

INSPECTION REPORT

Crowns Worthing Limited

14 August 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **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

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Crowns Worthing Limited

Contents

Summary

| | |
|---|---|
| Description of the provider | 1 |
| Scope of provision | 1 |
| About the inspection | 2 |
| Overall judgement | 2 |
| Grades | 2 |
| Key findings | 2 |
| What learners like about Crowns Worthing Limited | 7 |
| What learners think Crowns Worthing Limited could improve | 7 |
| Key challenges for Crowns Worthing Limited | 8 |

Detailed inspection findings

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Leadership and management | 9 |
| Equality of opportunity | 10 |
| Quality assurance | 11 |
| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 13 |

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Crowns Worthing Limited is a private training provider trading under the name of NVQs.com Training Group (NVQs.com). The group head office and training centre is in Worthing, West Sussex. The company has a second training centre in Brighton, and several other salons in major towns throughout East and West Sussex.
2. There are 196 learners on hairdressing programmes: 97 are foundation modern apprentices; 58 are advanced modern apprentices; and 41 learners are on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes. Learners work at salons within the Crowns hairdressing group, or at one of 150 other salons in Sussex.
3. The company contracts with Sussex Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for young people. The company is managed by a team of four directors: two senior directors dealing with strategic issues and group marketing; one director in charge of NVQs.com; and the fourth director in charge of training centres. Eleven staff support management in administration, training, or training advisory roles.
4. In June 2003, Worthing and West Sussex had unemployment rates of 1.3 and 1.1 per cent, respectively. Brighton had an unemployment rate of 3 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.5 per cent. Sussex and Worthing have relatively low proportions of minority ethnic groups in their population, averaging less than 3 per cent. Brighton has a higher level at 5.7 per cent but still less than the national average of 9.1 per cent. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above is 50 per cent in East Sussex and 55 per cent in West Sussex. The national figure is 47.9 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

5. All 196 learners are employed in either the Crowns hairdressing group commercial salons, or other independent Sussex salons. Off-the-job training is provided at NVQs.com training centres in Worthing and Brighton. Most learners attend the training centres for background knowledge and practical skills in hairdressing and key skills training. Two satellite training centres have been established at major independent salons in Worthing, West Sussex and in Heathfield, East Sussex. These satellite training centres co-ordinate the training and assessment of their employed learners through NVQs.com. A further group of learners in East Sussex train entirely within their salons and are tutored and assessed peripatetically by NVQs.com staff. Learners can join the programme at any time of the year. They complete an initial assessment of their learning needs at the beginning of their training programmes. Most assessment takes place at the training centres, with some in the workplace. Learners' progress reviews take place in the workplace and at NVQs.com training centres.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of inspectors | 5 |
| Number of inspection days | 20 |
| Number of learner interviews | 68 |
| Number of staff interviews | 32 |
| Number of employer interviews | 17 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 14 |

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, work-based learning in hairdressing is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of Crowns Hairdressing Ltd are unsatisfactory, and quality assurance is very weak. The company's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Leadership and management | 4 |
| Contributory grades: | |
| Equality of opportunity | 3 |
| Quality assurance | 5 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 4 |
| Contributory grades: | |
| Work-based learning for young people | 4 |

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. **Learners achieve a good standard of practical work.** Training produces the skills valued by employers and the hairdressing industry. Some level 2 NVQ learners' work in hairdressing is above the standard required by the qualification.

8. **The retention and achievement rates for all modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes have been poor for a number of years.** Retention and achievement rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme have been falling consistently for several years, although during 2001-02 there was a slight improvement. The retention and achievement rates for learners on this programme are still poor. Retention and

achievement rates on foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes are better and showing signs of improvement, but are still not satisfactory.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Total |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Total | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 |

9. Seventy-one per cent of learning sessions observed were satisfactory or better. Twenty-nine per cent were unsatisfactory. **The organisation has a range of good, supportive salons.** Most salons are of a good quality, with modern resources and senior staff with good hairdressing skills. NVQs.com staff and salon employers are enthusiastic in their support for learners and help them to develop good practical hairdressing skills.

10. **NVQs.com's training provision is flexible in meeting the needs of learners and their employers.** Learners can choose their off-the-job training day and class to suit their needs, and the company negotiates with salon owners to agree an appropriate method of attendance for the learner.

11. **Some of the teaching is poor.** Two of the seven learning sessions observed were unsatisfactory. Lesson planning is weak. Trainers use a narrow range of teaching methods, are over-reliant on trainer-centred sessions, and do not fully involve learners. Background knowledge sessions, even for new learners, are heavily text-based, in spite of trainers being unaware of the learners' literacy abilities. Resources for background knowledge work are limited and inspectors noted that some information given to learners is inaccurate. During some practical training sessions, there is insufficient emphasis on salon health and safety practice.

12. **NVQs.com has some poor assessment practice.** Practical skills and the related background knowledge are not assessed together. Assessors do not use appropriate, alternative assessment strategies for learners with additional learning needs. Assessment planning is poor and there is insufficient use of workplace salon evidence, except towards the end of learners' programmes. There is an over-reliance on trainers and training advisers to complete the awarding bodies' assessment logbooks. Internal verification is poor and assessors are not being supported effectively.

13. **Target-setting and action-planning of learners' progress is inadequate.** There is no useful discussion at the beginning of the learners' programme to consider prior learning and experience, or to plan the order in which the hairdressing skills will be taught and assessed. The learners' individual learning plans do not contain interim targets for NVQ unit achievement. There is no recognition of how salon-based training will work alongside the training centre activities. Plans are not updated regularly to reflect learners' progress and achievements. Neither the learners nor their employers receive a copy of the plans. Employers are not effectively involved in the progress review visits by NVQs.com staff. The new action plans do not include useful details or challenging

targets which can be effectively monitored. Learners have insufficient understanding of how their hairdressing skills relate to the NVQ and key skills requirements.

14. Literacy, numeracy and language skills support for the high numbers of learners with additional learning needs is inadequate. Approximately 40 per cent of NVQs.com learners have been identified as having additional learning needs. Each learner completes initial assessment tests at the beginning of their programme, but there is inadequate analysis and information about their exact learning needs, in order to plan appropriate support. There has been no analysis of any trends in learning needs. A few months before inspection, one trainer's job role was changed and she now holds some additional support sessions for learners. Not all learners with literacy, numeracy and language support needs currently attend these sessions.

Leadership and management

15. NVQs.com promotes its business well. It has an attractive, easy to use website, with colour photographs of the training centres, salons and learners. The website advertises training programmes and job vacancies, and celebrates learners' achievements. Promotional events have included a school links programme offering NVQs at level 1 in hairdressing and taster days for year 11 school pupils. The new employers' forum and development days have been well received by learners' employers.

16. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. Learners are aware of equal opportunities and diversity issues and feel well supported by staff. The company has recently organised events for employers and for staff, to promote equality and diversity. Significant efforts have been made in recruitment practices to overcome gender stereotyping. **The company does not monitor equal opportunities in the workplace effectively.** Employers are not sufficiently involved in equal opportunities activities beyond the initial induction with NVQs.com. Minority ethnic representation is broadly in line with the proportion of the local population, but this situation is not formally monitored.

17. NVQs.com has a comprehensive computer-based management information system. Both senior directors are able to interrogate the system well. They are able to produce a wide range of reports dealing with retention of learners and individual learners' progress and achievements. The system is updated weekly. Extended completion dates are entered into the system if required, following discussion with trainers. Management do not set interim targets for NVQ unit completion. Senior managers are unable to monitor learners' progress in detail and identify any concerns early in programmes.

18. Training management is ineffective at NVQs.com. Hairdressing learners' retention and achievement rates have been poor for a number of years. No systems have been introduced to improve the support for learners. Not enough action has been taken to review systems and staff job roles, to give learners and their employers effective support to improve retention and achievements. Team meetings are held regularly and notes from more recent meetings clearly identify staff responsibilities and actions required. Managers do not use the information available to them effectively to support their staff

and learners. Managers do not effectively share good practice with staff to improve the quality of the learners' experiences.

19. **On- and off-the-job training are not co-ordinated effectively.** Employers and learners are not adequately involved with NVQs.com in the initial stages of planning training to help the learners achieve their qualifications. Learners' prior learning experience is not adequately used to help them pass relevant NVQ and key skills units early in their programmes. NVQ hairdressing units are not planned with interim targets. Rates of progress cannot be identified effectively. Progress reviews and action-planning use the on- and off-the-job opportunities effectively to help the learners achieve their objectives. However, there is an over-reliance on the learner to create links between salon training and that given in the training centre.

20. **Quality assurance is very weak.** The self-assessment reports for the past two years have the same strengths and weakness throughout, although their action plans are used as working documents and referred to regularly by managers. The senior directors have identified that there is no overall quality assurance framework for the learning programmes, and are currently developing one. Monitoring procedures currently in place to gauge learners' experiences are inadequate. There is some fragmented monitoring of staff activities and some infrequent action is taken to carry out improvements. Internal verification is weak and poor assessment practices are not being identified. Trends in learner performance, or common mistakes made by learners or staff are not being analysed. Nor is there a systematic review of procedures.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good range of promotional materials and events
- comprehensive and flexible management information systems
- effective promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- ineffective operational training management
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities
- very weak quality assurance

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Strengths

- good standard of practical hairdressing skills
- good, supportive salons
- flexible training provision to meet the needs of learners and employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- some poor teaching and assessment practices
- inadequate target-setting and action-planning
- inadequate literacy, numeracy and language support
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED:

- the support and individual attention they receive from staff
- the ability to practise their skills on real clients
- encouragement from staff who make it easy to ask for help
- good team-working by staff at the training centres
- flexible training arrangements when away from the workplace

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of clients available in off-the-job practical classes
- training co-ordination - not having to repeat practical work previously covered in their salons
- the opportunities for assessment in the workplace as well as at training centres
- the continuity in training - less disruptions during training at the satellite centres
- the opportunities for training both on- and off-the-job

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED:

- significantly improve retention rates on all programmes
- maintain the strong link between retained learners and modern apprenticeship framework achievement
- improve and extend lesson-planning, widen the range of teaching methods used in training centres, and broaden teaching beyond the current focus on assessment requirements
- strengthen the process of target-setting and action-planning for individual learners
- systematically identify from initial assessment learners' specific additional learning needs
- fully incorporate literacy, numeracy and language skills learning with the individual programmes of those learners who need this support
- co-ordinate more effectively the on- and off-the-job assessment-planning, training delivery and employer involvement in the training programmes
- review systems and job roles to provide effective support to learners and their employers
- implement a comprehensive quality assurance framework for all aspects of the training programme
- improve internal verification planning and support for assessors
- introduce effective systems of observation and feedback for trainers and assessors

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good range of promotional materials and events
- comprehensive and flexible management information systems
- effective promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- ineffective operational training management
- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities
- very weak quality assurance

21. NVQs.com has a good range of promotional materials and events. It has an attractive, easy to use website which is managed by the organisation's managing director. The website promotes the training centres and salons, advertises job vacancies, celebrates learners' achievements, and has hairdressing news items. Photographs are used well to illustrate written information on the website and in the organisation's promotional leaflets. NVQs.com takes part in school and careers events and includes male learners and staff to promote hairdressing as a career for all. Taster days are well supported by year 11 school pupils and of the 60 pupils who took part in 2002-03, 15 have accepted salon employment.

22. Employers welcome the support given by NVQs.com for a range of employment and legal issues. The senior training director has good external links which give him a good range of information and contacts. A new employers' forum and equality of opportunity events held this year have been well attended and received. Employers and NVQs.com staff organise visits for learners to hairdressing exhibitions and competitions and manufacturers' representatives visit salon training sessions to tell learners about new products and hairdressing techniques.

23. Operational training management at NVQs.com is ineffective. Hairdressing learners' retention and achievement rates have been poor for a number of years. No operational procedures have been established to improve the support for learners. Managers are not using the data and learners' reports from the management information system to effectively introduce improvements. Insufficient action has been taken to review procedures and staff job roles, to help learners and their employers improve retention and achievements. Managers are not using the broad range of staff experiences and knowledge to bring about changes. Some staff could explain clearly to inspectors where they felt improvements could be made for learners.

CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED

24. The self-assessment report states as a strength 'clearly focused and targeted action plans' in the hairdressing section. Hairdressing team meetings are held regularly and notes from more recent meetings are identifying clearly the staff responsible and actions required. However, there is an over-reliance on informality by managers in discussing issues with each other. Managers do not effectively share good practice with staff to improve the quality of learners' experiences.

25. NVQs.com has a comprehensive computer-based management information system. Both senior directors are able to interrogate the system effectively. They are able to produce a good range of reports about the retention rates on programmes and about individual learners' progress and achievements. To keep the system up to date, the trainers provide the administrator with learners' NVQ units and key skills achievement information on a weekly basis. However, as interim targets for unit achievement are not planned with learners, the system does not hold interim targets for learners' NVQ unit completion. It holds final or completion dates only. Senior managers are therefore unable to monitor effectively the progress of learners at all stages of their programmes. The system cannot identify trends in achievement, programme numbers, retention or early leavers.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

26. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. All learners have an induction programme during which equal opportunities is discussed and a company statement issued to them. A popular cinema video is used effectively to introduce topics such as racial equality and gender stereotyping. Learners are aware of equality of opportunity and diversity issues and feel well supported by staff at NVQs.com. Progress review documents include checks on equality of opportunity and harassment issues. The company has recently organised events for employers and for staff, to promote equality and diversity, and has plans for more.

27. NVQs.com has recently purchased comprehensive and well-prepared materials to provide guidance and support for employers. The company issues a statement about equality of opportunity to employers, as part of introductory literature. Employers are encouraged to use that statement or some similar document as part of their own employment arrangements. Significant efforts have been made in recruitment practices to overcome gender stereotyping, and the company has made presentations to local schools and careers fairs using male learners and trainers to promote hairdressing as a career for both sexes.

28. Equality of opportunity is not monitored sufficiently in the workplace. Training advisers do not always complete the equal opportunities sections within the progress review paperwork. Employers are not aware of equal opportunities monitoring activities and are hardly involved beyond their initial contact with NVQs.com.

29. The company does not produce regular management reports about equal opportunities, although it is aware of the very significant gender imbalance throughout the industry. NVQs.com does not formally monitor minority ethnic representation in the

local population, although the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with this figure. The company has no recruitment targets to ensure continuing or improving recruitment levels for male and minority ethnic learners.

30. No learners are currently registered as disabled, but access to both training centres is unsuitable for learners who may have permanent or temporary difficulties with restricted mobility.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 5

31. NVOs.com has very weak quality assurance of its programme. The senior directors have now identified that there is no overall quality assurance framework for the learning programmes. This is currently being developed. However, this was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report, which gave as a strength the 'strong external and internal monitoring process'. Current processes to monitor the learners' experiences are inadequate.

32. NVOs.com conducts some fragmented monitoring of staff activities and some observations of training at the training centres have taken place recently. These are recognised in the self-assessment report as being weak. In some training sessions, staff do not use the available resources effectively, or fully engage the learners, enabling them to relate their salon experiences to the training centre activities. There is no formal observation of training in workplace salons or the satellite centres. The self-assessment report also records insufficient continuity of background knowledge and key skills training at satellite centres in the hairdressing section. Inspectors identified poor assessment practices and inadequate resources for background knowledge work at one satellite centre.

33. There have been two observations of progress reviews in the workplace by a senior director, but the subsequent reports did not focus on the experience of the learner and how that could be improved. The completed progress review forms are checked, signed and dated by a manager, but there is insufficient subsequent action to rectify omissions or poorly completed reports. NVOs.com has no procedures to check the completion of individual learning plans and action plans, or any remedial action taken. Trends in learner performance, or common mistakes made by learners or staff are not sufficiently analysed and there is no systematic review of processes to improve the provision. NVOs.com does not have a system of identifying documents by date or version. Inspectors identified out-of-date documents being used by learners. Spelling and grammar mistakes are not identified and corrected in NVOs.com's written materials used by learners, including the company's website.

34. Internal verification is weak and assessors are not receiving sufficient support. The two internal verifiers recently reviewed the involvement of work-based assessors and have reduced the active numbers to those who attend assessor meetings regularly. Planning for internal verification activities is poor. The self-assessment stated 'consistently high external verifier report grades' as a strength of the provision. There has been no internal verifier observation of workplace assessor activity until very recently.

CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED

35. The past two years' self-assessment reports have the same strengths and weakness throughout, although the self-assessment action plans are used as working documents and referred to regularly by managers. The organisation over-estimated its strengths, which in a number of cases inspectors found to be weaknesses. NVQs.com accurately identified some weaknesses, but inspectors found many more that are having a significant effect on the learners.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 4

| Programmes inspected | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Work-based learning for young people | 196 | 4 |

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good standard of practical hairdressing skills
- good, supportive salons
- flexible training provision to meet the needs of learners and employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- some poor teaching and assessment practices
- inadequate target-setting and action-planning
- inadequate literacy, numeracy and language support
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

36. Learners achieve a good standard of practical work, producing skills valued by employers and the hairdressing industry. Some level 2 NVQ learners work at practical hairdressing standards above the requirements of the qualification. Approximately 40 per cent of learners are identified as having literacy, numeracy and language support needs. Most foundation and advanced modern apprentices now achieve key skills qualifications before their NVQ. Some learners, who have been on the programme longer, were entered for the external key skills tests later in their programme, so completed their NVQs first.

37. The retention and achievement rates for all modern apprenticeships and NVQ learning programmes have been poor over a number of years. Retention and achievement rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme have been falling consistently for several years, although during 2001-02 there was a slight upward trend. Rates are still poor. Retention and achievement rates on foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes are better, and showing signs of improvement, but are not satisfactory. Almost all learners who are retained, achieve the NVQ and, if appropriate, the associated key skills qualifications required for the modern apprenticeship framework. Most retained learners are achieving their qualifications within the timescale of their programme. There are no targets specifically aimed at improving the retention rates on all programmes; current strategies being used to resolve

CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED

this problem are not effective, at the time of inspection.

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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----|---------|----|---------|-----|-----------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA) | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| | Number of starts | 56 | | 75 | | 104 | | 67 | | 30 | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 4 | | 9 | | 7 | | 10 | 15 | 8 | 27 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 4 | | 9 | | 7 | | 8 | 12 | 7 | 23 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 30 | | 23 | | 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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|----|---------|----|---------|----|-----------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA) | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| | Number of starts | 96 | | 83 | | 44 | | 47 | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 2 | | 14 | | 16 | 36 | 12 | 26 | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 2 | | 14 | | 15 | 34 | 11 | 23 | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 72 | | 25 | | 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

| LSC funded work-based learning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----|---------|----|---------|----|-----------|----|---------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| NVQ Training | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| | Number of starts | 56 | | 33 | | 28 | | 36 | | 75 | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 2 | | 9 | | 9 | 32 | 12 | 33 | 37 | 49 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 2 | | 9 | | 9 | 32 | 12 | 33 | 36 | 48 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 37 | | 4 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | |

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

Quality of education and training

38. The organisation has a range of good, supportive salons. Most have modern resources and senior staff with good hairdressing skills. NVQs.com staff and salon employers are enthusiastic in their support for learners and help them to develop good practical hairdressing skills. The training centres operate as commercial salons, although clients sometimes have two learners working on their treatments. The Worthing training

centre does not have enough workstations for each learner to work on a client. The clients at the training centres vary in age and hair type and allow learners to practise a wide range of treatments to cover the NVQ requirements. Learners receive good pastoral support from organisation staff and employers, and they appreciate the support given through regular visits from NVQs.com staff. Learners have access to a good range of professional products for salon use and retail lines available for sale to clients.

39. The training provision is designed to be flexible to meet the needs of learners and their employers. Learners can choose to attend on a variety of days and alternate classes to suit their requirements. NVQs.com staff discuss with salon employers appropriate methods of attendance for the learner. It is possible for learners to choose a learning regime that is either wholly or partially based at their place of employment. It is also possible for level 3 NVQ learners to attend level 2 NVQ training sessions if they and their employer wish to take advantage of the extra training on offer. The company has recently introduced plans to award certificates to learners who reach defined milestones in their programme.

40. Some teaching and assessment practices are poor. Most of the learning sessions observed were satisfactory, but two sessions by different staff were unsatisfactory. Lesson-planning is weak. Trainers use a narrow range of teaching methods, are over-reliant on trainer-centred sessions, and do not fully involve learners. Background knowledge sessions, even for new learners, are heavily text-based and trainers may not be aware of learners' literacy abilities. Computerised presentation packages are also mainly in written form. Most teaching on the level 3 NVQ programme focuses on awarding body assessment requirements, which does not broaden learners' knowledge of the full aspects of the qualification. The recording and use of learners' prior achievements is ineffective. Some of the work completed in salons is repeated in the training centres.

41. Resources used for background knowledge work are limited and inspectors noted that some information given to learners is inaccurate. Learning environments vary and in some locations there were inappropriate facilities for background knowledge work and written tests. For example, inspectors observed a background knowledge session in a busy commercial salon, with learners balancing portfolios on their knees and unable to write on flat surfaces. During some practical training sessions, there is insufficient emphasis on salon health and safety practices. For example, during a practical assessment, inspectors observed learners applying a colour treatment without wearing protective gloves.

42. Some of the assessment practice for NVQ and key skills knowledge, and practical assessments is poor. Learners' portfolios show that there may be many months between background knowledge and practical assessments for the same NVQ element/unit. Learners with poor literacy skills are routinely given written tests before alternative assessment strategies are used. Oral questions about background knowledge are not routinely assessed alongside related practical skills. Very little work-based evidence is used. Learners' NVQ hairdressing portfolios show that work-based assessment of practical skills takes place towards the end of their programmes rather than being used

CROWNS WORTHING LIMITED

effectively throughout. Key skills evidence is gathered mainly by hairdressing-based assignments rather than using evidence generated during hairdressing activities. Key skills evidence is not obtained sufficiently from salon work. NVQs.com staff and work-based assessors do not plan assessment activities sufficiently to ensure that all parties are clear about their responsibilities. Internal verification is not identifying many of these assessment issues or supporting assessors adequately.

43. Target-setting and action-planning of learners' progress is inadequate. Individual learning plans are not completed fully or used effectively. Neither prior learning and experience nor the schedule for teaching hairdressing skills are discussed initially with the learners. Learners' portfolios showed that the NVQ shampooing unit competences were often not fully assessed until months into the programme, even when the learners had worked in salons before starting with NVQs.com. The learners' individual learning plans do not contain interim targets for NVQ unit achievement, although recent training team meetings have identified potential NVQ unit achievement stages for the level 2 NVQ programme. There is, however, no recognition that different salons offer a varied approach to training in hairdressing skills, or details of how the salon-based training will work alongside the training centre activities. Individual learning plans are not updated regularly, and neither the learners nor their employers receive a copy.

44. Employers are not effectively involved in the progress review visits by NVQs.com staff. These visits focus on pastoral issues and copies of the review are given to learners and their employers; but proposed action is rarely noted, nor reviewed effectively during the next visit. The new action plans introduced in May 2003 do not include useful details or challenging targets which can be effectively monitored. The individual learning plans, progress review forms and action plans are often incomplete, and information about learners is missing. Learners do not sufficiently understand how their hairdressing skills relate to the NVQ and key skills requirements. NVQs.com relies too heavily on trainers and training advisers to complete the awarding bodies' assessment logbooks.

45. Literacy, numeracy and language support is inadequate for the 40 per cent of learners with such needs. The local LSC provides extra funding for these learners. Each learner at the start of their programme completes initial assessment tests, but the resulting analysis and information is inadequate to plan appropriate support. NVQs.com does not have an up-to-date analysis of trends in learning needs. A few months before inspection, new arrangements were made to introduce some literacy, numeracy and language support sessions for learners. Not all learners with additional learning needs currently attend these sessions.

Leadership and management

46. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. NVQs.com relies heavily on the learners to create links between their salon training and off-the-job training. Employers and trainers are poorly informed about each other's planning and delivery of training. Current progress reviews and action-planning are designed to incorporate on- and off-the-job training opportunities. However, employers do not receive a copy of learners' action plans and do not know when learners will be covering individual topics. Trainers are

unaware of skills learnt in the workplace unless learners tell them. NVQs.com does not accredit prior learning or set interim targets to identify rates of progress.

47. The internal verification of learners' portfolios does not identify poor assessment practice. For example, NVQ practical skills are often assessed months apart from the related background knowledge. Assessors are using written tests for learners with literacy support needs, only using oral questioning if learners cannot cope with the test. Portfolios show that workplace assessors do not sign off work until near the end of the learners' programmes. Insufficient work-based evidence, such as witness statements, is used.