

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Focus Training (Plymouth)**

**07 August 2003**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH)

### 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**

## **Focus Training (Plymouth)**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Focus Training (FT) was established in March 1999 and is run by six partners. The organisation's head office is in Plymouth and it has learners throughout Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly. FT offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, and national vocational qualifications (NVQs), in business and management, retailing and customer services, and hospitality.

2. FT employs 15 staff, which include an operations manager, a business development manager, eight assessors, one dedicated internal verifier, three administration staff, and one telesales person. The business development manager recently left full-time employment with FT, but now works two days each week as a consultant alongside the new business development manager, who is one of the partners. The management of the organisation was reorganised in January 2003 and are responsible for major decision-making and financial matters.

3. FT funds its training provision through Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It does not subcontract any of its training, all of which takes place in the workplace. There is not enough off-the-job training. FT provides the assessment, key skills, and literacy and numeracy support for all of its learners. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Devon is 1.1 per cent, compared with 1 per cent in Cornwall and the Isle of Scilly, and 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 is 51 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively, and 47.9 per cent for England.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Business administration, management & professional**

4. There are 51 learners on various training programmes, of whom 41 are employed. Of these, 34 learners are following business administration programmes, with 11 advanced modern apprentices, 20 foundation modern apprentices, and three learners on NVQ programmes. The other 17 learners are following NVQs in management, with 16 working towards NVQs at level 3 and one working towards an NVQ at level 4. Workplaces visited included professional offices, a hotel, a leisure centre, a travel agent, insurance brokers, and various retail establishments. The length of the training programmes varies from 18 months to four years. There is no off-the-job training.

## FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH)

### **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

5. There are 126 learners on retailing and customer service training programmes. Of these, 36 are advanced modern apprentices, 86 are foundation modern apprentices, and four learners are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. All training takes place in the workplace. Assessment visits are planned to take place every two weeks. All learners are employed in a variety of businesses throughout Devon and Cornwall, including national chains and independent retailers.

### **Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**

6. There are 35 learners on hospitality training programmes. Of these, five learners are advanced modern apprentices working towards qualifications in hospitality supervision and 30 learners are foundation modern apprentices working towards qualifications in bar service, food and drink service, customer service, and quick service. All of the learners are fully employed within the hospitality industry in organisations such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, privately owned licensed premises and those managed by large national brewers. All learners are recruited directly from the industry and many have been in employment for some considerable time before starting this training programme. FT's assessors visit the learners frequently in the workplace, where most training is carried out. The exception to this is the study for the technical certificates, which form part of the modern apprenticeship.

## **ABOUT THE INSPECTION**

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	28
Number of learner interviews	53
Number of staff interviews	29
Number of employer interviews	33
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	50

## **OVERALL JUDGEMENT**

7. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, FT's leadership and management and quality assurance are unsatisfactory. Its equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactory. The quality of the work-based learning in retailing and customer service is unsatisfactory, but hospitality and business management are 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	4

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

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

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

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

8. **Business administration learners produce a high standard of work and are well motivated.** Portfolios of evidence contain good examples of learners' work and written work is of a high standard. Key skills work is also well presented and is integrated with NVQ evidence. Learners are highly motivated and keen to progress.

9. The retention rate of learners in hospitality training is satisfactory. The hospitality training programme has not been running long enough to see achievements but, of the learners recruited, 97 per cent are still in learning.

10. **Achievement rates are poor for learners in retailing and customer service.** In 2000, only 27 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 25 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework.

11. **Achievement rates are poor for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners in business administration.** In 2000, there were 11 starts on these training programmes and only three successful framework completions. Achievement rates in the same period for the advanced modern apprenticeship are satisfactory.

## Quality of education and training

12. **Short-term target-setting is good for learners in hospitality, and retailing and customer service.** Learners in both areas are set good and challenging targets by their assessor at each visit. The targets are clearly referenced to the NVQ and are checked at each visit.

13. **There is good personal and training support for learners in all areas.** Assessors make frequent visits to learners in the workplace to assess and monitor progress. Visits take place at a time to suit the learners' work patterns.

14. **Learners' portfolios of evidence in hospitality training are well developed.** There is good recording of evidence and cross-referencing between NVQ units. Many learners make good use of IT and the internet for research.

15. Assessment is satisfactory in all areas. Assessors visit learners frequently and assessment is carried out in accordance with awarding body guidelines. However, there is an inconsistent approach to the type of evidence collected in retailing and customer service. Some assessors encourage the use of case studies, while others observe the learners many times. In business administration training there is insufficient observation of learners in the workplace and an over-reliance on written work.

16. **Learners in business administration, and retailing and customer service make slow progress.** Some learners are in training for six to nine months before completing any units. Learners can work on several units for a long time, with little emphasis on completing individual units.

17. **There is inadequate attention to key skills training in retailing and customer service.** Learners do not have a clear understanding of key skills and much of their NVQ work is not cross-referenced to the key skills units.

18. **Initial assessment is ineffective in retailing and customer service.** The individual learning plans rarely show the results of the initial assessment and sometimes the learner is not informed of the results. The initial assessment rarely identifies training needs.

19. **The planning of individual learning programmes for retailing and customer service learners is poor.** Learners' individual learning needs are not identified and are not recorded on their learning plans. Some learners are receiving work-related training from their employer but most assessors are unaware of this training and it is not being linked to the NVQ. Medium and long-term target-setting for learners are poor. Learners' progress reviews do not contain demanding targets or focus sufficiently on learners' progress.



## Leadership and management

20. **FT has a clear and detailed strategic plan.** Objectives for the three-year period of the plan have been identified and focus on improving the retention and achievement rates and developing staff.

21. **FT has good external working relationships** mainly through its membership of the local providers' network. The group enables training providers to share good practice and focus on issues affecting training providers.

22. **Management of training is ineffective.** Learners complete a training needs analysis but the results are not used to plan training. Learners' experiences in the workplace are not matched to the NVQ and learners who have carried out employers' training programmes have not had the evidence used towards their NVQ or key skills because assessors are often unaware of the training programmes.

23. **There is poor involvement of employers in training.** The service level agreements between FT and employers do not specify arrangements for providing on-the-job training. Employers are not involved in the learners' progress reviews and do not know about the learners' training programmes or training requirements.

24. **FT's management of literacy and numeracy support is poor.** Several learners who have been identified as dyslexic receive support from their assessor but do not receive any additional support from trained staff. FT's initial assessment tool does not identify the learners' literacy, numeracy, and key skills needs.

25. **The promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate.** There is little reinforcement, recording, or monitoring of equality of opportunity for learners. FT does not provide formal training to promote the learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Recently, FT has issued a booklet on equality of opportunity to the learners as part of the induction process, but it is too early to see its impact. Equality of opportunity is discussed at induction and reinforced with some learners at their progress reviews.

26. **There is good staff involvement in the self-assessment process, but insufficient involvement of learners and employers.** A comprehensive development plan for 2003-06 was drawn up following self-assessment, but it is too early to judge its impact. The self-assessment report produced for the inspection was largely accurate and recognised many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspectors.

27. Internal verification is satisfactory. The lead internal verifier plans verification for each month. However, there is no long-term plan to ensure that all assessors, assessment methods and qualifications are sampled logically. The recently developed management information system will be used to plan and monitor internal verification.

28. **The quality assurance system is incomplete.** There are procedures for internal verification and observation of assessors, questionnaires are sent to learners and employers and there are monthly staff meetings where some quality assurance issues are

## FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH)

discussed. However, there is no system to monitor the quality of the training the learners receive, or to monitor induction and learners' progress reviews.

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Strengths**

- clear strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- good external working relationships
- good internal communications
- effective staff induction training on equal opportunities
- good involvement of staff in the self-assessment process

#### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective management of training
- poor involvement of employers in training
- incomplete use of data
- insufficient use of targets to improve the organisation's performance
- poor management of literacy and numeracy support for some learners
- inadequate promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient feedback from employers
- incomplete quality assurance system

### **Business administration, management & professional**

#### **Strengths**

- good standard of learners' work
- well-resourced workplaces
- very good support for the learners

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners
- insufficient observations of learning by assessors
- some slow progress in business administration
- training in the workplace is not linked to the qualification aim

## **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

### **Strengths**

- good short-term target-setting
- good support for learners

### **Weaknesses**

- poor achievement rates
- poor planning of individual learning programmes
- slow progress for some learners
- ineffective initial assessment
- inadequate attention to key skills training

## **Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**

### **Strengths**

- good short-term target-setting
- well-developed portfolios of evidence
- good pastoral and training support for learners

### **Weaknesses**

- inadequate monitoring of learners' unit achievements
- poor consideration of learners' previous experience
- insufficient management of training

## FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH)

### **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH):**

- the ability to work at their own pace
- the friendly and approachable assessors
- the flexible approach to learning and appointments to suit their needs
- the opportunities to gain qualifications while earning a wage
- that assessors make them think about their work and why they are doing it
- the nice atmosphere
- being treated as an adult
- the high level of support

### **WHAT LEARNERS THINK FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH) COULD IMPROVE:**

- feedback after completing initial assessment
- the amount of paperwork - there is too much
- the progress they make towards their qualification - it could be faster
- more frequent assessors' visits
- getting employers to countersign evidence - 'it's easier to get an appointment with the Pope'
- clarity of information regarding the training programme

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH):**

- improving retention and achievement rates
- developing a complete quality assurance system to cover all aspects of the provision
- improving the management of training
- developing employers' understanding of, and involvement in, training
- continuing to build on recent developments
- developing a plan for the promotion of equal opportunities
- developing a strategy for the identification, delivery, and support of literacy and numeracy needs

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- clear strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- good external working relationships
- good internal communications
- effective staff induction training on equal opportunities
- good involvement of staff in the self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective management of training
- poor involvement of employers in training
- incomplete use of data
- insufficient use of targets to improve the organisation's performance
- poor management of literacy and numeracy support for some learners
- inadequate promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient feedback from employers
- incomplete quality assurance system

29. FT has clear strategies for improving its retention and achievement rates. It has developed a clearly written and detailed business plan, which focuses strongly on improving the learners' retention and achievement rates. FT has identified objectives for the development of the organisation, including objectives for improving retention and achievement rates, increasing funding streams, developing staff, and improving initial assessment and induction. There are also plans for a new information technology (IT) system and database. The business plan includes a detailed marketing analysis of local needs, trends, and competition.

30. FT has good external working relationships mainly through its membership of the local training providers' network. It has been able to develop good working relationships with local competitors and the network enables the organisations to share good practice and raise issues of concern affecting training providers. The benefits to the learners of FT's membership of the group include, having access to a broad range of additional qualifications and taking part in the 'Celebrating Success' event organised by the network. Membership has enabled FT to gain access to school open days and career-planning events and, through the use of mailshots, advertise the benefits of the modern apprenticeship scheme.

31. FT's internal communications are good. There are monthly team meetings for all

staff and these are very well attended. The meetings cover many issues related to the learners' training, quality assurance, and every other month there is a training workshop session. Recent workshops have included training in basic and key skills, and self-assessment. All assessors complete and send a weekly planner to the training centre so that managers know where staff are. Staff at the training centre are easily accessible by telephone.

32. Staff appraisal and development are satisfactory. Staff appraisals are up to date but not those of the partners who manage the organisation. FT appraises staff annually, with a short-term review after six months. Staff have access to training and development and their training needs are closely matched to the requirements of the organisation. Recent staff training and development has included training for basic and key skills, and health and safety. All staff have also updated their assessors' and verifiers' awards.

33. The management of resources is satisfactory. The operations manager sets and monitors a realistic budget, which covers funding, staffing, and staff caseloads. FT carries out a full analysis of all costs, including travel, stationery, and staff development. Financial management is satisfactory. The organisation's last financial audit was in April this year. FT received unqualified reports in both of the reported categories.

34. FT's management of training is ineffective. It does not match the learners' experience to the NVQ. Learners who have carried out employers' training programmes have not had the evidence used towards their NVQ or key skills because assessors are often unaware of the training programmes. Learners complete a training needs analysis at the start of their training programme, but this is not then used to develop a training plan. FT's assessors visit learners to carry out assessment and reviews, but they do not offer the learners any training.

35. There is poor involvement of employers in training. The service level agreements between FT and employers do not specify arrangements for providing on-the-job training. Employers are not involved in the learners' progress reviews and do not know about the learners' training programmes or training requirements. Frequently, they are unaware of the assessments taking place and do not always know what is expected of the learners.

36. The use of data is incomplete. There is a management information system from which reports are produced, but the data are not used to identify trends in retention and achievement or to improve the training provision. FT has developed a new data system, which was being launched during the inspection week. The system will enable staff to thoroughly monitor the learners' progress and identify quickly when learners are falling behind in their training.

37. There is insufficient use of targets to help improve FT's programme. Targets are set for recruitment, retention, and achievement for the whole organisation, but individual staff do not have targets set. Although staff have caseloads and targets for recruitment, they are not set targets for the retention and achievement rates of their learners.

## FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH)

38. There is poor management of literacy and numeracy support for some learners. Several learners identified as dyslexic receive support from their assessor, but do not receive any additional support from trained staff. FT's initial assessment tool does not identify the learners' literacy, numeracy, and key skills needs. FT has just introduced a new electronic initial assessment, which is detailed and provides results from tests instantly. However, at the time of the inspection it had not been widely introduced.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

39. All staff receive effective training on equal opportunities at induction. They are given a comprehensive information booklet and are required to complete a workbook, which is reviewed to test their understanding. Some staff are encouraged to attend training and meetings on equal opportunities and share this information with other staff. FT provides some workshops to reinforce staff understanding and knowledge.

40. FT has a flexible approach to staff's working hours to meet employers' and learners' needs. This includes appointments at times to suit the learners' work patterns. The learners have assessors' mobile telephone numbers so that they can contact them easily.

41. FT is adequately developing staff awareness of equality of opportunity. An equal opportunities committee meets every three months and equality of opportunity is a standard agenda item on the monthly staff meeting. There are satisfactory plans to widen access to training for learners from under-represented groups. A member of staff spends one day each week initiating a range of contacts with diverse groups in the community. These links have improved networks but have not yet resulted in a higher proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups. For example, in the current intake there are three learners from minority ethnic groups.

42. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. They are confident about talking to someone about bullying or harassment, although some of them are confused about appeals and grievance procedures. Most learners are aware of a confidential hotline that is available, although little use has been made of this. All complaints are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

43. The collection of equal opportunities data on new learners is satisfactory, but this is not analysed regularly to help develop good practice. Data are also collected from questionnaires from early leavers and this is analysed each month to determine trends. There is no formal action plan created from this data.

44. Access to FT's training centre and head office for learners with mobility difficulties is satisfactory. The training area is on the ground floor and parking is available.

45. FT has an equal opportunities policy that has been updated recently. The new policy is a condensed version of the previous policy, and some important areas have been omitted.

46. The promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate. There is little reinforcement,



recording, or monitoring of equality of opportunity for learners. While there are a range of initiatives, these are at a developmental stage and have not been brought together into a strategic plan for the promotion of equality of opportunity. FT does not provide formal training to promote the learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. The equal opportunities committee has recently designed a booklet on equality of opportunity and this is given to the learners as part of the induction process, but it is too early to see any impact on them. Equality of opportunity is discussed at induction and reinforced with some, but not all, learners at their progress reviews.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 4**

47. An effective development team is responsible for the self-assessment process. Staff are fully involved in the process through attending workshops, contributing to discussions, reviewing the draft documents, and grading provision. A comprehensive development plan for 2003-06 was drawn up following self-assessment, but it is too early to judge its impact. The self-assessment report produced for the inspection was largely accurate and recognised many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspectors.

48. Internal verification is satisfactory. The lead internal verifier plans verification for each month. However, there is no long-term plan to ensure that all assessors, assessment methods, and qualifications are sampled logically. The recently developed management information system will be used to plan and monitor internal verification.

49. Feedback from employers is insufficient. Employers are not asked regularly for their views and are often not part of the learners' progress review process. Some employers receive questionnaires but very few are returned. Those that are returned are not analysed for trends regularly or used to help develop improvement plans. FT does not seek the learners' or employers' views on the training provided as part of the self-assessment process. Feedback from learners is not used to develop specific action plans to improve the training provision.

50. The quality assurance system is incomplete. There are procedures for internal verification and observation of assessors, questionnaires are sent to learners and employers and there are monthly staff meetings where some quality assurance issues are discussed. However, there is no system to monitor the quality of the training the learners receive, or to monitor induction and learners' progress reviews. There is no system for reporting on and using the management information that FT collects to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes and to plan for improvement, particularly in the retention and achievements rates.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	51	3

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- good standard of learners' work
- well-resourced workplaces
- very good support for the learners

#### Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners
- insufficient observations of learning by assessors
- some slow progress in business administration
- training in the workplace is not linked to the qualification aim

#### Achievement and standards

51. Learners' work is of a good standard. Learners are justly proud of their portfolios of evidence, which are all personalised and contain good examples of their work. They have an excellent working knowledge of the contents and are able to talk about their work with confidence. The standard of learners' written work is very good, with well-referenced personal statements and case studies. Many learners are also making good use of other product evidence and cross-reference it to their written work. In some cases, photographs and display literature have been used to good effect. The evidence is displayed neatly in well-presented portfolios. Key skills work is also very well presented and is integrated with NVQ evidence wherever possible. The records of evidence grids are updated and all learners are fully aware of their personal progress and the additional evidence they need to complete units.

52. The achievement rate is poor for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners in business administration. In 2000, there were 11 starts on the foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes, and only three successful framework completions. The maximum achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework is only 27 per cent, which is poor. In 2001 and 2002, only 27 per cent of learners achieved the framework, but a further 60 per cent are still in training. For advanced modern apprentices, achievements in 2000 are satisfactory, with most learners still in training. The management programme only began in 2002 and 17 out of the 27 learners who started are still in training, with no achievements to date. The overall rate of retention is satisfactory.

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)</b>	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2		9		5											
Retained*	0		2		3												
Successfully completed	0		0		2												
Still in learning	2		8		1												

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)</b>	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	13		17		10											
Retained*	0		9		5												
Successfully completed	0		2		3												
Still in learning	12		8		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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>NVQ Training</b>	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	23		4		1											
Retained*	0		1	25	0	0											
Successfully completed	0		1	25	0	0											
Still in learning	19		1	25	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

53. All workplaces are well resourced and working conditions are good. Employers are effective role models and learners are able to see good commercial practice in action. In addition, learners occupy responsible company positions and their employers and co-workers value them. Learners are also developing additional social, occupational, and management skills. Their duties are well matched to the requirements of the NVQ and key skills.

## FOCUS TRAINING (PLYMOUTH)

54. Learners are very well supported by FT's staff. They benefit from frequent visits by assessor that take place every two weeks, they are highly motivated and keen to progress. Learners feel valued by FT and all are aware of the company's hotline and the wide range of advice and guidance that is available. Recent personal problems experienced by learners have been dealt with sensitively. Learners are confident and have productive working relationships with assessors and employers.

55. Although internal verification is satisfactory, there is inadequate forward-planning to ensure that all units and assessors are monitored over time. Assessors are meeting the learners' literacy, language, and numeracy needs. Staff are adequately qualified to deliver NVQs and key skills but, although some have coaching qualifications, there is a shortage of staff with training qualifications. The resources provided in the workplace for learners are satisfactory. Some learners use the website regularly and, while none of them are using the laptops available from FT, they are all aware of them.

56. There are insufficient observations of learners by assessors in the workplace and their portfolios of evidence have little observation evidence in them from assessors. Examples include one learner with only one observation since October 2001, another with two observations since April 2002, and a third with no observations since November 2002. Another learner has had one observation since June 2002 and another has not had an observation since January 2003. This is particularly serious, as there is also an almost complete lack of employers' testimonies in learners' portfolios of evidence. As a result, there is an over-reliance by assessors on learners producing written work. This course of action seriously disadvantages learners who find writing case studies or personal statements challenging.

57. Some learners on business administration training programmes are progressing slowly. Twenty-eight per cent of learners are now beyond the planned end date of their programmes. While some of them have achieved their main NVQ and are waiting to complete their key skills training, there are other learners who have yet to achieve a single NVQ unit and have not started their key skills training. Other learners have made slow progress due to working on a number of units simultaneously but not finishing them, and this reduces their opportunities to gain unit certification. The internal verification process has failed to identify this slow progress. FT has in part recognised this problem and, as a result, the more recently enrolled learners are making very good progress that includes achieving individual NVQ units and integrating key skills evidence.

### **Leadership and management**

58. Although there is ongoing coaching by employers and assessors, training in the workplace is not linked to the qualification aim. The training needs analysis that is carried out with each learner at the start of the training programme is not fed into individual learning plans. While most employers are providing individual coaching for learners to help them to perform specific tasks, there is little formal company training taking place. No learners have attended any externally run courses sponsored by their employer and there are no employer training responsibilities on learning plans.

59. Not enough planning has been done to implement technical certificates for business administration, which became a mandatory requirement of the modern apprenticeship framework in January 2003. There has been no assessor training, although some is planned. At the time of the inspection, none of the learners had done any work towards gaining the technical certificate and FT had no plans for delivering the required guided learning hours.

**Retailing, customer service & transportation****Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	126	4

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

**Strengths**

- good short-term target-setting
- good support for learners

**Weaknesses**

- poor achievement rates
- poor planning of individual learning programmes
- slow progress for some learners
- ineffective initial assessment
- inadequate attention to key skills training

**Achievement and standards**

60. Learners achieve good levels of occupational skills and gain in confidence during their time in training. They are happy in their jobs and appreciate the opportunity to gain a qualification at work.

61. Achievement rates are poor across all training programmes. Learners on the customer service modern apprenticeship programmes have made slightly better progress than those on retailing programmes, but overall rates are poor. Twenty-eight per cent of advanced modern apprentices in 2000 achieved their full modern apprenticeship framework. This reduced to 5 per cent in 2001. On the foundation modern apprenticeship programme, 25 per cent achieved their full modern apprenticeship framework with 4 per cent achieving in 2001. The achievement rates for learners on an NVQ-only programme is 4 per cent. FT identified this in its self-assessment report and has identified several initiatives to help improve achievement in their development plan, but as yet they have had little impact. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on all training programmes.

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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	28		44		29											
Retained*	8		12		13												
Successfully completed	1		2		8												
Still in learning	23		11		2												

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	66		129		84											
Retained*	35		50		37												
Successfully completed	0		5		21												
Still in learning	48		37		1												

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
NVQ Training	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5		40		23											
Retained*	3		18		6	26											
Successfully completed	0		12		1	4											
Still in learning	3		1		0	0											

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

## Quality of education and training

62. Short-term target-setting is good, with each learner set challenging targets. Learners are set work to complete each time the assessor visits the workplace. These targets are then reviewed as part of the assessor's subsequent visit and assessors celebrate achievement of these targets. In most cases, the work is clearly referenced to the NVQ. Learners and employers are happy with the work set. However, only a small number of assessors are setting good short-term targets.

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63. There is good support for the learners. They enjoy a good working relationship with FT's staff. Assessors visit the workplace every fortnight to assess and plan learning. The assessor is sensitive to the needs of the learners and is supportive but not intrusive. The learners have a hotline number given to them at induction that can be used at any time for any concerns or problems. All of these calls are logged and the response is quick. Learners are transported to central points to take key skills examinations or their travel costs are reimbursed for these occasions. The assessor has a flexible approach to the workplace visits fitting in with the learners' work patterns and the demands of the business.

64. Resources within the organisation are satisfactory. FT has six laptop computers for learners without IT facilities. However, the deployment of these is not well managed. The development plan identified the need for more laptops but they have not yet been purchased. Previously set questions are available for both retailing and customer service NVQs, although some are not always relevant to the current qualifications. Some handouts are available covering generic subjects, such as health and safety. None are available to support the knowledge requirements of the occupational units. The assessors use of handouts is inconsistent.

65. Overall, assessment practices are satisfactory. However, there is an inconsistent approach to the type of evidence collected by learners. Some assessors encourage the use of case studies, while others will observe learners many times. Some portfolios of evidence have an insufficient variety of assessment methods. Assessment-planning is inconsistent, although some assessors plan assessments well. Some assessors do not relate the assessments to individual units of the NVQ or key skills.

66. The planning of individual learning programmes is poor. Learners' individual training needs are not identified and are not recorded on their individual learning plans. Some learners are receiving work-related training from their employer but most assessors are unaware of this training. It is not linked or used as evidence towards the NVQ or key skills. Evidence for learners' portfolios is not always collected. Many employers have good company training schemes that are not reviewed by FT's staff or matched to the learners' qualifications. FT relies on employers to complete on-the-job training for learners, but employers believe that FT is responsible for all training. Medium-and long-term target-setting for learners are poor. Targets for the completion of individual units of the NVQ and key skills are set but rarely take into account learners' individual circumstances. Learners are often confused about the relevance of these targets. Learning plans are not always updated to indicate the learners' progress, and achievement and target achievement dates are rarely amended when they have been passed. FT has identified that learning plans are not completed well. Demanding targets are not set at learners' progress reviews and there is insufficient focus on learners' progress. Employers are rarely involved in the reviews. This has recently been identified by FT and assessors are now encouraging employers to be more involved.

67. Some learners make slow progress towards the achievement of their qualification aim, particularly those that have been in training for some time. Learners have taken some time before any units are completed, typically six to nine months. Learners begin



collecting evidence at the beginning of their training programme that relates to several units of the NVQ but over the course of time, they forget what they have covered and do not collect sufficient evidence. There is no emphasis on completing individual units to aid motivation. Management staff informally monitor learners' progress each month but, until recently, there has been little improvement in the speed of achievement.

68. Initial assessment is ineffective. Learners complete an assessment of literacy and numeracy as part of the initial assessment which does not assess key skills. Sometimes the tests are given to the learners to complete in their own time, which reduces the validity of the results. Individual learning plans rarely reflect the results and sometimes the learners are not informed of them. Occasionally, learners have not completed the initial assessment before starting the NVQ and it may take up to four months to complete it. Support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs consists of assessors giving them more time. The initial assessment rarely identifies training needs and does not result in the planning of training.

69. There is inadequate attention to key skills training. Key skills are mentioned at induction and frameworks are clearly outlined in the NVQ pack, but often the learners do not have a clear understanding of what they involve. Records of observations do not refer to key skills. Case studies produced by the learners are not cross-referenced to the key skills until the end of the NVQ. Assessment-planning makes no reference to key skills. FT regards key skills as additional qualifications rather than as an integral part of the whole modern apprenticeship framework.

### **Leadership and management**

70. Learners have a good understanding of the internal verification process and the learners' knowledge of equal opportunities is satisfactory. They are all aware of the confidential hotline operated by FT and the procedure to appeal against assessment decisions. The learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is consistently checked at progress reviews, although learners were not encouraged to discuss specific issues.

71. The learning process is not well managed and is not quality assured. For example, inductions and progress reviews are not subject to quality assurance monitoring or evaluation. There is insufficient awareness and use of employers' training and training materials. FT does not sufficiently involve employers in the learning process. The organisation recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report.

**Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	35	3

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

**Strengths**

- good short-term target-setting
- well-developed portfolios of evidence
- good pastoral and training support for learners

**Weaknesses**

- inadequate monitoring of learners' unit achievements
- poor consideration of learners' previous experience
- insufficient management of training

**Achievement and standards**

72. FT has provided accreditation for programmes in hospitality and catering since 2002. Up to the time of the inspection no qualifications have been achieved in either NVQs or modern apprenticeship frameworks, but there has been insufficient time for learners to complete their training programmes. Of those recruited, 97 per cent have remained in training. Learners are employed in a wide range of hospitality establishments. All training is carried out in their place of work by managers or workplace supervisors. The skills that are achieved are of a good level and appropriate to the sector of the industry in which the learners are employed. One advanced modern apprentice is responsible for the management of a small kitchen in a popular food establishment and also has the responsibility for managing staff and introducing new dishes to the menu. Learners recruited to modern apprenticeship programmes in bar service also achieve positions of responsibility quickly, frequently being able to manage the bar area with little or no supervision. Key skills have not been fully introduced into the training programmes. Learners are aware that they form part of their training programme but little work has been carried out towards their achievement. It is not clear where evidence may be identified for key skills and there has been little preparation for the external testing of them.

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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	5																
Retained*	0																
Successfully completed	0																
Still in learning	5																

\*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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	31																
Retained*	0																
Successfully completed	0																
Still in learning	30																

\*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

73. Short-term target-setting is good. All training is carried out in the learners' workplace, with the exception of that relating to technical certificates. Individual learning styles are considered and assessors spend time to ensure that learners have a good understanding of the various aspects of training. At each visit, learners are set targets which they are required to achieve by the next visit. These are well defined and recorded. Assessors review learners' responses well and provide comments, which enables the learners to recognise how well they are progressing and to improve, if necessary.

74. The learners' portfolios of evidence are well developed. There is good recording of evidence and cross-referencing between NVQ units. Several portfolios illustrate good examples of the use of IT and the internet for research into aspects such as health and safety. Learners are also encouraged to access FT's website to contact other learners.

75. There is a good level of pastoral and training support for individual learners from their assessors and employers. Assessors make frequent visits to the workplace to carry out the eight-weekly reviews or to assess and monitor progress. These visits take place at times to suit the learners' work patterns. Visits are well recorded and identify actions the

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learners need to complete before the next visit. The learner retains a copy of these actions, but a copy is not given to the employer. Learners receive a good induction into their training programme, which is carried out over a period of time at their workplace. FT provides effective guidance for learners, which helps to identify the training programme that is most appropriate for them. Learners are also aware of the training programmes they can progress to in order to further develop their careers.

76. Assessors have good experience of the hospitality industry and of training and assessing. Learners have access to good industry resources in their workplace. This is particularly evident for those learners working towards qualifications in bar service. Resources and equipment used in this area are good. Learners have access to some learning materials produced by FT's staff. These are clear and well produced, although currently not well circulated among all staff.

77. Assessment of learners' work is carried out in the appropriate manner and in accordance with awarding body guidelines. Learners receive detailed feedback on their performance on completion of assessment. All learners are assessed on entry for any learning difficulties and support that they require. The training assessors support those with identified learning support needs. The initial assessment also identifies the learners' level of key skills. Some learners, where appropriate, carry out key skills training at levels higher than that required for achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework. The individual learning plans that are developed on entry to training do not fully consider the previous experience that many learners have. The identification of units and the order in which they are carried out does not take full advantage of the learners' experience to improve the rate of progress.

78. The monitoring of the learners' unit achievements is inadequate. Individual learning plans fail to identify target dates for unit achievement and some learners are unaware of what they should be aiming to achieve. The individual learning plan is not used as an effective document to support learners' achievement. Although this area of learning is relatively new to FT, some learners are making good progress. Where this is the case, assessors and learners record achievement well but this information is not routinely recorded at the organisation's head office.

### **Leadership and management**

79. Management within this area is satisfactory. FT holds quality assurance meetings each month with all staff to discuss the learners' progress and uses these meetings as sessions for staff training and development. Assessors also have individual meetings with the FT's operations manager, which they use to identify the progress learners are making towards achievement and any other issues assessors have. Communication within the organisations and between assessors is good. Quality assurance processes are satisfactory, with a planned process of internal verification of learners' and assessors' performance.

80. The management and monitoring of training in the workplace is insufficient. The training needs analysis completed to identify the training required is not fully developed

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with employers and FT does not review the quality of training systematically. Learners are aware of the NVQ appeals procedures and the role of the internal verifier in the training process. The company issues all learners with an equal opportunities policy document at induction. However, the company does not fully monitor equality of opportunity in the learners' workplaces.