

REINSPECTION REPORT

Rathbone Training Reinspection

28 May 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

RATHBONE TRAINING REINSPECTION

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rathbone Training (Rathbone) is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. It employs about 1,000 staff and is one of the largest training organisations in the country. Its 68 training centres cover most of the United Kingdom. Rathbone's mission is to provide good support and learning for people who are experiencing serious disadvantages. Rathbone holds contracts with 15 local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). The lead LSC is Cumbria. Rathbone also has contracts with five Jobcentre Plus regions, covering all of England except the Southwest. At the reinspection, Rathbone had almost 5,300 learners, of whom 2,127 were on Entry to Employment programmes and 1,107 were taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs). It had 281 modern apprentices, 305 adults in work-based learning and 318 clients on New Deal programmes. Rathbone also has learners in Scotland and Wales and 236 learners on specialist programmes for 14 to 16 year olds.

2. Rathbone is led by a senior management team, which reports to a board of trustees. The senior management team consists of a chief executive and directors of finance, operations, new development and personnel. Rathbone has seven regional offices, each with a regional manager or director. The regional managers join the senior management team to form the general management team, which is responsible for operational management. A national quality assurance manager is responsible for quality and advises the senior and general management teams on quality assurance and improvement. Each training centre has a team of training advisers led by senior training advisers who report to a training centre manager. The training centres have copies of all the company's policies and procedures, including those for quality assurance and equality of opportunity. Rathbone has a national strategy for developing its training, which has recently been updated. The company is accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, and with ISO, an international quality assurance standard.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Information & communications technology

3. Three of Rathbone's training centres offer training in information and communications technology (ICT). Since the previous inspection, the number of learners in ICT has fallen from 57 to 30. At Barrow-in-Furness, there are five foundation modern apprentices and 12 adults working towards an examination-based qualification in information technology (IT). At Milton Keynes, five young people and six adults are working towards non-work-based qualifications in IT at levels 1 and 2. Two learners at Derby are also working towards these non-work-based IT qualifications. Most of the adult learners are on full-time programmes. None of the learners are employed. Modern apprentices attend work placements for up to four days each week. Learners are recruited through Connexions and Jobcentre Plus and through Rathbone's approaches to schools and the local

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community. All applicants are interviewed and it is Rathbone's policy to accept all except those judged likely to harm themselves or others. Many learners have not attended training before and have no qualifications. A high proportion of learners have additional learning needs. In 2003-04, 83 per cent of the learners at Rathbone's training centres in Cumbria required help with literacy or numeracy.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	10
Number of learner interviews	21
Number of staff interviews	19
Number of employer interviews	5
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of visits	5

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. Rathbone's previous inspection was carried out in January 2003. Provision was good in foundation and satisfactory in construction, engineering, administration, retailing, hospitality and sports, and health and social care. However, land-based provision and ICT were unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and quality assurance were satisfactory and equality of opportunity was good. At the end of the reinspection, ICT was satisfactory. Rathbone no longer offers land-based provision.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Land-based provision	4
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 18-24	4

Construction	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	3

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

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Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3
New Deal 18-24	3

Information & communications technology	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	4
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

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

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

Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	2
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	4
New Deal 18-24	4
Programme centres	3
Workstep	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3
Work-based learning for young people	3
New Deal 18-24	3

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	20	3
Work-based learning for young people	5	3
New Deal 18-24	5	3

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

Strengths

- good support for learners
- good initial assessments and progress reviews
- effective quality assurance

Weaknesses

- some out-of-date equipment and resources
- narrow range of programmes
- weak links to industry

Achievement and standards

5. Most learners' work is satisfactory. Learners achieve proficiency in using computers and software. During off-the-job workshops they work enthusiastically and provide one another with support which complements the support given by their tutors. Learners who are on work placements receive extra training from employers and develop a variety of skills. Their activities include computer programming in hospital administration, the use of computer graphics and website design for a community newspaper, and database administration for a manufacturing company. However, most learners are not on work placements. Learners' portfolios are good. They contain detailed records of assessments and progress reviews as well as learners' accounts of their activities and performance. However, little of this material is referenced to the requirements of the NVQs.

6. Achievement rates have improved since the previous inspection. In Barrow-in-Furness, 78 per cent of adult learners achieved their target qualifications in 2003-04. In Milton Keynes, the proportion was 38 per cent, but 25 per cent are still in learning. In Barrow-in-Furness, eight learners started foundation modern apprenticeships in 2003-04. Two of these have completed the apprenticeship framework and three are still in learning. Twenty-five learners started the non-work-based IT programme offered at Milton Keynes in 2003-04. Of these, 60 per cent have achieved their qualification and

12 per cent are still in learning. Most learners start with no qualifications and many have personal and social problems that make learning difficult. A good proportion of foundation modern apprentices move on to work. Of the five foundation modern apprentices who started in 2003-04, three moved on to work. However, only 25 per cent of the adult learners at Barrow-in-Furness and Milton Keynes went into jobs.

7. Retention rates have also improved since the previous inspection, when the average rate was 24 per cent. Managers have focused on improving retention and achievement rates and have had some success. Targets are set for each training centre and managers have monthly meetings with individual training advisers to discuss the retention and achievement of their learners. Rathbone has appointed dedicated workers in some regions to support learners who have serious problems or whose attendance is poor. In other regions, this work is carried out by the training advisers. In some regions, Rathbone has obtained the funding to offer learners a cash bonus for completing each stage of their individual learning plans. In 2003-04, the retention rate for young people was 72 per cent in Milton Keynes and 62 per cent in Barrow-in-Furness. In the same year, the retention rate for adult learners was 59 per cent in Barrow-in-Furness, but only 40 per cent in Milton Keynes.

Quality of education and training

8. Learners receive good support. Rathbone's staff welcome new learners and quickly establish effective relationships that enable them to identify problems that are preventing learning. All training centres provide good literacy and numeracy support. Staff have gained or are working towards qualifications in teaching literacy and numeracy and this is improving their understanding of learners' needs. Learners who lack confidence are encouraged to succeed. One learner who failed an external examination was contacted by her tutor and persuaded to continue with the course. At the training centres there are posters with the names of learners who have recently gained employment. This encourages learners to apply for jobs. Learners with personal or social problems are treated with sensitivity. One learner was offered support when she was bereaved. Another was provided with new clothes for a job interview. Learners on work placements receive regular visits to ensure they are not isolated. Learners' progress is regularly monitored. Learners value the flexibility of being able to work at their own pace.

9. Initial assessment is thorough. Rathbone identifies additional learning needs and needs for literacy and numeracy support at induction. It also assesses new learners' computer skills. The results of this initial assessment are used well to plan learners' training. Individual learning plans are prepared within the first two weeks of training and updated throughout learners' programmes. These are thorough and enable training advisers to meet learners' individual needs. Learners' progress is reviewed frequently, particularly at the start of their programmes. Progress reviews cover all aspects of learners' programmes and are used to set clear targets with dates for achieving them. The paperwork used to record reviews is well designed and thoroughly completed.

10. Teaching is satisfactory. Learners receive a well-planned three-day induction. This

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provides an introduction to learners' programmes and covers equal opportunities, health and safety, and complaints and grievance procedures. Most learning sessions are well planned and include activities to encourage learners to interact with each other as well as the tutor. In the better sessions, tutors set activities at a level to suit individual learners and learners participate effectively. In one numeracy workshop, all the learners worked together to solve numerical problems using a suitable range of resources. However, some teaching does not take sufficient account of learners' differing needs. In one session on spreadsheets, for example, some learners did not understand the terms their tutor was using. These learners were unable to complete the exercise and lost interest in the session. Learners who are on work placements attend Rathbone's training centres for half a day each week. They update their portfolios and receive training in literacy, numeracy and key skills. However, they receive little training that relates to their activities at work.

11. At the previous inspection, Rathbone did not have sufficient contacts with local employers and could not arrange enough work placements for learners in ICT. This weakness remains and Rathbone has no effective strategy to remedy the situation. However, falling numbers of learners mean that fewer learners are now waiting for a work placement. Rathbone is replacing NVQs with qualifications that do not require work experience. The work placements that do exist are good and Rathbone has good links with work-placement providers. Employers support learners and help them to develop a suitable range of IT skills. Good assessment takes place on the job, but the co-ordination of work and off-the-job training is poor.

12. Some resources in the training centres are out of date. Although the computers work adequately, they are slow and have old software. Different machines use different operating systems. This means that work saved on one machine cannot always be accessed on another. Rathbone plans to upgrade all its systems within the next 12 months. At most training centres, all learners can use high-speed broadband internet connections. However, the training centre at Milton Keynes has no high-speed internet connection and only one machine with internet access. Some training centres do not have enough learning materials. Learners can use manuals and worksheets, but few other learning materials are available.

13. Assessments are satisfactory. Staff observe learners frequently in the workplace and gather good evidence of their competence. They give detailed and constructive feedback and complete thorough records. Employers have a satisfactory understanding of the requirements of their learners' programmes and are well informed about learners' progress. However, they are insufficiently involved in assessment. There are no qualified work-based assessors and little use is made of witness testimony. Learners on full-time programmes are assessed at the training centres. The timing of the assessments is agreed with the learners. Assessments meet the requirements of the awarding body and internal verification is well managed. Regional internal verifiers meet regularly with assessors and provide them with good support. One of the regional internal verifiers is based at the Milton Keynes training centre and internal verification at that centre is particularly effective.

14. The range of ICT programmes is narrow and does not meet the needs of all learners. The training centre at Barrow-in-Furness offers just one qualification in IT, which is unsuitable for some learners who already have experience of using computers. The training centre at Milton Keynes does not offer qualifications at level 3. Learners who wish to progress to this level are referred to other training providers.

Leadership and management

15. Rathbone has developed its quality assurance processes to place greater emphasis on the retention and achievement of learners. At Milton Keynes, managers and training advisers meet each month to review the progress of individual learners and set targets for the following month. Rathbone carries out regular audits to ensure compliance with procedures such as the procedures for reviewing learners' progress. Self-assessment has improved and is now better integrated with quality assurance. Rathbone now reviews its training in each vocational area twice each year using self-assessment forms that all staff complete. The results of these reviews guide staff appraisals and are also sent to the regional office, where they are collated in a regional self-assessment. The regional self-assessment reports provide information to staff in the training centres about good practice in other centres. They are also used to produce the national self-assessment report. Self-assessment has led to improvements. For example, it identified a weakness in learners' preparation for progress reviews at Milton Keynes. This was put right by introducing a form for learners to assess their own progress before each progress review. Rathbone now plans to introduce the form in other vocational areas. Self-assessment has also led to improvements in inductions and initial assessments. Representatives of all regions attend a national quality forum each month. This enables good practice to be shared widely. Some training centres have recently appointed outreach workers, who have rapidly increased attendance rates. Communications within Rathbone are good. Monthly meetings at each training centre enable a two-way flow of information between the head office and the regions.

16. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Rathbone recruits many learners with difficulties that have prevented learning and offers excellent support to help them succeed. Learners receive a good introduction to equality and diversity at their inductions and this is reinforced during progress reviews and learning sessions. Rathbone holds forums where learners can raise any concerns and displays its equal opportunities policies and procedures prominently in the training centres. The company collects data on learners' ethnicity and gender. However, it has taken no specific steps to target under-represented groups. For example, few of the adult learners in ICT are women. Rathbone has carried out a full review of all its training centres to monitor compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and has made alternative arrangements for learners with mobility difficulties where problems have been identified.