

REINSPECTION REPORT

Associated Neighbour Training Reinspection

28 May 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

ASSOCIATED NEIGHBOUR TRAINING REINSPECTION

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

REINSPECTION REPORT

Associated Neighbour Training Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Associated Neighbour Training is a privately owned training company with offices in Buckland, near Reigate in Surrey. The company was formed in 1982. There are 95 learners in land-based subjects, business administration, management and professional, retailing, customer service and transportation, and health, social care and public services. Of the 95 learners, 56 are advanced modern apprentices, 10 are foundation modern apprentices and 29 are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The owner and two office administrators are the company's only full-time staff. There is one part-time office administrator. The recruitment manager and five assessors are self-employed. The assessors visit learners in the workplace to carry out progress reviews, assessments and key skills training. Much of the training takes place in the workplace and some is subcontracted to local colleges of further education and other specialist providers.

2. Modern apprenticeship and NVQ training are funded by Surrey Learning and Skills Council. Surrey is one of the most affluent areas in the UK, with a mostly professional and highly skilled workforce. It has a service-based economy, including banking, finance, insurance, distribution, leisure and public sector services. There is a large number of small businesses employing fewer than 50 people.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Land-based provision

3. Associated Neighbour Training offers training in veterinary nursing for 16 learners, nine of whom are working towards NVQs at level 3 and seven are working towards NVQs at level 2. An external body regulates the training programme and assessment. All learners are employed in veterinary training practices, which are linked to an approved veterinary nursing assessment centre. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to a specialist veterinary nursing training provider to prepare learners for external examinations. Learners attend off-the-job training for one day each week during their programme. The external awarding body requires veterinary practices to allocate three hours each week to formal on-the-job training in addition to the off-the-job training. All assessment of on-the-job training is carried out in the workplace. There is no modern apprenticeship framework for veterinary nurses and no requirement for them to complete key skills.

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Business administration, management & professional

4. There are 35 learners in business administration, six in management, six in estate agency and two in accounting. Forty-one are advanced modern apprentices, and the rest are foundation modern apprentices. Most learners are referred to Associated Neighbour Training by their employers, and a few are recruited through Connexions. Learners are employed in a variety of local companies in Surrey, including insurance offices, local authorities, estate agencies and accounting practices. Learners have an initial assessment and induction at the start of their programme. Most training takes place on the job, but accounting learners attend local colleges for off-the-job training. Staff visit learners regularly to carry out assessments in the workplace. Progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

5. There are 17 learners in customer service. Fifteen of these are advanced modern apprentices and two are foundation modern apprentices. Learners are employed in a variety of businesses across Surrey, including sales companies, customer support centres, and retail stores. Most learners are recruited from existing employment. A vocational skills analysis and key skills assessment is carried out during the recruitment process and the results are used to plan the learners' programmes. Induction is carried out in each learner's workplace. There are three assessors, two of whom are internal verifiers, and one other internal verifier in the customer service team.

Health, social care & public services

6. There are 13 learners working towards the NVQ at level 3 in oral healthcare. All learners are employed in local dental surgeries. Off-the-job training and assessment for the NVQ are subcontracted to a local specialist provider. Learners may attend for off-the-job training during the day or evening on one day each week over a period of two years. Assessment takes place in the workplace and the learners receive regular visits from assessors and the provider's staff for quarterly progress reviews. There is no modern apprenticeship framework for oral healthcare and no requirement for learners to complete key skills. In order to become fully qualified dental nurses, learners must complete the NVQ at level 3 in oral healthcare and pass an external assessment.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	23
Number of staff interviews	16
Number of employer interviews	18
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	15

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. Associated Neighbour Training was previously inspected in December 2002. Training in land-based provision, business administration, management and professional and health, social care and public services was judged to be satisfactory. Training in retailing, customer service and transportation, and the leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance of Associated Neighbour Training were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, the quality of work-based learning in land-based provision, business administration, management and professional, health, social care and public services was judged to be good. Training in retailing, customer service and transportation, and the leadership and management of Associated Neighbour Training were judged to be satisfactory as were equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

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

Land-based provision	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

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

ASSOCIATED NEIGHBOUR TRAINING REINSPECTION

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

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

Land-based provision	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Health, social care & public services	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

8. Learners in veterinary nursing have made significant improvement in their progress towards achievement. Systems have been developed to help learners complete their portfolios more quickly and give them more time for examination preparation and revision.

9. In business administration, management and professional programmes, achievement rates for advanced modern apprentice have been consistently good over the past three years. Target-setting and monitoring of progress have improved and learners complete units much faster than before.

10. The standard of work in business administration, management and professional portfolios is good, and reflects learners' attainment and progress. Portfolios are well organised and well presented, and contain a wide range of diverse evidence. Learners develop useful skills in research and computing.

11. Although key skills training is integrated with the NVQ training in business administration, management and professional, **some learners make slow progress towards the achievement of the external key skills tests.**
12. Although the standard of work and achievement of NVQs in customer service is now satisfactory, one-third of learners do not achieve their key skills until late in the programme. **Learners have too few opportunities to practise the external key skills tests.**
13. In oral healthcare, progress towards achievement of the NVQ was slow at the previous inspection, but it has improved and is now satisfactory. Learners develop sound skills and knowledge to prepare them for their roles.

Quality of education and training

14. **Off-the-job training remains good in veterinary nursing.** It is well planned and explanations from the teacher are clear. Learners are well supported by visits to their work placements, and tutorials are effective in developing their skills and knowledge.
15. **On-the-job training in veterinary nursing is also good.** Supervisors pay close attention to learners' development needs and ensure that they receive a range of practical training and experience. However, this is not always planned far enough in advance.
16. **Resources for off-the-job training in veterinary nursing are good.** Facilities are well equipped for teaching background knowledge and practical work, including diagnostics. Displays of technical material reinforce learning. Staff are well qualified and experienced in veterinary surgery and veterinary nursing.
17. **Insufficient attention is paid to meeting individual learning needs in veterinary nursing.** The information gathered at initial assessment is not always used to plan individual learners' programmes, or to extend the range of teaching methods used. Small group tutorials do not always include sufficient target-setting. In lessons, there is not enough checking of learners' understanding.
18. **Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in business administration, management and professional programmes is now very effective.** Workplace supervisors are briefed fully on the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks. Employers are fully involved in planning assessments in the workplace, and routinely take part in the learners' progress reviews.
19. **Learners on business administration, management and professional programmes have good individual coaching and training from their assessors and from workplace supervisors.** Learners are given clear guidance and support and take full responsibility for their portfolios at an early stage. Employers give learners a thorough induction to the workplace and offer good on-the-job training, supplemented by specialist off-the-job training.

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20. **Some assessment practices for business administration, management and professional qualifications are weak.** Some of the evidence is not authenticated, and signatures and dates are missing from some documents. There is an over-reliance on product evidence and insufficient use is made of direct observation in the workplace.

21. **In customer service, employers are fully involved in the learners' apprenticeships.** Good information packs are given to employers at the start of the programme. All learners receive good on-the-job training and attend a good range of external courses.

22. **Action plans for learners in customer service are very clear** and are focused on achievement. Plans include detailed action points, clear targets and are used effectively to review term objectives, plan assessments, agree monthly tasks and activities and record training sessions.

23. **Off-the-job training is good in oral healthcare.** It is well planned and covers all the background knowledge for the NVQ. Teaching includes a wide range of methods to meet learners' needs. Learners' understanding is regularly checked and homework and projects are used well to reinforce learning.

24. **Support for learning in the workplace is good in oral healthcare.** Employers provide good opportunities for learning and access to assessment to enable them to succeed. They reinforce off-the-job training by discussing it with learners, and help them with their homework and projects.

25. **The resources to support learning in oral healthcare are good** and are used well to develop learners' background knowledge. Training facilities are very well equipped with teaching resources and specialist equipment such as dental radiographs. All staff are well qualified for their respective roles and they keep up to date through their own continuous professional development.

26. **The use of initial assessment remains unsatisfactory.** It does not provide sufficient detail on individual needs. Individual learning plans do not show the arrangements for meeting these needs and some learners struggle with the written activities associated with their assessment.

Leadership and management

27. **Internal communication remains good and external communication, particularly with employers, is now good.** Meetings now focus closely on improving provision and staff are more involved in developing and delivering the service to learners. Assessors keep employers well informed about learners' programmes and they are effectively involved in the learners' training.

28. Business planning was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, but it has now improved. **Associated Neighbour Training has a sound business plan with targets focused on recruitment, retention and achievement.**

29. Associated Neighbour Training carries out quarterly reviews with learners **but records do not always contain targets**, and the discussions do not always include all aspects of the learners' programmes and progression. There is insufficient exploration of concerns which are not associated with the learners' employment or progression.

30. **Internal verification has improved in customer service since the previous inspection, but there are still some concerns.** The internal verification plan is not always followed by internal verifiers. Action points are not always followed up and there is still an over-reliance on the internal verification of learners' achievements rather than the verification of assessment practice.

31. **Learners and employers are fully aware of equality of opportunity.** They can describe the concepts of equality of opportunity well, and their understanding of their rights and responsibilities is good.

32. **Associated Neighbour Training does not promote its programmes to under-represented groups.** Most of the learners are already in employment and little activity has taken place to widen participation from disadvantaged groups.

33. **The monitoring of provision at Associated Neighbour Training has improved and has been effective in improving the quality of training offered to learners.** Staff are responsive when a need for change is identified. The work of subcontractors is also monitored more effectively.

34. **The arrangements for quality assurance are not yet complete** and processes do not always pick up inconsistencies in the use of documents or implementation of procedures. This is recognised by Associated Neighbour Training in its self-assessment report.

ASSOCIATED NEIGHBOUR TRAINING REINSPECTION

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good internal and external communication
- much improved monitoring of provision
- good awareness of equality of opportunity by learners and employers

Weaknesses

- inadequate action-planning in quarterly progress reviews
- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance
- insufficient targeting of under-represented groups

Land-based provision

Strengths

- significant improvement in progress towards achievement
- good on- and off-the-job training
- good resources for off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- consistently good achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good standard of work in portfolios
- good individual coaching and training
- very effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- some weak assessment practices
- slow achievement of key skills for some learners

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- good involvement of employers in learners' training
- well-focused action-planning

Weaknesses

- late achievement of key skills
- some weak internal verification practices

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good support for learning in the workplace
- good resources to support learning

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory initial assessment

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good internal and external communication
- much improved monitoring of provision
- good awareness of equality of opportunity by learners and employers

Weaknesses

- inadequate action-planning in quarterly progress reviews
- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance
- insufficient targeting of under-represented groups

35. Internal communication was identified as a strength at the previous inspection and remains so. Regular staff meetings are held and are used well to keep staff up to date with developments, for the exchange of information and ideas, and to review progress in implementing the company's post-inspection development plan. An appraisal process has been introduced for staff, including those who are self-employed. They are encouraged to attend external training events and they take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Meetings are used well to share with colleagues the information gathered at these events. Since the previous inspection, meetings have focused more closely on improving provision and staff are now more involved in developing and delivering the service to learners. Procedures are clear and the company makes particularly good use of colour in its processes and monitoring documents. External communication is now also good. Associated Neighbour Training develops particularly effective links with employers and involves them in learners' training. Employers are well informed about learners' programmes and have clear contracts with Associated Neighbour Training. Assessors keep employers well informed about learners' programmes, although some would like more information about how they might develop learners and prepare them for assessments. Health and safety, and equality of opportunity checks on employers are made at the start of a learner's programme, although equality of opportunity is not always reviewed effectively during the programmes. Associated Neighbour Training has recently provided employers with guidance on equality of opportunity.

36. Business planning was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, but this has now improved. Associated Neighbour Training has a sound business plan with targets focused on recruitment, retention and achievement. Information is gathered systematically to monitor progress towards the targets and the business plan is updated

quarterly. The company's performance is broadly in line with the targets set. Longer-term planning includes targets which build on and improve retention and achievement rates.

37. Associated Neighbour Training carries out quarterly progress reviews with learners. The process is called performance appraisal, and is particularly effective in involving employers. They carry out a review with learners and many complete the associated documents to record the discussions. However, these records do not always contain action plan targets and the discussions do not always include all aspects of learners' programmes and progression. For example, discussions tend to focus on learners' progress at work rather than on their development needs or plans for the future. While assessors' monthly meetings with learners are used well to set targets for assessment, their quarterly reviews are not used to set longer-term action plans for their development. The pastoral aspects of learners' programmes are not always covered, and although learners are asked if they are being treated fairly, the sessions are not used to explore or test their understanding of their rights and responsibilities. There are insufficient follow-up discussions to explore matters which are not associated with employment or progression.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

38. Learners and employers have a good awareness of equality of opportunity. Employers are sensitive to the needs of their learners and are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities as employers. Appropriate checks on equality of opportunity, health and safety and insurance are made before learners start their apprenticeship programmes. Employers and subcontractors sign to say they will adhere to Associated Neighbour Training's agreement, although their compliance is not yet monitored. At the previous inspection, promotion of equality of opportunity was a weakness. Associated Neighbour Training has prepared a workbook for learners which is particularly effective in developing learners' knowledge and understanding. They can describe the concepts of equality of opportunity well, and their understanding of their rights and responsibilities is good. A booklet for employers has been prepared and recently introduced, but it is too early to see what impact it will have. Staff have attended training on equality of opportunity. One particularly memorable event was attended by Associated Neighbour Training's own modern apprentice, who then updated her colleagues at a team meeting. The company has a good selection of resources on equality of opportunity.

39. Learners know how to make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated. There have been no complaints from learners during the past year, but on previous occasions prompt and appropriate action was taken to resolve learners' concerns. Quarterly progress reviews include a question on equality of opportunity and whether learners are being treated fairly, but there is insufficient space to record discussion or findings in detail. Associated Neighbour Training produces little publicity or marketing material. Its literature does not include inappropriate or stereotypical references. The application form has been amended to encourage applications from people with disabilities. A newsletter is effective in celebrating successes and promoting learners' achievements.

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40. The previous inspection identified that Associated Neighbour Training did not monitor equality of opportunity sufficiently. Since then it has collated and analysed the information it gathers on learners' gender and ethnicity more systematically. All of the learners in dental nursing are women, as are most of those in veterinary nursing. However, the company has not promoted its programmes to under-represented groups. Most of the learners are already in employment and little activity has taken place to widen participation from disadvantaged groups.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

41. The monitoring of provision is much improved and has been effective in improving the quality of training. Staff are very responsive when a need for change is identified. The company has updated its policies and procedures manual and it now includes procedures for all key aspects of provision. It has introduced audits to monitor the implementation of these procedures. Learners' files are audited to ensure that they contain up-to-date and appropriate information. Where instances of non-compliance are identified, they are dealt with. For example, when documents were not completed appropriately, training was provided for staff on how to improve the information they record. The company has improved its collection of feedback from learners and employers and been successful in increasing the response rate. Analysis of the results shows increased satisfaction with the service offered. Data on retention and achievement is collected and used to measure progress against targets in the business plan. Learners' progress is monitored systematically. If learners are not meeting their targets, managers and staff try to improve their progress. The company has a good framework for self-assessment which draws on a wide range of internal and external information. Provision is reviewed at regular team meetings and the results are used to develop the company's self-assessment report. This is not yet an annual activity, but the most recent report identified several of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the reinspection. However, some sections of the report are descriptive and not evaluative.

42. The work of subcontractors is also now monitored more effectively. Both subcontractors now have sound contracts which include the service level required. Six-monthly meetings are held between Associated Neighbour Training and the subcontractors and these are effective in reviewing provision. Appropriate records of these meetings are now kept, showing actions for improvement. The company has introduced the observation of teaching in subcontractors, but this is relatively recent and too few have taken place to provide meaningful information.

43. There are still some concerns with the arrangements for quality assurance. This is recognised by Associated Neighbour Training in its self-assessment report. For example, there is no action-planning in response to the analysis of feedback from learners and employers. While individual concerns are dealt with satisfactorily, there is no overall plan for improving provision, based on the feedback. Staff are observed on their monthly visits to learners to carry out assessments, review progress and agree targets for progression, but records of the observation cover assessment practice only. Some

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inconsistencies in the use of documents, such as the quarterly progress report, have not been picked up. Internal verification procedures have improved since the previous inspection, but are still not reliable in identifying incomplete documents or in improving assessment practice. Visitors to veterinary nurse training work placements have not always identified instances where learners have had inadequate access to resources or insufficient on-the-job training.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	16	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- significant improvement in progress towards achievement
- good on- and off-the-job training
- good resources for off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learning needs

Achievement and standards

44. Since the previous inspection, learners have made significant improvement in their progress towards achievement. All learners at level 2 have completed their portfolio work and 60 per cent passed the examination component of their programmes at the first attempt. A further 20 per cent completed the examination at the second attempt. The pass rates for learners at level 3 were lower, but have improved since the previous inspection to 50 per cent. Good progress has been made developing systems to help learners complete their portfolios more quickly. Monthly progress reviews on portfolio-building are carried out by the subcontractor. Learners now complete their portfolios more quickly and have more time for examination preparation and revision.

Quality of education and training

45. Good off-the-job training was a strength at the previous inspection and remains so. It is well planned with detailed schemes of work and copies are given to learners and employers. In background knowledge sessions, good use is made of worksheets to develop learners' knowledge and understanding. Explanations from the teacher are clear. Technical content is well structured using medical and veterinary examples. Discussion is used well to help learners link the background knowledge to their practical experience at work. However, teachers do not always do enough to encourage learners to research solutions. Learners are visited regularly in their work placements and have tutorials which are effective in developing their skills and knowledge. The subcontractor promotes an 'open door' policy and individual tutorials are provided on request. Learners are confident that they can get extra help and support if they need it. The

personal support from staff and supervisors maintains their motivation and helps them to progress.

46. On-the-job training is now good. All work placements are approved training practices with qualified assessors who attend regular meetings with the subcontractor. Supervisors pay close attention to learners' development needs and ensure that they receive a range of practical training and experience. However, this is not always planned far enough in advance. If procedures are not carried out at a learner's placement, systems are in place to ensure that learners are given experience in an alternative placement. For example, if learners are in branch practices which do not have radiographic facilities they spend some time each week in the main practice, which does have these facilities.

47. Resources for off-the-job training are good. The classroom is large and well equipped with access to television and video facilities. A good range of up-to-date and appropriate textbooks and journals are used by learners. If learners need additional textbooks, these are purchased by Associated Neighbour Training. Displays of technical material reinforce the learning. A good range of veterinary equipment, including diagnostic laboratory equipment, is available and is used well to develop learners' knowledge and understanding in practical work and simulations. The subcontractor ensures that resources are sufficient and current and, when necessary, additional resources are obtained. A new lease has been taken out on additional rooms in the building to improve the teaching accommodation. Staff are well qualified and experienced in veterinary surgery and veterinary nursing. They are knowledgeable and learners value their experience in the profession. Staff keep up to date by attending veterinary courses and improving their qualifications. Newly appointed staff take qualifications in teaching or assessment. The strengths relating to staffing were identified in the self-assessment report.

48. Assessment of training in the workplace is sound and has improved since the previous inspection. Background knowledge questions are used well by assessors. Portfolios are well organised and learners know what they have achieved and what is left to do. They are fully aware of their responsibilities and entitlements, such as, to tutorial or training time in their placements, although some did not receive the information at the start of their courses. They understand the mechanisms for their support and progress review and make good use of them. Concerns are dealt with promptly.

49. Progress reviews and action-planning for learners were identified as weak at the previous inspection. There have been some improvements but, insufficient attention is paid to meeting individual learning needs. Learners' individual learning styles are assessed at induction but this information is not used to help plan learners' programmes, to extend the range of teaching methods, and they are not discussed at progress reviews. Reports on learners' off-the-job training are produced three times a year and are given to their employers. However, they do not give enough information to help plan revision and practical on-the-job training, in preparation for examinations. Learners are visited regularly by representatives from the veterinary nursing approved centres to which their training practices are linked. These visits have been helpful in supporting

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learners and improving their training, although in some cases have not been frequent enough to rectify problems promptly. Learners attend small group tutorials at the off-the-job training centre each term. They develop learners' knowledge and understanding, but they do not always include enough individual target-setting, and are rarely recorded. In lessons, there is not enough checking of learners' understanding.

Leadership and management

50. The veterinary nursing programme is well managed. Staff are effective in planning and delivering a programme which meets the needs of learners and employers. Monitoring of the subcontractor, by Associated Neighbour Training, has improved. There is now a contract in place, which includes a clear service level agreement between both organisations, and twice-yearly meetings are scheduled to review provision. Communication between the subcontractor and Associated Neighbour Training is good, and there is now better communication with, and support for, work-placement assessors. Staff meetings are regular and focus on achievement. Action points from meetings are properly followed up. All learners have an initial assessment which includes a test for literacy and numeracy. None of the learners have been identified as needing additional support. There are no formal arrangements to provide additional specialist support if it is needed, but staff are willing to give extra help when necessary. The subcontractor contributed to the development of the self-assessment report. Much of the report is descriptive rather than evaluative, but the strengths described in the text match those identified by inspectors.

51. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessors meet regularly to standardise assessments, and there is now better monitoring of attendance at these meetings. However, too much internal verification takes place just before an external verification visit. This is recognised by the subcontractor, which has taken on a new member of staff to resolve this.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	49	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- consistently good achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good standard of work in portfolios
- good individual coaching and training
- very effective co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- some weak assessment practices
- slow achievement of key skills for some learners

Achievement and standards

52. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices have been consistently good over the past three years, at over 65 per cent. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices remain satisfactory at 50 per cent. Target-setting and monitoring of progress have improved and learners now complete units much faster.

53. The work in portfolios is good and reflects the learners' attainment and progress. Portfolios are well organised and well presented, and contain a wide range of diverse evidence from the workplace, including witness testimonies, direct observations, personal statements, professional discussion, and written answers to questions. Learners have a very good understanding of how to cross-reference their evidence to units of the NVQ and clearly demonstrate which evidence is meeting the criteria for key skills. Learners develop research and computer skills to produce well-presented reports for their companies. For example, one management learner produced a persuasive presentation on reasons for increasing the marketing budget. Her proposals were implemented by her employer. Another employer adopted a very effective travel booking system which was designed by an administration learner. Learners also make excellent use of the internet to extend their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities.

54. Initial assessment, induction and assessment processes have improved since the previous inspection and are beginning to take effect. Retention rates have improved and

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most learners remain in employment when they finish their training.

55. Although key skills training is integrated with the NVQ training, some learners make slow progress towards the achievement of external key skills tests. Associated Neighbour Training recognises this weakness in its self-assessment, and is dealing with it through additional support, and better key skills practice and resources.

Quality of education and training

56. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is now very effective. Associated Neighbour Training identified some aspects of this strength in its self-assessment report. Communications with employers have improved significantly and are now very good from the start of learners' programmes. Staff give workplace supervisors full information on the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks. An employers' pack has recently been introduced and includes all relevant information about the programme, the learner's individual learning plan and copies of policies and procedures. This has been well-received by employers, and they are now knowledgeable about their responsibilities in the training process. Employers, assessors and learners jointly choose optional units for the frameworks, carefully matching them with the requirements of the job role. Employers are fully involved in assessment planning during the assessors' regular visits to the workplace, and routinely take part in progress reviews. Assessors negotiate with employers to ensure that learners have the maximum number of opportunities for generating evidence for their NVQ.

57. Learners have good individual coaching and training from their assessors and from workplace supervisors. This is identified in the self-assessment report. Assessors visit at least once every four weeks to coach, support and assess learners. They give clear guidance on portfolio-building and cross-referencing. Learners take full responsibility for their portfolios at an early stage, and have a very good understanding of how they will be assessed and the evidence that may be cross-referenced to key skills units. Learners may contact assessors at any time through e-mail, telephone or fax, and they receive helpful and prompt support. Employers give learners a thorough induction to the workplace and offer good on-the-job training to develop new skills. They often supplement this by specialist off-the-job training such as product knowledge, customer service, computer packages, first aid, and telephone skills. If the learner's job role does not provide all the required training and assessment opportunities, employers second the learner to other departments to broaden their experiences and challenges.

58. Induction has improved since the previous inspection and is now comprehensive and thorough. Varied activities help to engage learners' interest, including well-designed tasks that require the learner to gather relevant information about their workplace. The content and requirements of their NVQ are covered thoroughly. The documents given to learners during induction are clear and easy to understand, and include good examples. Learners are given clear information on health and safety, how to appeal or complain, and on the equal opportunities procedures.

59. Initial assessment processes are satisfactory. Learners complete a simple questionnaire to help identify their preferred learning style. Those who do not have appropriate general certificates of secondary education have a key skills assessment and written exercise to determine their level and any additional support needs for literacy and numeracy. Learners who need additional help are given effective support by their assessors. Ongoing reviews are used to determine support needs which are not identified at the start of the programme. Tutors work individually with learners who need support, to help them achieve the external tests. Learners have access to good practice materials, past papers, and online programmes to develop key skills.

60. Resources are satisfactory. There is a good ratio of staff to learners. The four assessors and internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and experienced, and update their skills and knowledge regularly as part of their continuous professional development. Learning materials are adequate. All learners have an up-to-date textbook, and laptop computers are provided for learners who do not have access to computers for study purposes. Handouts are well designed and professionally produced.

61. Assessment is well planned. Learners are able to decide the order of units for assessment, and agree clear and specific short-term activities which they should carry out before the assessment. More use is now made of professional discussion. Evidence is cross-referenced systematically to NVQ units and good use is made of oral and written questioning of background knowledge. However, some of the assessment practices are weak. Some of the evidence is not authenticated, and signatures and dates are missing from some documents. In one case, a trainee assessor's assessment had not been countersigned by a qualified assessor. There is an over-reliance on product evidence with insufficient use of direct observation.

Leadership and management

62. The management of learning is satisfactory. The staff work well together and they meet regularly to share information and ideas and discuss learners' needs and progress. A culture of continuous improvement has enabled many practices to be improved to meet the needs of learners more effectively. Meetings are now recorded and action points are followed up. Internal verification is satisfactory, and includes sampling plans, standardisation meetings and staff development. Assessors are observed twice a year by the internal verifier, who gives constructive and detailed feedback and agrees targets when necessary. New staff are well supported through shadowing, mentoring and training. Initial assessment includes an exercise to test learners' literacy and numeracy, but none of the current learners has additional support needs. There are no formal arrangements in place to provide additional specialist support, although staff are willing to give extra help when necessary.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	17	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good involvement of employers in learners' training
- well-focused action-planning

Weaknesses

- late achievement of key skills
- some weak internal verification practices

Achievement and standards

63. Learners' progress towards achievement of their NVQ has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Improved progress was identified in the self-assessment report. Associated Neighbour Training has implemented an effective system for monitoring learners' progress. Assessors submit monthly reports which are then entered into a comprehensive database using different colours to highlight each learner's progress. Every learner has an achievement plan which gives them specific and appropriately staged target dates to work towards. These are linked to a set of milestones for each NVQ and modern apprenticeship framework against which learners' progress is measured.

64. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Their portfolios contain sound evidence including work products, project work, photographs and personal statements. Learners' customer service skills improve during their programme.

65. Although the achievement rate for NVQs is now satisfactory, one-third of learners do not achieve their key skills until late in the programme. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Associated Neighbour Training has recognised the importance of introducing key skills at an early stage, and these are now an integral part of the NVQ from the start of the programmes, but it is too early to see the impact of this on achievement rates. Learners have too few opportunities to practise for the external key skills tests.

Quality of education and training

66. Employers are fully involved in the learners' training. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Since the previous inspection, Associated Neighbour Training has improved its communication and liaison with employers. For example, good information packs are given out at the start of the programme and employers now have a better understanding of their learners' programmes and training requirements. All learners receive good on-the-job training. Employers invest significantly in training and development to ensure learners can deal effectively and efficiently with internal and external customers. Learners attend a good range of external courses such as graphic design and presentation skills, team leader skills, project management and customer survey techniques. The customer service job roles are excellent and match the requirements of the NVQ well. Assessors maintain close contact with employers, who are now fully involved in the review process. Employers support learners well and if additional experience is needed, employers respond well. For example, one employer devised special work projects for a learner which would generate extensive evidence for the NVQ. Another employer adopted an innovative animated computerised logo for the company which had been designed by a learner in customer service.

67. Action plans for learners are very clear and are focused on achievement. Plans record detailed action points and clear targets which are agreed between the employer, learner and assessor each month. Plans are used effectively to review short-term objectives, plan future assessments, identify opportunities to collect evidence for the NVQ, agree monthly tasks and activities, and record any special training sessions. Learners have very specific targets to achieve before the next visit. Employers retain a copy of the plan and use it well to monitor learners' progress before the next assessment visit.

68. Initial assessment and induction are carried out satisfactorily. Learners have an initial assessment of their learning styles, occupational abilities and learning needs when they start the programme. All are working toward an appropriate level of NVQ. Their induction includes good information on rights and responsibilities, health and safety, equality of opportunity, and a clear explanation of the NVQ and key skills requirements. There are good working relationships between assessors, learners and employers. Learners receive good support and guidance from their assessors and employers.

Leadership and management

69. Customer service programmes are managed satisfactorily. Assessors have appropriate caseloads and co-ordinate their responsibilities well. Some learners have recently had a change of assessor and this change has been managed well. Feedback is collected from learners and is promptly acted upon. Equality of opportunity is promoted well to learners and employers. All learners have an initial assessment which includes an exercise to test their literacy and numeracy skills. None of the current learners has additional support needs. There are no formal arrangements in place to provide additional specialist support should it be needed, although staff are willing to give extra

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help when necessary.

70. Internal verification has improved since the previous inspection, but there are still some concerns. Assessment practice has improved. For example, assessment planning is now satisfactory and assessors have developed a good set of questions to check learners' knowledge and understanding. Internal verifiers and assessors have started to hold meetings, and assessment methods have improved, but these have not yet included the standardisation of technical certificates. An internal verification plan has now been produced but this does not include observations of assessors. The plan is not always followed by internal verifiers. Internal verifiers do not always follow up the action points that they give to assessors. There is still an over-reliance on the internal verification of learners' achievements rather than the assessment methods or practice. Associated Neighbour Training recognises in its self-assessment report that some new systems have yet to be established.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	13	2

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good support for learning in the workplace
- good resources to support learning

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory initial assessment

Achievement and standards

71. Progress towards achievement of the NVQ was identified as slow at the previous inspection, but it has improved and is now satisfactory. Learners develop sound skills and knowledge to prepare them for their roles in oral healthcare. Assessment is well planned, helpful feedback is provided and effective action plans are prepared. Unit achievement records show that learners progress at an appropriate rate and they are on course to achieve their NVQs by their target end date. Those learners who started in the autumn of 2002 have all completed 11 units of their qualification and are working effectively towards the remaining three units. They have just taken the external assessment component of their programme. Retention rates remain satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

72. Good off-the-job training was identified as a strength during the previous inspection, and remains so. It is well planned and thorough. Teaching is good and includes a wide range of methods to meet learners' needs. Learners' understanding is regularly checked. Homework and projects are used well to reinforce learning and to provide evidence of background knowledge for learners' portfolios. Deadlines are set for the completion of homework, projects and units, and progress towards these targets is monitored closely. Assessment plans are detailed and involve learners in making decisions about how they would prefer to be assessed. These plans, deadlines and progress are shared with employers and assessors. The subcontractor is based centrally with easy access by public transport, although many learners have long distances to travel.

73. Good support for learning in the workplace was also identified as a strength at the previous inspection, and remains so. Employers provide good opportunities for learning

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and access to assessment. They reinforce off-the-job training by discussing it with learners, and help them with their homework and projects. There are good opportunities for learners to put theory into practice at work through access to a range of dental equipment and procedures. Many employers offer additional training in health and safety and first aid and encourage learners to make use of evidence from this training in their portfolios. Assessors are welcomed into surgeries and visit frequently to observe performance or advise on portfolio-building.

74. The resources are good and are used well to develop learners' knowledge and skills. The subcontractor's training facilities are very well equipped with an overhead projector and video equipment, as well as specialist dental equipment. These are used well for background knowledge and practical sessions. All workplaces are fully equipped to carry out a full range of dental procedures. Staff are well qualified for their respective roles and they keep up to date through their own continuous professional development. Teaching staff at the subcontractor are well qualified occupationally and in teaching. This was identified in the self-assessment report.

75. The use of initial assessment was identified as ineffective at the previous inspection, and while some improvements have been made, it remains unsatisfactory. Learners are assessed to ensure that they are able to meet the requirements of the NVQ and the demands of work-based learning. They complete a psychometric test to determine their learning style. A written exercise is used to assess their literacy and numeracy skills. However, this does not provide sufficient detail on learners' individual needs. Individual learning plans do not always include arrangements for meeting these needs and some learners have difficulties with the written activities associated with their assessment.

Leadership and management

76. The oral healthcare programme is well managed by the subcontractor. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and assessment is effective in producing a training programme which meets the needs of learners and their employers very effectively. Communication between the subcontractor, learner, employer and the provider is good. Learners' files are properly maintained and contain copies of all current targets and assessment plans as well as detailed monitoring documents. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessors are observed and meet regularly with verifiers and tutors to standardise assessment practice. Monitoring of the subcontractor has improved and there are better records of the meetings and agreements held with subcontractor. This includes a contract which clearly identifies the service level agreement between both organisations. The subcontractor contributed to the development of Associated Neighbour Training's self-assessment report, but the report does not include strengths and weaknesses for this area of learning. Much of the text is descriptive rather than evaluative.