

INSPECTION REPORT

DCET Limited

29 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

DCET Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. DCET Limited was established by electrical contractors in 1995 to provide work-based learning in these regions. Since March 2000, the company has operated as an independent training provider and is now owned by a parent company, BLDC Holdings Limited (BLDC). DCET provides training for advanced modern apprentices in electrical installation at its training centres in Exeter, Plymouth, Redruth and Bideford.

2. The senior management team consists of three directors and a general manager. The general manager is responsible for the company's operational and financial management, and equality of opportunity arrangements. DCET also has a quality assurance manager, a training manager, a vocational assessor, and three full-time lecturing staff, who also hold the additional posts of curriculum manager, internal verification co-ordinator and assessor.

3. DCET's training provision is funded by Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council (LSC). All of DCET's learners are employed in local companies and attend training sessions fortnightly or weekly at one of the company's training centres. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Devon and Cornwall is 1.1 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, compared with 9.1 per cent in England. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Devon and Cornwall achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 52.3 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent in England.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Construction

4. There are 118 advanced modern apprentices training in installing and commissioning electrotechnical systems and equipment. Learners take up to 42 months to complete the training programme. All of the learners are employed in one of 64 member companies in Devon and Cornwall. Off-the-job training is carried out at one of four training centres and learners attend for 21 days each year. The learners spend the rest of their time in the workplace, working towards their modern apprenticeship framework. Learners are recruited by DCET, Connexions, or directly by employers. All of the learners receive an induction at the training centre and a further induction in the workplace. Assessment takes place in the workplace and is carried out by qualified assessors from DCET. Learners' progress reviews are carried out in the workplace every 12 weeks.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	24
Number of learner interviews	40
Number of staff interviews	24
Number of employer interviews	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	25

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. DCET's leadership and management are satisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory, as are its quality assurance arrangements. The quality of work-based learning in its construction training programmes is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Construction	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Retention rates are good.** The retention rates of learners in 1997-98 and 1998-99 were 100 per cent and 96 per cent respectively. Retention rates since that time have decreased but are still good. Retention rates for years when learners are still in training vary between 89 per cent and 78 per cent. DCET records reasons for them leaving but there is insufficient action to rectify the lower retention rate in the most recent years.

7. **For the years when data are available, the learners' achievement rates are very good.** Since 1997, achievement rates have been 100 per cent and 96 per cent. All learners work towards relevant additional qualifications, including first-aid courses, health and safety qualifications, and vocationally specific certificates. These are above the

requirements laid down in the qualification framework.

Quality of education and training

8. **There is good recording and monitoring of learners' progress** within the training centre. DCET maintains records of the learners' progress at element level in order to monitor them accurately and closely. Learners have a good understanding of the detailed assessment requirements of their training programme, but are not always sufficiently aware of their own progress. The learners receive verbal feedback at assessment events and written feedback given afterwards is often insufficient to guide the learners in how to improve. DCET records learners' achievement within the training centre and applies for unit accreditation when it is appropriate. Duplicate copies of records are maintained in the learners' portfolios of evidence, but these are retained within the training centre and are not readily available to the learners.

9. **DCET has good links with employers, which enable potential modern apprentices to obtain a suitable work placement quickly.** The company maintains good links with employers throughout the modern apprenticeship. Employers are supportive and offer sustained employment to almost all of the learners in a range of small local contractors and national companies.

10. **Learners have a wide range of additional qualifications available to them and pass rates are good.** All learners can access the courses on the latest wiring regulations, inspecting and testing of electrical systems, health and safety and first aid, and the industry's achievement measurement test. These improve the learners' employability and give the employer a more flexible workforce.

11. There was very little off-the-job training during the week of the inspection, due to the large number of learners on holiday. Of the two learning sessions that inspectors were able to observe, both were satisfactory or above.

12. **Learners' progress reviews are weak.** Three-way discussions between the learners, workplace supervisors and the assessor do not always take place. Targets are not stated clearly, focused, or appropriate to individual learners, and they are often too descriptive. They are not specific enough to ensure good progress towards the qualification. In many cases, targets are not revisited at each review and learners are not always challenged if they do not meet their targets. Sometimes workplace supervisors are not asked for their comments and frequently do not sign the review form. Site reviews do not take place regularly when learners are working away from home. Equality of opportunity is not recorded on site reviews.

13. **There is insufficient practical skills training in the off-the-job training programme.** There is no dedicated practical training area in any of the DCET's training facilities. DCET recognises this and plans to install additional workshop facilities, but these plans have not

yet been updated.

Leadership and management

14. **DCET has good informal communication.** There is a good exchange of general information relating to the operational management of training. This informal communication is effective, but although there are many useful meetings these are not typically scheduled and they are not minuted.

15. **There is good support for staff.** Staff appraisals are well structured and assess the completion of previously agreed objectives, and overall performance. They also identify individual training needs. Identified training needs are appropriate to the company and the individual and relate to teaching needs and continuing professional development.

16. The office accommodation is being extended and rearranged and is adequate to meet staff needs. Additional laptops have been ordered and training has been scheduled for the management of information systems.

17. DCET's approach to the provision of literacy, numeracy, and language skills is satisfactory. All learners are required to complete assessments relating to these skills as part of the selection procedure.

18. **The formal strategic and operational planning is inadequate.** Much of DCET's planning is informal and unrecorded. There is no consistent recording of management decisions and actions. A basic business plan has been written for 2003-04, but it is insufficiently detailed and its objectives are difficult to measure.

19. **There is insufficient use of management data.** Some data are analysed, such as feedback from learners' and employers' questionnaires. This has resulted in changes to the curriculum and training, which have impacted positively on learners. Other data, such as local diversity information and retention and achievement statistics, are not analysed or used to help develop strategic-planning and management decision-making.

20. **Learners have a good awareness of equality of opportunity and how it relates to them in the workplace.** Learners are knowledgeable about their rights and most of them are also aware of their responsibilities to others. Learners have a good knowledge of the complaints procedure and know what action to take in the event of a complaint. However, there is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity to employers and in general promotional literature. The promotional strategy for equality of opportunity is not sufficiently focused.

21. **DCET's quality assurance manual is good.** It is available electronically or in hard copy. There is no formal system for the observation of off-the-job training or reviews. **Weaknesses in reviews are often not identified early enough and there is no formal system for the sharing of good practice.** DCET has recently reviewed its quality

assurance policies and procedures, and appointed a quality assurance manager. The quality assurance system is too recent to have had a significant impact on the learners.

22. DCET keeps detailed records of the internal verification process and the related procedures are well defined within the quality assurance system. There are comprehensive assessor and internal verifier information files. The internal verification system is well managed, with scheduled quarterly moderating meetings.

23. **There is no formal planning of on-the-job training.** Learners have to examine the work or tasks available on the job and match these to the requirements of the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Employer and assessor involvement to assist the learners is insufficient.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good informal communication
- good support for staff
- good awareness of equality of opportunity by learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate formal strategic and operational planning
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficient use of management data

Construction

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- wide range of additional qualifications
- good monitoring and recording of NVQ progress
- good use of links with the employer

Weaknesses

- weak progress reviews for learners
- insufficient off-the-job practical skills training
- inadequate planning of on-the-job training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT DCET LIMITED:

- the enjoyable training programme
- the good, friendly, helpful tutors with site experience
- small class sizes and more personal tuition
- that their views are considered and taken into account
- the conveniently located, local training centres
- the additional qualifications to improve employability

WHAT LEARNERS THINK DCET LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the time spent at DCET's training centres - 'insufficient time - it should be day-release throughout'
- the number of off-the-job practical training sessions - 'there should be more practical sessions at the college'
- the explanation of the training programmes' structure
- the information provided about off-the-job training before they start the training programme

KEY CHALLENGES FOR DCET LIMITED:

- develop a formal approach to strategic- and operational-planning
- extend the use of management information in planning, performance analysis and quality assurance
- develop and implement a strategy for the promotion of equality of opportunity
- improve learners' progress reviews
- improve and develop the planning and co-ordination of training

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good informal communication
- good support for staff
- good awareness of equality of opportunity by learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate formal strategic and operational planning
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficient use of management data

24. DCET has good informal communication. All of its staff are located close to each other. There is a regular exchange of general information relating to the operational management of the training, which benefits the learners. Discussions take place on broader issues, for example the development of the self-assessment report and the quality assurance manual. A lot of meetings take place, but these are typically un-scheduled and they are not minuted. There is a positive culture of encouraging feedback at all levels, which extends to communication with employers, who report that DCET is good at providing regular information and is quick to respond to relating to the learners' issues. There is frequent and effective communication between employers and DCET about learners between reviews, but this is often unrecorded. Staff have a good understanding of the company's vision and mission statements. They have clearly defined job descriptions, which have been updated recently, and staff understand their role within the company.

25. DCET supports its staff well. There is a comprehensive induction programme for new staff, which includes the company's history, health and safety policies, equality of opportunity and quality assurance. New staff are issued copies of all the relevant documents, and policies. New staff are on a six-month probationary period, during which they have at least two formal meetings with their line manager. At the end of the probationary period there is a formal appraisal, after which staff appraisals take place annually. The appraisals are structured and assess the completion of previously agreed objectives, general performance and identify training needs. These appraisals are complete and up to date. Identified training is appropriate to both the needs of the company and staff, and relates to both teaching and personal development needs. There is a training budget, which is sufficient and additional funds are available at the directors' discretion. There is a good quality assurance manual which is available to staff electronically and on hard copy. This enables staff to have easy access to all the most recent versions of policies, procedures and administrative forms. The office

accommodation is being extended and rearranged, and is adequate to meet staff needs. Additional laptops have been ordered and training has been scheduled for the management of information systems. The classrooms are large, well lit and resourced adequately. A new training room will be available once the rearrangement of office space is complete.

26. DCET's approach to the provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills is satisfactory. All learners are required to complete assessments relating to these skills as part of the selection procedure. Guidance is given to those who are unsuccessful in the selection tests and these learners are then re-assessed. However, there is no analysis to indicate whether these tests predict good performance. DCET provides support adequate to those learners with additional learning needs, once the need has been identified. There are service level agreements with employers which have been revised recently. These are satisfactory, although they contain insufficient detail in some areas. Employers are given a good, comprehensive handbook at the beginning of the training programme, which contains information about the company, staff, and details relating to the provision of training.

27. The formal and strategic and operational planning is inadequate. Much of DCET's planning is informal and unrecorded. There is no consistent recording of management decisions and actions. However, the management and staff respond well and effectively to problems, which benefits the learners and contributes to their progress. A basic business plan has been written for 2003-04, but it is insufficiently detailed and objectives are difficult to measure. There is no evidence to indicate whether the objectives are realistic. There is no regular meetings schedule. Meetings often take place in response to a requirement for discussion or action. While the director has a good level of involvement with the management of the company, much of this is informal. The company's key performance targets are reviewed formally at the monthly senior management meetings of BLDC. The director is aware of this and has plans to implement a formal business-planning cycle.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

28. Learners at DCET have a good awareness of equality of opportunity and a clear understanding of its relevance to them in the workplace. Learners are knowledgeable about their rights and most of them are also aware of their responsibilities to others. Learners are well aware of the company's complaints procedure and know who to contact. All learners are given a copy of DCET's equal opportunities policy at induction and carry out a range of equality of opportunity training sessions and exercises. Equality of opportunity and learners' awareness is monitored effectively and reinforced in training centre reviews using a standard set of questions. Informal and unwritten questions are used in on-site reviews, but the responses to these are not recorded. There is currently some reinforcement of equality of opportunity in training sessions. A recent curriculum review has led to a revised training programme, which incorporates equality of opportunity sessions into the scheme of work. It is too early for this to have had an impact on the learners. Current procedures are effective in improving the learners' awareness, but they have not been effective in reinforcing equality of opportunity with

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employers. There are some displays of material in the workplace which are inappropriate to equality of opportunity.

29. DCET has an equal opportunities policy which has been reviewed recently after consultation with the local LSC. The policy satisfactorily meets the requirements of current legislation. There is no formal plan for the implementation of this policy but there are informal and well-established procedures to monitor equality of opportunity through learners' and employers' questionnaires and feedback, employer monitoring reports, and set questions to learners at training centre reviews. The training agreement briefly states the general responsibilities of employers and learners in respect of equal opportunities, but it does not make it clear how the learners should promote equality of opportunity in the workplace.

30. There is an inclusive approach to the recruitment of new learners. DCET takes into consideration the learners' additional learning needs and provides them with appropriate support to enable them to complete the training programme.

31. All staff receive basic training in equality of opportunity. Additional training is also available to staff and DCET is enthusiastic in its support for staff attendance on further short training events.

32. The promotion of equality of opportunity is insufficient. While promotional literature makes clear that DCET is an equal opportunities training provider, there is no positive action within the literature to promote equality of opportunity. DCET has recently produced a very general promotional strategy but it lacks focus, sets no specific, dated targets, and does not state clearly who is responsible for particular proposals. Data on local diversity are not used to help develop the planning of equal opportunities. Performance data are not analysed according to groups of learners. While DCET has made some attempt to increase employers' awareness of equality of opportunity, the promotion work is inadequate. Two women recently passed DCET's selection tests, but they did not gain employment and were not taken on to the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. There are no female learners at DCET. The main training centre is accessible to those with disabilities.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

33. There is a good quality assurance manual, which is available in hard copy and electronically. The computerised version enables quick access to all of DCET's policies, procedures and relevant documents, for example, the internal verification strategy, and other administrative forms. The system is interactive, which enables good staff involvement. While informal observations of off-the-job training occur, there is no formal system for the quality assurance of learning sessions or reviews. Weaknesses in the reviews are often not identified early enough. There is no formal system for the sharing of good practice and the quality assurance procedures have not been effective in raising standards. Learners' retention and achievement rates have declined slightly in recent years. There are no management action plans to resolve this. There has been a recent review of quality assurance policies and procedures and a quality assurance manager has

been appointed. The system is too recent to have had a significant impact on the learners' progression and achievement rates.

34. The self-assessment report was discussed informally and at staff meetings. Staff were closely involved in its production and fully understand the report. Feedback and comments were sought from employers in addition to the questionnaires, which were used to help develop the report. The self-assessment report did not identify a number of key strengths and weaknesses and indicated a number of strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice.

35. DCET keeps satisfactory records of the internal verification process and the procedures are well defined within the quality assurance system. Internal verification is thorough and well planned. There was a two-year gap when there was no visit by the external verifier. This is unsatisfactory, although this did not impact on the learners as the provider has direct claim status.

36. The use of management data is insufficient. DCET collects data relating to the learners' gender, ethnicity and disability, but these are not collated or analysed in such a way to support management. Learners' questionnaires are collated and represented by the use of bar charts, but there is no further systematic analysis to identify potential improvements. Specific observations from learners have resulted in changes, for example, an increase in the amount of practical training. DCET identifies trends in performance but does not take full advantage of this information system or use the information to take effective action.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	118	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- wide range of additional qualifications
- good monitoring and recording of NVQ progress
- good use of links with the employer

Weaknesses

- weak progress reviews for learners
- insufficient off-the-job practical skills training
- inadequate planning of on-the-job training

Achievement and standards

37. Retention rates are good. The retention rate of learners in 1997-98 and in 1998-99 was 100 per cent and 96 per cent respectively. Retention rates since that time have decreased but are still good. Retention rates for learners who are still in training vary between 89 per cent and 78 per cent. For example, of 28 starters in 1999-2000, six learners have left the training programme and, in 2000-01, 11 learners have left the training programme from 51 starters. Four learners have left the training programme from the 37 starters in 2001-02, and six learners have already left the training programme from the 43 starters in 2002-03. DCET records reasons for them leaving, but there is insufficient action to deal with the lower retention rates in the most recent years. The duration of this programme is four years. Five learners who were made redundant have been assisted into new employment by DCET by using its networks of employers.

38. The learners' achievement rates for years where data are available, are very good. Since 1997, achievement rates have been 100 per cent and 96 per cent. All learners work towards a wide range of relevant additional qualifications, including first-aid courses, health and safety qualifications, and vocationally specific certificates. These are above the requirements laid down in the qualification's framework.

The following table shows 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		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	43		37		51		28		25		16				
Retained*	0		0	100	2	4	12	43	24	96	16	100				
Successfully completed	0		0	100	2	4	12	43	24	96	16	100				
Still in learning	37		33	89	38	75	10	36	0	100	0	100				

*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

39. Practical work carried out by learners is good and compares well with industry standards. Background knowledge work carried out off the job to complement on-the-job training is satisfactory. During the week of the inspection there were few off-the-job training sessions available for the inspectors to observe. Of the two learning sessions observed, both were judged by inspectors to be satisfactory or above. In some cases, work is well presented. Good use is made of tutors' experience and effective use is made of examples linking practical work to background knowledge training in the classroom. Learners speak highly of the standard of personal tuition received in the training centre. Employers are also supportive of training.

40. Resources are generally satisfactory. The Exeter training centre has a range of classrooms and an information and communications technology (ICT) training centre, which are of a good standard. The training rooms in North Devon and Plymouth are furnished simply but are suitable for the purpose. There is no dedicated practical training area within the Exeter facility. Arrangements are at an advanced stage to provide a practical performance assessment area, which is to open in late September 2003. It is planned that learners who normally attend one of the remote training centres will visit the Exeter site for practical instruction. There are sufficient qualified and experienced training and support staff who match the requirements of the training programme and the range of employers. Learners benefit from the staff's previous practical site experience. Health and safety is given sufficient priority and learners work in a safe and healthy environment.

41. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme meets the needs of local employers and prospective learners. All learners have the opportunity to achieve a wide range of additional qualifications, such as inspecting and testing electrical installations, wiring regulations, the industry's measurement test, health and safety and first aid. These are all requirements of the electrical industry and DCET pays for these courses. The

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achievement of such qualifications improves the learners' employability and employers have a more flexible workforce suitable to meet the needs of the local and wider community.

42. Assessment is satisfactory. Modern apprentices receive planned visits at least every month from qualified assessors. These visits do not generate detailed action plans and do not sufficiently monitor, record or report learners' progress, but there is good recording and monitoring of learners' progress within the training centre. Records are maintained at element level to accurately record learners' progress towards the NVQ. Learners have a good understanding of the detailed assessment requirements of their training programme but they are not always sufficiently aware of their own progress. There is good use of assessment by direct observation in the workplace and good use of witness testimony, which is signed by occupationally competent witnesses and subsequently validated by the employer. Feedback at assessment events is given verbally and followed up in writing, but it is often insufficient to guide learners in how they could improve. Unit achievement is recorded within the training centre and is applied for as appropriate. Duplicate copies of records are maintained in the learners' portfolio but these are retained within the training centre and so are not readily available to the learners. Some assessment occurs too late. For example, assessment of site diaries in the first year does not take place until towards the end of the year.

43. Internal verification is thorough and well planned. Assessors are always aware of internal verification events. There are quarterly formal meetings between assessors and internal verifiers to identify and share good practice or to standardise the work of assessors. External verifiers' reports are analysed by the internal verifier, who provides a useful summary to assessors along with a copy of the report. Work-based assessors often work in isolation. There is good recording of internal verification of learners' portfolios of evidence. Some internal verification of site diaries occurs towards the end of the training programme, when site diaries are nearly completed.

44. Initial assessment consists of individual literacy, numeracy and key skills assessment. These tests identified only a few learners needing additional support with literacy and numeracy. However, inspectors found a small number of learners who do require additional help, some of whom have been waiting a long time for support. DCET does not formally test for dyslexia, but one learner who informed the company of his dyslexia has been lent a laptop computer to assist with his written work. The results of initial assessment are circulated to local employers to help them with recruitment.

45. Induction is satisfactory. Learners receive a detailed induction at DCET and additional inductions from their employers and the various main contractors on whose sites they work. Induction includes detailed information on the contents of the training programme and career prospects in the industry. All learners are employed in a range of companies, including sole traders, local public authorities and major national contractors. Almost all learners remain with their employer on completion of their training.

46. Key skills are now introduced at an early stage in the training programme. This has

not always been the case and some learners have made slow progress towards achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework. DCET recognises this in its self-assessment report and has taken action to improve the situation. Key skills provision is now satisfactory and most learners have a good awareness of key skills and their relevance to the modern apprenticeship framework.

47. Learners' progress reviews are weak. Three-way discussions between the learners' workplace supervisors and the assessor do not always take place. Targets are not stated clearly, focused, or appropriate to the individual learner, and they are often too descriptive. They are not specific enough to ensure good progress towards the qualification. Targets are not always revisited at each review and learners are not always challenged if targets are not met. Workplace supervisors are often not asked for their comments and sometimes do not sign the review form. Site reviews do not take place regularly when learners are working away from home. In one case, a learner was away for seven months and was not visited on site during this period. Equality of opportunity is not recorded in site reviews and has only recently begun to be recorded in training centre reviews. Overall, individual learning plans are satisfactory. They are a standard format and are updated regularly. There is no clear link between progress reviews and individual learning plans.

48. Practical skills training in the off-the-job training programme is insufficient. Learners attend the training centre for 21 days each year for off-the-job training. Learners speak highly of the background knowledge content and of the standard of teaching and training. However, most learners state that there is little practical training to complement or build on those skills attained in the workplace. Practical workshop resources are limited. DCET recognises this and plans additional workshop facilities, but these plans have yet to be implemented and current learners have little practical off-the-job training.

Leadership and management

49. There is inadequate planning of on-the-job training. The advanced modern apprenticeship is well planned within the training centre, but there is a little planning of on-the-job training. DCET's staff have started to produce good workbooks and practical assessments in preparation for the introduction of technical certificates from September 2004. Learners respect the substantial experience of DCET's tutors. DCET's managers have developed good working relationships with local employers over a long period of time, and these have been used to good effect to obtain alternative employment for learners who were made redundant. Learners benefit from good employment opportunities. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is good, but it is not reinforced sufficiently. Internal verification is thorough in the training centre and in the workplace. Review visits occur frequently but are not monitored effectively or quality assured. There is insufficient forward-planning, although DCET's management respond well to problems. Learners are able to experience a wide range of practical tasks in the workplace, but little formal planning and co-ordination of these tasks. In most instances, it is left to the learners to identify the tasks to be carried out and to match these to the requirements of the NVQ. Workplace supervisors and tutor/assessors are insufficiently involved in the planning of on-the-job training.