements. There is not enough participation by the learner in the induction process. Learners are given many handouts which are only explained briefly.

Poor Practice

The learning materials given to learners are poor, containing many grammatical errors.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	76	3

47. There are 76 learners on work-based learning programmes in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel. There are 18 advanced modern apprentices, 51 foundation modern apprentices, and seven on NVQ training programmes. Of the foundation modern apprentices, 28 are chef learners, one is a food and drink service learner, four are quick service learners, four are hospitality service learners and six are bar service learners. The 13 advanced modern apprentices comprise eight chef learners, two hospitality supervision learners, two hospitality service learners, and one front office learner. Paragon Training has a wide range of work placements, including public houses, restaurants, hotels, coffee bars, and fast food outlets. Chef learners attend a restaurant outlet on a business park for training and assessment. Learners are recruited from existing client companies, advertisements in the local press and school job fairs. Paragon Training carries out the induction in the workplace on the first visit after signing the learner on to the learning programme. It consists of completing all relevant forms and an initial assessment, health and safety, and equal opportunities policies and procedures. There are four staff who are qualified and experienced assessors. Three staff have internal verification qualifications and duties. The chef learners attend the training centre for off-the-job training every week. The other learners have access to monthly workshops for key skills development and support or help with portfolio production. Their assessments are carried out in the workplace.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	6		12		17		20		25							
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		0		2		6	30	13	52							
Still in learning	6		8		3		0	0	1	4							

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	33		46		48		34		38							
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0	0							
Successfully completed	0		6		11		18	53	17	45						
Still in learning	29		17		5		0	0	0	0						

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		8		12		8		7							
Retained*	0		0		0		0	0	0							
Successfully completed	1		2		5		3	38	6	86						
Still in learning	4		2		1		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 employers and work placements
- good learner support
- good practical training for food preparation learning programme

WEAKNESSES

- poor practical assessment for chef learners
- low retention rates
- ineffective initial assessment

48. Learners are employed by a range of good employers. There is good communication between employers and assessors. Learners receive good support from their employers. Many employers are actively involved in the review process. Learners are able to acquire essential vocational knowledge and occupational skills in the workplace. Employers are kept up to date with learners' progression and are involved in future action-planning by the assessor.

49. Assessors provide effective learner support. They are well qualified with relevant industry experience and visit learners in the workplace every two weeks for assessment and support. Many learners get additional visits when the need is identified. Assessment visits often take place out of normal hours to meet specific assessment requirements. Learners are provided with a taxi service to attend off-the-job training. All learners have the mobile telephone numbers of their assessors.

50. There is good practical training on the food preparation learning programme. Chef learners attend every two weeks for practical training and assessment at a commercially run restaurant facility. The resources are good and provide a good variety of work tasks with a range of large commercial equipment and menu items. The trainer plans the menu to meet individual learner's needs on a regular basis. Learners work in small groups and get good individual support.

51. Assessment for chef learners is poor. Assessments are not carried out under normal industry conditions. Learners are in a large commercial environment, but are not part of the main production team. The production of the dishes used in assessment is in a corner of the kitchen used specifically for training. Some evidence is not appropriate for the level of NVQ which learners are working towards. Written material for background knowledge training is poorly presented and produced.

52. Retention rates are low. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices in 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-01 are 45 per cent, 53 per cent, and 48 per cent respectively. The retention rates for advanced modern apprentices in the same years are 60 per cent, 35 per cent, and 41 per cent respectively. The current achievement figures show an improving trend.

53. Initial assessment is ineffective. Some learners do not receive basic skills testing. Some learners complete key skills testing and industry-based initial assessments. There is no systematic approach to initial assessment or accreditation of prior experience and achievement. Many learners have good industry experience when joining the learning programme, but this prior experience is not acknowledged or used effectively when developing their individual learning plans. The target achievement dates on most individual learning plans are the projected end date of the learning programme. No consideration of individual ability or experience is included. There is no short-term target-setting and the individual learning plans are not referred to regularly.

54. Basic skills provision is adequate. Learners complete a basic skills test where the assessor thinks it necessary, having carried out an interview and reviewed the application form. The test used is the basic skills agency test. Thirteen of the 63 learners currently on programmes have been identified as having additional learning needs. The support provided for these learners is provided through additional visits to help learners with their background knowledge and written evidence. One learner attends the training centre for individual support provided by the basic skills tutor. The hospitality assessors have no specialist training for supporting learners with additional needs.

Assessors can refer learners to the basic skills team if additional support is required. All learners have equal access to specialist help when it is identified, not all learners choose to attend.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	121	3

55. There are 121 learners on work-based learning programmes in hairdressing and beauty therapy, of whom 23 are advanced modern apprentices, 90 are foundation modern apprentices and six are on NVQ training programmes at level 2. All learners are employed. Reviews take place every six to 10 weeks. An initial review takes place six weeks after starting the learning programme. Learners can join a learning programme at any time during the year. They attend an induction, which includes an outline of the provider’s training programme, and the equal opportunities and health and safety policies. Learners complete an initial assessment of their basic and key skills. Additional support is provided by staff on an individual basis. Assessment takes place at the training centres and in the workplace. Off-the-job training in hairdressing is carried out at one of three training centres. Learners receive practical training, in their work placements, supported by Paragon Training’s staff. Most learners attend for training on one day every two weeks, but some learners attend every week. Recruitment of learners is mainly through employers’ referral, Connexions and direct involvement with schools. There are six assessors, of whom three are internal verifiers. There are four other members of staff who are working towards their assessor qualifications. In addition, there are 20 work-based assessors who all have appropriate qualifications and experience.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2		41													
Retained*	0		0														
Successfully completed	0		6														
Still in learning	2		21														

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	41		91													
Retained*	0		0													
Successfully completed	0		6													
Still in learning	37		53													

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		8													
Retained*	0		0													
Successfully completed	3		5													
Still in learning	3		3													

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

STRENGTHS

- good background knowledge training
- good employers

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress by foundation modern apprentices
- poor understanding of key skills by learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more timely assessment of learners' background knowledge
- additional off-the-job training

56. Learners receive good background knowledge training in well-resourced training environments, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. All off-the-job training

sessions are supported by a standardised lesson plan that describes the learning activity and has a method of assessing learners' understanding. There is a good ratio of learners to trainer, with one trainer to every 10 learners. Learners receive good individual support throughout their training sessions. A wide range of teaching methods is used to cater for different learning styles. Teaching materials used in learning sessions are of a high standard. Learners are issued with home study packs, which include a self-evaluation form. Learners who experience problems with their background knowledge are given additional individual support. There is some linking of background knowledge to practical training and assessment carried out in the workplace. Assessment of background knowledge and understanding is carried out late in the learning programme. Some practical observations have been made, but NVQ units are incomplete. However, there is good support for new assessors employed by Paragon Training and work-based assessors.

57. Learners have good employers. Salons are well resourced and operate to a high commercial standard. There is a good range of professional products. All employers receive a scheme of work outlining the practical training. Employers are well qualified. Employers have an input in target-setting during the review process. Training in the workplace is organised on a regular basis and learners have access to a wide range of different types of hairdressing model. Most learners attend additional training at their work placements. All learners are tested during induction to determine their literacy and numeracy skills. Systems are in place to provide support for learners with additional support needs, particularly with assignment and theoretical work. Some learners do not receive adequate support from their employers. There is no provision of basic skills training or retesting to record developments.

58. Paragon Training took over the unsatisfactory provision of another provider in October 2001. Judgements on retention and achievement are unavailable. However, on the foundation modern apprenticeship for the period 2001-02, 58 per cent of learners are still in learning. On the advanced modern apprenticeship programme for the same period, 51 per cent of learners are still in learning. Of the learners who started on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme in 2002-03, 90 per cent are still in training. One hundred per cent of the advanced modern apprentices are still in training for the same period.

59. There is slow progress made by learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme as identified in the self-assessment report. Some learners close to the end of their programme have not completed any NVQ units. Learners who have extensive experience before starting learning programmes are progressing at the same rate as those coming into training with no previous experience. Although some practical training takes place in the training centres, there is not enough additional off-the-job training and assessment.

60. Learners have a poor understanding of key skills. Learners do not know what key skills level they are working towards. Some learners do not know if they have to take examinations for key skills. Other learners think they have taken them and are awaiting

results. Learners do not know what assignments they have to complete for key skills. Some learners think that the assignments produced for their NVQ are also assessed for their key skills. One employer has introduced key skills early in the learning programme.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	36	3

61. There are currently 11 advanced modern apprentices, 24 foundation modern apprentices, and one NVQ learner on work-based learning programmes in care. All learners are employed as care assistants in residential homes for older people. Most learners are recruited after they are in full-time employment in care. Off-the-job training workshops are carried out every two weeks at the training centres in Weymouth and Bournemouth. For those who cannot attend, off-the-job training is organised at the learners' place of employment. All learners are visited regularly in the workplace for progress reviews and assessment. NVQ learners are given 120 hours of supported learning. Preparation for care learners are on supervised work placements for 16 weeks. All new modern apprentices carry out a key skills assessment and most of them do a basic skills diagnostic test. Additional learning support is provided as necessary. There are two full-time members of staff, both of whom are qualified assessors and one is a trained internal verifier and holds a teaching certificate.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		10													
Retained*	0		0														
Successfully completed	0		0														
Still in learning	3		8														

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		17													
Retained*	0		0													
Successfully completed	0		0													
Still in learning	13		11													

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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		1													
Retained*	0		0	0												
Successfully completed	0		1	100												
Still in learning	1		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 pastoral support for learners
- well-planned off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards completion
- ineffective review process

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more reference materials for learners
- more involvement of employers

62. There is good pastoral support for learners. Each learner is allocated to one trainer/assessor responsible for monitoring their progress. The trainer/assessor visits the

learner every two to four weeks, and more frequently if required, to carry out progress reviews and assessment and to liaise with the employer. Learners' work is supervised by a senior member of their employer's staff who provides witness testimony of their work. Learners have good working relationships with the trainers/assessors. The trainers/assessors fully understand the individual needs of their learners. Learners with particular support needs are referred to specialist support. Some learners who have received poor support are now provided with good support to help them improve their confidence.

63. Off-the-job training is well planned, comprising a 12-month programme of training sessions. Learners also receive key skills and portfolio support. Learners receive further advice about projects and assignments. Each session has a lesson plan identifying the topic and necessary resources. The off-the-job training plan is circulated to employers. The training plan has helped employers to better co-ordinate their on-the-job training and also to reinforce the off-the-job training. Learners are able to share ideas with peers at the training centres. Attendance is very good. Learners who experience problems in being released for off-the-job training arrange to attend workshop training in their own time. At the workshops learners receive photocopies of journal articles relevant to the topic. However, there is not enough use of a good range of journals, source materials and academic texts.

64. There is slow progress toward completion. Of the learners registered on the foundation modern apprenticeships in care between 2001-02, 70 per cent have gone past their intended completion date and have not yet completed the framework.

65. The review process is ineffective. Many individual learning plans are not systematically updated. There is insufficient use of short-term targets. If targets are set they are not specific enough to help the learner achieve them. A standard form is used to review progress but the section for recording action plans does not outline what the learner needs to do before the next visit.

66. Some feedback sessions do not provide learners with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. There is insufficient systematic internal verification. In some cases, employers are not sufficiently involved in providing feedback. Some employers do not receive enough information about assessment processes. Some employers do not fully understand their role in the training and assessment processes.

Foundation programmes**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	45	3
Programme Centres	49	4

67. There are 45 learners on Life Skills (16-18) programmes at the Weymouth and Bournemouth training centres. They are referred by Connexions. Learners attend between 16 and 30 hours over a minimum of four days each week. On starting the programme, learners complete an induction, which includes initial assessment and the agreement of an individual learning plan. Learners can work towards key skills, prevocational awards, or short certificated qualifications such as first aid, food hygiene or introduction to computing. Personal development is included in off-the-job training at the training centre. Twenty-six learners have work placements with local employers on either a full- or part-time basis.

68. Forty-nine adults are currently attending programme centres at Blandford, Dorchester and Weymouth. One programme centre is open on four half-days and the other two on one day a week and provide a programme of support to help tackle clients' individual jobsearch needs over a period of up to 26 weeks. All clients are referred by Jobcentre Plus. Some attend voluntarily, but most are required to attend. They all receive an initial interview by Paragon Training's staff to assess their needs, skills and abilities. An action plan is then agreed detailing how their goals will be achieved. Clients choose from a range of modules providing specific jobsearch and work skills training, and usually attend two or three sessions a week.

69. Learners and clients on Life Skills and programme centres can join at any time. They all receive an induction covering the learning programme, health and safety and equal opportunities. Their progress is reviewed by Paragon Training's staff every four weeks.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Life Skills																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	57		99		53		87									
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0	0	0								
Successfully completed	14		32	32	27	51	55	63								
Still in learning	39		6	6	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

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

Programme Centres												
Programme Centres												
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	80		192									
Planned learning completed	6	8	78	41								
Gained job	14	18	84	44								
Still in training	49	61	1	1								

STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners and clients
- very good portfolios produced by Life Skills learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor planning and organisation of programme centre training
- weak target-setting and action-planning for clients attending programme centres
- inadequate resources for programme centres
- poor progression from Life Skills programmes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of individual support for clients in programme centres
- better use of individual experience for basic skills learning

70. There is good individual support for learners and clients. Work-placement officers for Life Skills match clients effectively with suitable work placements to meet individual needs. They visit learners at least weekly in the training centre and every two weeks in the workplace. There is a high ratio of training staff to learners which enables particularly good pastoral support to be provided on issues such as housing, debts, homelessness and health. There are good links with outside agencies. In the programme centres, tutors run workshops which allow clients to progress at their own pace, with help readily available and guidance from their trainers. They regularly provide support for clients with a range of personal problems. Records of client and learner support are not adequate.

71. Portfolios of evidence of prevocational and key skills awards collated by Life Skills learners are of a very high standard. They are clearly referenced, have interesting and varied content, and effectively demonstrate competence.

72. Numeracy and literacy support is satisfactory for Life Skills learners. Basic skills tutors use initial assessment effectively to identify needs and agree an action plan with each client. Flexible methods of learning include groupwork or individual support. Some clients work towards key skills. There is no initial assessment of additional learning or social needs for clients attending programme centres. If a client is identified as having literacy or numeracy needs, trainers generally refer the client to the Jobcentre Plus adviser for formal assessment. Some trainers give informal support, but this generally comprises writing letters or curriculum vitae on behalf of clients, rather than helping them develop their own literacy and numeracy skills. On Life Skills programmes, there is not enough use of evidence produced during learners' everyday activities.

73. The planning and organisation of training at programme centres is poor. Taught sessions are not always well structured. Many session plans do not state aims and objectives. Clients are not always fully briefed in advance of when training sessions will take place and what activities will be carried out. Training techniques are poor and sometimes comprise only reading handouts. All clients are expected to use the same learning materials, regardless of their individual needs. Most materials are text-based only. In one session with two clients, the trainer conducted a long individual discussion with only one of the clients. There is insufficient use of employers and outside speakers. Resources are not always used effectively. Trainers do not always plan the time to be spent with each client and often overrun sessions. Trainers do not plan the

use of the computer to ensure clients have equal access. Life Skills training sessions are generally satisfactory.

74. Target-setting and action-planning for clients attending programme centres is weak, as identified in the self-assessment report. The initial action plan drawn up with clients is poorly detailed. There is insufficient information about clients' prior qualifications, experience and career aims. Employment objectives are not sufficiently specific. There is no evidence of specific, individual learning or jobsearch targets against which progress can be measured. Motivational tools, such as jobsearch logs, are not used effectively. Progress reviews take place regularly and provide good individual client support, but are not used effectively to measure progress or set new targets. Action plan and review forms have now been redesigned. There are effective progress reviews in Life Skills programmes.

75. Resources for jobsearch within programme centres are inadequate, as identified in the self-assessment report. Accommodation is poor, particularly at the main programme centre in Weymouth. One programme centre has no private interviewing room. Some furniture is inappropriate. There is only one laptop available for clients to use at each programme centre. Internet facilities are only available at one programme centre. There is no storage available for files or portfolios at two of the programme centres. There are no facilities for visually or hearing-impaired clients. The company is relocating the main programme centre to its head office in Weymouth where there are good facilities. There are inconsistent practices in the provision of jobsearch training for Life Skills learners. Those learners based in the training centre do regular jobsearch whereas those in full-time work placements do not.

76. Only 23 per cent of Life Skills learners entered employment or training in 2001-02. Retention averaged at 45 per cent over past two years, with most learners leaving without achieving their learning plan. Only 34 out of 114 learners achieved a qualification in 2001-02. Retention and achievement of clients attending programme centres is satisfactory. Progression into jobs was 44 per cent in the year 2001-02, against a target of 45 per cent. In the year 2002-03, 17 per cent of clients have already progressed into employment and 50 per cent are still in training.

Good Practice

One Life Skills learner on a part-time catering work placement needed support with numeracy. The basic skills tutor designed some learning materials completely around potential catering activities such as weighing, measuring and using a timer.