

INSPECTION REPORT

CMS Vocational Training Limited

06 November 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

CMS Vocational Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. CMS Vocational Training Limited (CMS) was established in 1982 to provide vocational training to young learners in Huddersfield and the surrounding area in Kirklees. The company operates from its head office in Huddersfield and from its other centre in Batley. The company is funded by the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for young people in business administration, management and professional, and also in retailing, customer service and transportation. The learners who are funded by the LSC follow foundation and modern apprenticeships or national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes. The LSC also funds work-based learning for learners in information and communications technology (ICT). However, there were not enough learners in this area for a separate inspection. Employers in the Kirklees area employ or provide work placements for most occupational learners and clients. Most training takes place on the job, and CMS provides off-the-job training. CMS also has a contract with Jobcentre Plus to provide longer occupational training (LOT) in ICT and a contract to offer short intensive basic skills (SIBS) training for unemployed adults. However, there were too few learners on SIBS training to inspect this area .

2. Four directors own CMS. Two directors who originally established the company provide strategic management and succession planning support for the two operational directors. One of the operational directors has specific responsibility for finance and quality assurance and another director is responsible for training programmes. CMS employs 28 staff across two centres in Huddersfield and Batley. There is a centre co-ordinator in the Batley office who reports directly to the director for training. Since 1992, CMS has held the Investor in People standard, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

3. In January 2003, 3.8 per cent of the population of Kirklees was unemployed, slightly higher than the national average of 3.7 per cent. Of the 6,221 unemployed people in Kirklees in January 2003, 28.5 per cent were under 25 and 27.5 per cent classed as long-term unemployed. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 14.4 per cent in Kirklees, compared with 9.1 per cent in England. In 2002, 48 per cent of 16 year olds in Kirklees gained five general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above, compared with 52 per cent in England.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

4. Twelve foundation modern apprentices and five national vocational qualification (NVQ) learners, of whom two have additional social needs, are following business administration, management and professional training programmes. Most of the learners are employed and others are in work placements. Learners are recruited from Connexions, by direct application from learners, and through employers. Off-the-job

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training for new learners recruited this year takes place on one day each week, and for learners from previous years, one day each month. There are three members of staff involved in this area of learning. CMS's staff train and assess all learners and also carry out internal verification. Learners' progress reviews and assessments are carried out every two to three weeks.

Information & communications technology

5. Thirty-five Jobcentre Plus clients are on LOT for between 26 and 52 weeks. These clients are trained in personal effectiveness and self-awareness at the training centre and then CMS arranges **appropriate** work placements for them. Clients attend the training centre for two half-days each week for information and communications technology (ICT) training and jobsearch. Clients following ICT programmes are working towards nationally recognised qualifications at levels 1 and 2 and some single certificated subjects. Clients are referred to CMS by Jobcentre Plus advisers and can start their training at any time. Prospective clients have an initial interview and those who are referred for literacy and numeracy skills training have an initial assessment to identify their needs. Clients' progress reviews are carried out at intervals of six to eight weeks, depending on the training programme.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

6. Thirty-nine learners are training in the occupational area, of whom one learner is an advanced modern apprentice, 16 are foundation modern apprentices and 22 are following NVQ programmes. Learners are following retailing programmes at levels 2 or 3, customer service programmes at levels 2 or 3, or distribution and warehousing programmes at level 2. Most learners within the occupational area are employed, and the remainder are on work placement. Employers, work-placement providers, or CMS's staff provide training in the workplace. All assessment is carried out in the workplace. Training programmes are managed and administered from one of the two company centres.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	24
Number of learner interviews	43
Number of staff interviews	30
Number of employer interviews	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the clients in ICT who are funded by Jobcentre Plus, receive satisfactory training. However, the quality of work-based learning in business administration, management and professional, and also in retailing, customer service and transportation is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management in CMS are

unsatisfactory. The company provides equality of opportunity to a satisfactory level but quality assurance is unsatisfactory.

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	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Information & communications technology	3
Contributory grades:	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	3

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

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

8. **The Jobcentre Plus clients are developing good personal and occupational skills.** They significantly increase their self-esteem and develop sound work ethics, relating to punctuality, attendance and interpersonal skills.

9. CMS routinely monitors its clients' attendance and punctuality. **Attendance rates are good at between 85 and 90 per cent.**

10. **Retailing and customer service learners' vocational and personal skills are very well developed.** All learners are offered comprehensive on-the-job training in their job roles, and some also participate in in-house employer training programmes. Learners also develop wider personal skills, such as social and communication skills.

11. The achievement and retention rates of Jobcentre Plus clients are satisfactory. Over half of the clients gain employment and most clients who leave their training programme

early enter further education or move to locations with more job opportunities.

12. Achievement rates of the modern apprenticeships frameworks for business administration learners are poor. Of the 13 advanced modern apprentices who started since 1999, six have achieved their qualifications, with one still in learning. Of the 132 foundation modern apprentices who started since 1999, 13 have achieved, with 12 still in learning. For the NVQ programme, of the 24 starts, seven have achieved, with five remaining in learning. The retention rates over this period have been poor for each year, with no significant improvements.

13. The retention and achievement rates in retailing and customer service are poor. In 2000-01, the retention rate of foundation modern apprentices was 58 per cent, which fell to 40 per cent in 2001-02. The retention and achievement rates of retailing and customer services NVQ learners are also poor, averaging a retention rate of 48 per cent and an achievement rate of 43 per cent over the past three years.

14. Progress for some retailing and customer service learners is slow. Although some learners do achieve units and NVQs on time, many have been in training for several months or more and have not yet achieved a single NVQ unit.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Information & communications technology	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	7
Total	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	8

15. Progress reviews for business administration learners are good. There is a well-planned programme of visits, which CMS communicates effectively to the learners and the employers. Sufficient time is spent with the learners reviewing their progress, after which the workplace supervisors become involved. Most learners help plan their own learning by completing an action assessment plan with details of what they have to achieve by the next visit.

16. Business administration learners are offered good arrangements for off-the-job training. These arrangements are highly effective and meet the requirements of the awarding body and provide the learners with the background knowledge to meet their learning needs and the requirements of the training.

17. Jobcentre Plus clients are offered good personal and practical support. There are clear and very effective arrangements for clients who require financial, travel and childcare support. CMS's tutors have close working relationship with the clients based on mutual respect and openness, and provide them with practical and personal support.

18. There are satisfactory arrangements for all learners who require literacy, numeracy

and language support. When learners are identified as having literacy, numeracy or language support needs, a member staff provides effective support for these learners. The learners who cannot be supported effectively during the normal training sessions are provided with additional time in workshop sessions.

19. Guidance and support for all learners are satisfactory. All learners receive satisfactory levels of support from CMS's staff. Training officers provide the learners with a lot of information and advice, and support them well.

20. **Initial assessment for business administration learners is inadequate.** The information from the assessments does not help develop their training plans. There is no occupational assessment to assess learners' aptitude for a career in business administration.

21. **Induction arrangements for employed business administration learners are poor.** The learners' induction comprises a very brief introduction to the qualification and a handout on health and safety and equal opportunities during the tutors' first visit to the employer.

22. **The business administration learners' individual learning plans are not used adequately.** The learning plans are not detailed and contain the same completion date for all learners. A significant number of the learners' individual plans are not completed or are inaccurate.

23. **The monitoring of Jobcentre Plus clients' on-the-job learning and performance is inadequate.** A significant number of the clients' learning goals are too general and non-specific. The clients' vocational needs are not taken into account sufficiently in planning or assessing learning.

24. **There is an insufficient range of training options offered to clients.** Individual learning plans routinely identify clients' aspirations to develop a wider range of ICT skills. However, the range of ICT training offered to clients is limited to ICT qualifications at levels 1 and 2 and single subjects such as word processing.

25. **Progress reviews for retailing and customer service learners are weak.** These are poorly recorded, and many do not focus on achievement of qualification units or elements. Reviewers' comments on learners' progress and action points are too often vague and general.

26. **Poor use is made of individual learning plans for retailing and customer service learners.** Plans are often poorly completed, with qualification achievement dates often the same across NVQ and key skills units. Learners have little awareness of their learning plans, their content and purpose, and many do not have a copy in their portfolios.

27. **Learning resources in retailing and customer service are poorly used.** CMS has a good range of workbook learning materials on such subjects as stock control, display and merchandising, taking payments, customer service and consumer law. However, these

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are not routinely used and provided to learners to widen their knowledge and understanding of the occupational area.

Leadership and management

28. **CMS has developed good links and partnerships with external organisations.** Links with the local LSC, and with other training providers and employers, provide suitable work-placement opportunities for its learners and help develop its business strategies.

29. **CMS has a good programme of staff development, which is linked to the company's strategic and business plan.** All staff receive a detailed annual appraisal, at which their performance and their roles are discussed.

30. **CMS has a wide range of good initiatives to widen participation of learners who traditionally do not access training.** CMS also provides classes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) for men and women in different venues, to encourage these learners to share their experience of learning and access other types of learning in an environment in which they feel safe. CMS's staff reflect the society in which CMS serves, providing good role models for some learners.

31. The provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills support at CMS is satisfactory. The literacy, numeracy and language needs of work-based learners and Jobcentre Plus clients are identified effectively. The learners who require additional support are offered effective and individual support.

32. **There have been ineffective actions to improve retention and achievement rates.** CMS has identified a range of actions to improve this weakness. However, many of these strategies have not been implemented or are ineffective.

33. **The learners' information system at CMS is incomplete.** CMS cannot effectively monitor the performance of its learners or clients or identify their relative performance.

34. **Quality assurance arrangements for training at CMS are poor.** There are policies and procedures relating to most aspects of training, but these procedures are not effective in identifying weaknesses in key aspects of training or ways to improve it. There is a wide-ranging audit system monitoring the compliance of documents and procedures against published specifications, but it is currently targeted largely at CMS's business systems.

35. **There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity for employed learners.** CMS provides equal opportunities training for all its learners, but not those who are employed.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good external links and partnerships
- well-managed staff development

Weaknesses

- ineffective actions to improve retention and achievement rates
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity for employed learners
- incomplete learners' information system
- poor quality assurance arrangements

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- good learners' progress reviews
- good off-the-job training to meet the requirements of the qualification authorities

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate initial assessment
- poor induction for employed learners

Information & communications technology

Strengths

- good job skills development for clients returning to work
- good personal support

Weaknesses

- weak monitoring of clients' performance
- insufficient range of qualifications offered to clients

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- high level of job and personal skills gained by learners

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- weak learners' progress reviews
- poor use of learning resources

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CMS VOCATIONAL TRAINING LIMITED:

- 'I like being thought of as a person, not like at school'
- 'I can use my qualifications to get a job'
- 'I can understand my job better because I'm on the NVQ'
- 'I learn and get qualifications while at work'
- the support for childcare costs and bus fares
- 'superb tutor. Really good things you didn't learn at school'
- the friendly and supportive staff - 'staff are good at sorting out problems'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CMS VOCATIONAL TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of ICT tutors
- the use of books and handouts
- the wording of NVQ qualifications
- the induction sessions
- the boring jobsearch sessions - 'We just look through the papers'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CMS VOCATIONAL TRAINING LIMITED:

- ensure the implementation of literacy, numeracy and language skills training
- promote equality of opportunity to all learners
- effectively quality assure the key training processes
- provide effective initial guidance for all learners
- carry out a more comprehensive initial assessment of the learners
- improve the achievement and retention rates of LSC learners
- use learners' data and information effectively to improve the quality of training

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good external links and partnerships
- well-managed staff development

Weaknesses

- ineffective actions to improve retention and achievement rates
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity for employed learners
- incomplete learners' information system
- poor quality assurance arrangements

36. CMS has developed good links and partnerships with the local LSC, and with other training providers, and employers, to provide suitable work-placement opportunities for its learners and to develop its business strategies. For example, there are very effective arrangements for placing learners who are recruited directly from a number of local schools, or who are unemployed, with suitable employers. CMS uses its links especially productively to place learners who need additional support, with sympathetic employers. CMS uses its close working relationships with some local schools, training providers, and colleges to produce marketing information and promotional material for the prospective learners at careers guidance events.

37. All staff receive a detailed annual appraisal, at which their performance and their roles are discussed. A good programme of staff development, which is linked to the company's strategic and business plan, supports the appraisal. Many staff attend additional courses and receive very relevant professional development to improve the level of the support to the learners. For example, some tutors in retailing and customer service have updated their knowledge by spending a number of days with a well-recognised national retailer. A number of the tutors have also attended a good and comprehensive programme to gain appropriate literacy, numeracy and language qualifications.

38. CMS has a satisfactory management structure. It has a board of four directors, which provides clear direction through shared values and strategic objectives. One director is responsible for training, and another for finance and quality assurance. Four managers, each responsible for an area of training, support the directors. There is a team of full- and part-time tutors who are responsible for training and assessment, offering literacy, numeracy and language skills support, providing work-placement opportunities and employer liaison. All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

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39. Communications within CMS are satisfactory. Staff have easy access to the company's managers and directors. Senior managers recognise that operation on two distant sites poses communication challenges and the location of full staff meetings is alternated between the two sites. There is also a strategy to provide all staff with convenient e-mail access. Formal communication is satisfactory. The minutes of board meetings are distributed to staff regularly, and there are arrangements for key staff to present reports to the board throughout the year. Meetings are generally well recorded, and staff are aware of the targets set for them. Target-setting and monitoring are satisfactory. Staff are generally aware of the strategic and operational targets set by the board for their area of responsibility, and they receive regular reports on their progress.

40. The provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills at CMS is satisfactory. CMS has a new literacy, numeracy and language skills strategy and action plan. It is detailed but the action points and timescales for implementation are not recorded formally. There is a team of five tutors for literacy, numeracy and language support. All are working towards the new recommended qualifications for tutors and support tutors. One member of the team is responsible for the co-ordination of literacy, numeracy and language skills across the company. The literacy, numeracy and language needs of work-based learners is identified effectively, using an appropriate test and observation of learners' performance during the training sessions. The learners who require additional support are offered effective and individual support. All Jobcentre Plus clients who are referred to SIBS courses are routinely assessed on entry for their level of literacy, numeracy and language skills and then systematically assessed for specific support needs. However, other CMS clients do not receive the same systematic approach as SIBS learners but, when the needs of these clients are identified they receive effective and prompt support.

41. The management of resources is satisfactory. All of the tutors have appropriate teaching qualifications, or are working towards them. Accommodation is welcoming and well maintained. Many areas used by the learners display a wide range of material, some of which is the learners' work. There has been effective investment in information technology (IT) resources for learners and staff. Recent computer upgrading has provided most learners who attend the two centres with appropriate access to computers with internet access. There is also a wide range of other learning resources available, but these are not always used effectively.

42. Actions to improve retention and achievement rates have been ineffective. CMS has recognised in its latest self-assessment report that there are poor retention and achievement rates on most of its training programmes. It has identified a range of actions to improve this weakness, such as the identification of learners at risk, better processes for the learners' induction, increased visits to work placements, and starting its main recruitment activity from July to September. However, many of these strategies have not been implemented or are ineffective.

43. The learners' information system at CMS is incomplete. Accurate information on the retention and achievement of learners was not available before October 2002. CMS cannot monitor the relative performance of its learners effectively. For example, it was

unable to provide comparative information on the retention of learners at the Huddersfield and Batley training centres. The company has made considerable progress in resolving this issue, but the development of the information system is not complete.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

44. The managing director and one of CMS's staff are jointly responsible for all aspects of the implementation and promotion of equality of opportunity. The company's equal opportunities policy has not been systematically reviewed, but the board of directors receives regular updates on equal opportunities issues and policy matters. The company has detailed procedures relating to bullying and harassment, and the learners receive clear guidelines on how to complain or express their concerns. Most learners receive specially developed equality of opportunity training and information during their induction.

45. CMS has a wide range of good initiatives to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. These initiatives include Saturday clubs for young learners who are disaffected and special projects with some local schools. CMS also provides ESOL classes for female and male adults in different venues, to encourage these learners to share their experience of learning and access other types of learning in environments in which they feel safe. CMS also offers financial support to lone parents who require child support and to the learners who require support with transport.

46. CMS has a satisfactory approach to the collection and analysis of equal opportunities data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability. This information is used to monitor the recruitment of the learners and it is also used to help develop CMS's marketing activities. However, CMS's information system cannot provide accurate information about the learners' relative performance.

47. The company is developing its strategy to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 for the recruitment of its staff. However, the company effectively monitors the ethnicity and disability of its staff and its employees reflect the society in which it serves, providing good role models for some learners.

48. There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity for employed learners. CMS provides well-developed training sessions on equal opportunities for all of its learners, but not those who are employed. It has an insufficiently clear approach with some work-placement providers and employers in explaining its expectations regarding equal opportunities. The company checks to ensure that the work-placement providers and employers have an equality of opportunity policy or are using CMS's policy and procedures. Significant numbers of employed learners receive effective equal opportunities training from their employers. However, during the learners' progress reviews, equality of opportunity is mentioned briefly but not discussed adequately. CMS is over-reliant on some of the work-placement providers and employers to implement the equal opportunities policies effectively and some learners are not aware of their rights and responsibilities at work.

49. Access to the upper floors on both sites is poor for those with restricted mobility. However, there are satisfactory arrangements to provide specialist and general accommodation at ground level when required.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

50. Quality assurance arrangements for training at CMS are poor. There are policies and procedures relating to most aspects of training, but these procedures are not audited and are not effective in identifying weaknesses in key aspects of training or ways to improve it. For example, some learners did not have their initial assessment record and CMS was not aware of this fact. In the company's most recent self-assessment report there is no evaluation of the Jobcentre Plus provision. The responsibilities of two directors for the management of quality assurance are unclear. The director responsible for management of quality assurance is only responsible for the auditing of the policies and procedures. However, the other director authorises the publication of most quality assurance documents, supervises internal verification, and manages the analysis of learners' and employers' feedback. The directors do not systematically use any performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness of these policies. There is a wide-ranging audit system for monitoring the compliance of documents and procedures against published specifications, but it is focused largely on CMS's business systems. However, new specifications have been introduced which relate more directly to training, for instance in the monitoring of teaching observations. There are no procedures to monitor the quality of on-the-job training.

51. Policies and procedures for internal verification are adequate. There is a sampling plan, which samples different qualification units and the tutors' assessment process. Tutors receive feedback, although this is not always in sufficient detail. The assessment practices of tutors assessing the learners at work is observed but not systematically. External verification reports are reviewed and reported on at board level.

52. The collection and analysis of feedback from learners and employers is satisfactory. Learners' views are sought during the training programme and at the end of training programme using postal questionnaires. All employers receive postal questionnaires each year and a sample group is followed up for interviews. The response rate to postal questionnaires is good from employers and adequate for learners. Analysis of responses is presented regularly to the board.

53. Before 2003, the company's self-assessment reports focused upon contract compliance, rather than learners' training. However, the most recent self-assessment report evaluated the training provision and all staff were involved in its production. However, not all provision was evaluated, particularly that of Jobcentre Plus. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and weaknesses found by the inspectors, but underestimated the impact of the weaknesses on its training provision. The inspection team disagreed with all of the self-assessment grades but one. CMS has produced a detailed action plan, based on its latest self-assessment report, but it is too early to determine the impact of many of the identified actions.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	17	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good learners' progress reviews
- good off-the-job training to meet the requirements of the qualification authorities

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate initial assessment
- poor induction for employed learners

Achievement and standards

54. Modern apprenticeship framework achievement rates are poor. CMS identified this weakness in its most recent self-assessment report. Of the 13 advanced modern apprentices who started since 1999, six have achieved their full framework, with one still in learning. Of the 132 foundation modern apprentices who started since 1999, 13 have achieved their full framework with 12 still in learning. For the NVQ programme, of 24 starts, seven have achieved, with five remaining in learning. The retention rates over this period have been poor for each year, with no significant improvements. There have been no advanced modern apprentices recruited since 2000-01. CMS has been slow to take action on this weakness following the writing of the self-assessment report early this year. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, with learners' portfolios containing a wide range of work-based evidence. Most learners are carrying out a wide range of business administration tasks competently.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			7		4		2									
Retained*			4	57	4	100	1	50								
Successfully completed			3	43	2	50	1	50								
Still in learning			0	0	0	0	0	0								

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		43		47		40									
Retained*	1		0	0	6	13	11	28								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	3	6	10	25								
Still in learning	1		8	19	3	6	0	0								

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		6		8		7									
Retained*	3		2	33	4	50	3	43								
Successfully completed	0		1	17	4	50	2	29								
Still in learning	3		2	33	0	0	0	0								

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

Quality of education and training

55. Most learners' progress reviews are good. There is a well-planned programme of visits for the learners, which CMS communicates effectively to the learner and the employers. Learners are visited regularly, at least monthly, and often every two or three weeks depending on the learners' needs. Sufficient time is spent with the learners reviewing their progress. Following this the workplace supervisors meet with the learners and gain a good knowledge of their progress and their NVQ targets for the next

meeting. There is an effective three-part-recording document, which records the outcomes of this process along with targets that are set for the next period. These objectives are clear and have a time limit for their completion. Most learners help plan their own learning by completing an action plan with details of which NVO units they have to achieve by the next visit. New computer software for monitoring learners' progress has been developed. This system records a score that reflects their progress through the qualification and presents a clear pictorial representation of their progress and what has still to be achieved. This new approach has excited learners and is a good motivational tool.

56. The learners are offered good arrangements for off-the-job training that meets the requirements of the awarding body. This highly effective arrangement is providing learners with the background knowledge to meet their learning needs and the requirements of the training programme. Learners who have been recruited this year and have already started on their programme are well motivated and positive about the knowledge they are gaining and the good progress they are making. The arrangements offer a good range of training opportunities. For example, training is provided on telephone techniques, different filing systems, computer applications and employment law, focusing on employment rights, health and safety and equal opportunities. Timetables for the programme have been circulated to learners and their workplace supervisors. Learners' off-the-job training has been developed to make links both to their workplace learning and to the new induction handbook and is a requirement for all new learners to complete within the first six months of starting their training programme. Key skills training is satisfactory, with progress towards achievement of key skills being emphasised in the early stages of the learners' programme. Taught sessions are offered to provide learning for those who do not have the required knowledge. One training session was observed. The session was well planned, with clear objectives, and used a range of teaching methods. The tutor established good rapport with the learners and took good account of their individual needs.

57. Learning resources are satisfactory. There are sufficient qualified and experienced staff who support the learners. Resources are up to date, and of industry standard. Learning materials have been developed or purchased and are being used in an interesting way to help keep learners motivated. Training is delivered in suitable accommodation that is clean and fresh, with sufficient space to deliver the training programmes in a safe environment. Learners are offered the opportunity of attending the training centre on one day each month for background knowledge and key skills development. Not all learners take up this opportunity.

58. There are satisfactory arrangements for learners who require support in literacy, numeracy and language skills. When learners are identified as having literacy, numeracy or language support needs, a trained member of staff provides effective support for these learners. The learners who cannot be supported effectively during the normal training sessions are provided with additional time in workshop sessions.

59. Learners receive adequate guidance and support. They comment positively on the support they receive from CMS's staff, who are available at all times to help learners with

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work and pastoral problems. Employers support workplace learning effectively and learners make adequate progress in their companies. For example, some learners are moved to different departments which better suit their needs. For learners who may have additional social needs, the staff provide extra visits to the workplace or to the training centre to support the learners in their job role. These learners receive more frequent reviews and feedback until they have made the required improvements. The staff also support employers when there are problems in the workplace, such as poor timekeeping or behaviour problems. Where learners need a new work placement, for example owing to redundancy, CMS provides support in seeking a new employer for the learner. At the end of the training programme learners are offered guidance and support on progressing to the next level in learning. A significant number of learners continue in learning with CMS.

60. Learners' initial assessments are inadequate. CMS uses the literacy, numeracy and key skills assessment to identify learners' needs. Assessments are made of learners' performance in group tasks for those who attend induction, but this process is not systematic and is insufficiently thorough. The information from these assessments does not always help to develop the learners' individual learning plans. Most learners do not see how this assessment links with their training programmes. There is no occupational assessment to assess the learners' aptitude for a career in business administration. One learner has been offered an unsuitable work placement and will have to change work placements. Employed learners are not all routinely assessed at the start of their training programmes.

61. Induction is poor for employed learners. The learners' induction comprises a very brief introduction to the qualification and a handout on health and safety and equal opportunities during the tutors' first visit to the employer. The learners are not offered an opportunity to explore their views and any concerns which they may have about their training with other learners, and develop support arrangements with their colleagues. The learners who were interviewed do not see how the induction process prepares them for learning at work. Induction for learners who start initially without a job is satisfactory. This includes the initial assessment, health and safety, equal opportunities, an introduction to the qualification frameworks and some group activities.

62. Use of the learners' individual learning plans is poor. The learners' individual learning plans are not adequately detailed and contain the same completion date for all learners. A significant number of the learners' individual learning plans are not completed, or are inaccurate, and do not support the learner in planning their progress. Targets for achievement of the NVQ optional units are not always recorded even when learners have made progress in achieving these. Learners are unclear as to how or why the individual learning plan is used. This document is not used to plan learning or progression, nor are the outcomes of the new monitoring weighting system recorded on the learners' individual learning plans.

Leadership and management

63. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are well supported by CMS's management. For example, management supported the development of the programme to meet the new requirements for achievement of technical certificates by business administration learners. When new staff are recruited, an overlap period is planned to support the new staff in supporting the learners effectively. Staff have personal development files and staff training is encouraged and funded in line with business needs. Staff value this arrangement very much. In CMS, communications are effective and the company's management is approachable and available.

64. There is a quality assurance system, with staff being issued with numbered procedures, but the policies do not have sufficient impact on the learners' quality of training. Quality assurance of training for learners in the workplace does not take place. Observations of training in the training centre take place, but infrequently. This quality assurance process does not provide staff with a clear development plan to improve the training provision. Internal verification is satisfactory and there is a plan for verification activity, which records what has taken place, and there are regular standardisation meetings to ensure verification is managed effectively across the qualifications. The self-assessment of the occupational area identified some of the strength and weaknesses identified by the inspectors, but did not sufficiently consider the impact of weaknesses on the learners' performance.

Information & communications technology

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	35	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good job skills development for clients returning to work
- good personal support

Weaknesses

- weak monitoring of clients' performance
- insufficient range of qualifications offered to clients

Achievement and standards

65. Over 70 per cent of clients referred to CMS by Jobcentre Plus are returning to employment after long periods of unemployment. These clients are developing good personal and occupational skills. They significantly increase their self-esteem and develop sound work ethics relating to punctuality, attendance and interpersonal skills. Some of these clients have been made redundant and have had one type of job for a significant number of years without updating their occupational skills. These clients are supported to develop a thorough understanding of current job opportunities, which mostly require a different range of skills to those that they have. In addition, many clients are working towards gaining a qualification in IT. Many clients speak very highly of their experiences and the development of new skills. Some employers agree clear on-the-job training plans with the clients. In one example, the client had moved from department to department within an administration support team, shadowing each member of staff and gaining valuable skills and knowledge of the job. Many clients use the experience gained in their work placement to assist in their jobsearch sessions.

66. Clients' achievement and retention rates are satisfactory. Over half of the clients gain employment and most clients who leave their training programme early enter further education or move to locations with more job opportunities. The standard of most clients' work is satisfactory and they can demonstrate their acquired practical skills in IT to a satisfactory level. CMS routinely monitors the attendance and punctuality of its clients. Attendance rates are good at between 85 and 90 per cent.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																	
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	43		114		52		16									
Retained*	5		64	56	31	60	11	69									
Planned learning completed	5		36	32	22	42	9	56									
Gained job	5		36	32	22	42	9	56									
Still in training	31		4	4	0	0	0	0									

*retained clients are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

Quality of education and training

67. CMS offers its clients good personal and practical support. There are very effective arrangements for clients who require financial, travel and childcare support. Tutors have very good and close working relationships with the clients, based on respect and openness, and they provide practical and personal support particularly to lone parents as and when appropriate. For example, some clients were supported to explore appropriate childcare arrangements and one client was supported in resolving some issues with the weekly payments. CMS has appropriately qualified staff who provide prompt and good personal counselling to clients who may require additional advice and guidance.

68. The quality of the teaching and learning sessions is satisfactory. Tutors use a wide variety of workbooks and worksheets to effectively illustrate good methods of using the different software packages. Most sessions have well-structured lesson plans, with clear aims and learning outcomes. Tutors support the needs of most of the clients, who may have diverse needs and different levels of ability. There are some specific activities within ICT lessons for clients who start with advanced skills. Activities are effectively adapted to suit clients who are new to ICT and lack confidence.

69. CMS provides satisfactory resources to support its clients. IT rooms in both of the company's training centres are of adequate size, well lit and the equipment is well maintained, with enough workstations and printers to meet the needs of all clients. All machines have internet access. However, at both training centres the IT rooms are at the top of several flights of stairs. In one of the training centres the clients are seated in two separate sections of one room, with a dividing wall that restricts the view of clients and the tutor. Staff are appropriately qualified for the levels taught. Learning support materials are adequate to meet the clients' needs.

70. The clients receive adequate literacy, numeracy and language skills support. The clients' literacy, numeracy and language skills needs are not assessed systematically. However, the tutors have a clear approach in identifying clients who require additional literacy, numeracy or language support at the early stages of their programme. The clients who are identified as requiring literacy, numeracy or language support are effectively supported by qualified staff. There are also new arrangements to assess the literacy, numeracy and language skills needs of all clients on entry to the programme. The literacy, numeracy and language skills support team has recently acquired a range of resources specifically matched to the requirements of the adult literacy, numeracy and language core curriculum standards.

71. The arrangements for the monitoring of clients' on-the-job learning and performance are weak. Clients' individual learning plan and action plan do not contain specific details. Significant numbers of the clients' learning goals are too general and non-specific. The existing vocational needs of the clients are insufficiently assessed or taken into account in planning or assessing learning. Recording of assessment and monitoring of progress is inconsistent and some is poor. Feedback to clients of their progress is not sufficiently clear and objectivity and is mainly verbal. There is no link between on- and off-the-job training. Reviews are regular, but, do not refer to the individual learning plans, learning goals and jobsearch activities. Records of job skills that are acquired in the workplace are incomplete.

72. CMS offers its clients an insufficient range of training options. Clients are offered an opportunity to discuss their expectations with CMS's employment advisers. Individual learning plans routinely identify the clients' aspirations to develop a wider range of ICT skills. However, the range of ICT training offered to clients is limited to ICT qualifications at levels 1 and 2 and single subjects such as word processing.

Leadership and management

73. There is a newly appointed programme manager and two employment advisers who supervise the Jobcentre Plus programmes. There is also one ICT tutor and a team of five literacy, numeracy and language skills support tutors. There is an open and consultative management style, which has promoted effective, often verbal, communication. Staff consider that they are well supported by managers. There is an annual appraisal system in which all staff take part. During the appraisal meetings, staff are encouraged to update their training and occupational skills. However, there is insufficient focus on some aspects of the clients' progress. Team meetings take place regularly to discuss the quality of provision. During some of these meetings there are effective discussions which are focused on the clients' experience. However, the self-assessment report did not evaluate Jobcentre Plus programmes.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	39	4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- high level of job and personal skills gained by learners

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- slow progress for some learners
- weak learners' progress reviews
- poor use of learning resources

Achievement and standards

74. Learners' job and personal skills are highly developed. All learners are offered comprehensive on-the-job training in their job roles, and some also participate in in-house employer training and development programmes. As well as acquiring relevant job skills, they also develop wider personal skills, such as social and communication skills. They adopt a more mature approach to work, and take initiative in carrying out tasks rather than being told what to do. Some learners have been given responsibility for particular areas of work, such as stock control and ordering, or training of less experienced staff. One learner has developed a set of guidance handbooks for staff in basic company retailing and administrative procedures. Most learners entering the programme on work placement quickly achieve employed status.

75. Retention and achievement rates are poor. In 2000-01, the retention rate of foundation modern apprentices was 58 per cent, which fell to 40 per cent in 2001-02. The highest achievement rate over the past three years was 26 per cent in 2000-01, with 12 per cent and 15 per cent in the years 1999-2000 and 2001-02 respectively. Forty per cent of foundation modern apprentices starting in 2002-03, and 75 per cent of those starting in 2003-04 are, however, still in learning, with the potential to achieve their qualifications. The NVQ achievement rate among foundation modern apprentices fell from 75 per cent in 1999-2000 to 37 per cent in 2001-02. The retention and achievement rates of NVQ learners are also poor, averaging a retention rate of 48 per cent and an achievement rate of 43 per cent over the past three years.

76. Some learners' progress is slow. Although some learners achieve units of NVQs on time, many have been in training for several months or more, and have not yet achieved a single NVQ unit. Some learners have been in training for similar lengths of time, and have not yet made any progress with key skills. Progress reviews and assessors' visits for

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some learners have had to be postponed on a number of occasions. Some learners have not been adequately supported to make expected progress owing to changes in their jobs or work placements. Some poor matching of learners to work-placement job roles and qualifications has meant that learners have experienced delays in achieving NVO units, and have difficulty in gaining the evidence required by qualification standards.

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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	1		2											
Retained*	0		0	0											
Successfully completed	0		0	0											
Still in learning	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

LSC funded work-based learning															
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	4		25		40		19							
Retained*	0		0	0	16	40	11	58							
Successfully completed	0		1	4	6	15	5	26							
Still in learning	3		10	40	3	8	0	0							

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

LSC funded work-based learning															
NVQ Training	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5		48		48		47							
Retained*	0		0	0	23	48	25	53							
Successfully completed	0		6	12	20	42	20	43							
Still in learning	5		17	35	0	0	0	0							

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

Quality of education and training

77. Teaching and training on retailing, customer service and transportation are satisfactory. Most training takes the form of individual coaching of learners in the workplace by their training advisers. Off-the-job training at CMS in health and safety and equality of opportunity, as part of the induction, is satisfactory, and learners remember some aspects of this training. Use of short-term targets to support learners' progress is satisfactory. Learners are given tasks to complete or achieve at each tutors' visit, for completion by the next visit. Targets are progressive, and build on the learners' achievements.

78. Support for literacy, numeracy and language skills is satisfactory. The tutors effectively identify most of the learners' additional needs during the initial assessment or during the training sessions. Any learner whose needs are identified is also timetabled for support in the specific lessons available for all learners.

79. All tutors in the occupational area are suitably qualified as assessors or internal verifiers. They also possess substantive experience in the appropriate occupational sectors, either in the retail trade, in customer service roles, or in stock control and storage operations. All have recently carried out or are planning to carry out occupational development to meet qualification assessment strategy requirements.

80. Programmes are developed for the interests of learners. All learners with an interest in working in the occupational area have a choice of joining programmes dedicated to the retailing, customer service or distribution and warehousing sectors. There is a clear link between most learners' career aspirations, their current employment or work placement, and the qualifications they choose to follow. All learners' managers identify CMS's programmes as relevant to learners' job roles, and meeting employers' needs.

81. Guidance and support of learners is satisfactory. All learners receive satisfactory levels of support from CMS's staff. Training staff provide much information and advice to learners, and support them well and take a good deal of time to explain qualification requirements. They ensure that learners have a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve their short-term targets, and meet their qualification evidence requirements. Many learners also receive a wide range of support from their employer or work-placement provider. Some, however, receive little in the way of support and encouragement.

82. Learners' progress reviews are weak. Although good use is made of short-term targets for learners, these are poorly recorded on review records, and many do not focus on achievement of qualification units or elements. Reviewers' comments on learners' progress and action points are too often vague and general. These reviews do not give a clear understanding of actual progress made toward qualification aims, or of the progress intended to be achieved by learners. Reinforcement of health and safety, appeals procedures and equal opportunities at reviews is inadequate. These topics are often dealt with at reviews by the reviewer asking one or two standard questions as to whether

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the learners have encountered any health and safety risks or accidents, and if they are being treated fairly in the workplace. Reviewers place little or no emphasis on confirming learners' awareness of these important issues. Learners' workplace supervisors or managers are not always present at, or involved in, the review process. Poor use is made of individual learning plans. They are often poorly completed, with qualification achievement dates often the same across NVO and key skills units. Learners have little awareness of their learning plans, their content and purpose, and many of them do not have a copy in their portfolios of evidence. CMS has been piloting a software package to monitor the progress of some of its learners. Some assessors take out laptop computers to record and monitor learners' achievement in the workplace. In the software, each qualification unit or element achieved is awarded a points score, based on a weighting devised by the awarding body, which is then recorded on a simple chart. This information gives a clear picture of learners' progress, and is valued by learners and employers. The system is planned to be extended to all assessors and learners in the future. However, this system has been introduced too recently to determine its impact on learners' progress.

83. Learning resources for the occupational area are poorly used. CMS has a good range of workbook learning materials on such subjects as stock control, display and merchandising, taking payments, customer service and consumer law. However, these are not routinely used and provided to learners to widen their knowledge and understanding of the occupational area and highlight good industry practice and principles. Learners confirm that they have received little in the way of learning resources from CMS.

Leadership and management

84. Training staff are supported by an open and consultative management style. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and use the yearly appraisal process effectively to update their skills. During these meetings clear objectives are set, but actions to improve the achievement and retention of learners are not systematically and adequately discussed. Most staff are also supported to be involved in different projects with other organisations and training providers to share ideas and working practices.

85. Internal verification is satisfactory. This process has been effective in identifying gaps in learners' evidence and recording. Although the company's verification strategy does not provide guidance on key regulatory requirements, the planning and recording of verification activity are meticulous and thorough. Plans and records of portfolio sampling are in place, as are records of assessor observation. However, learners' interviews are not always recorded.

86. Standardisation meetings and team meetings take place regularly to discuss the quality of provision. However, there have been inadequate actions to improve the weak aspects of the programme. The self-assessment of the occupational area identified broadly the strength and weaknesses identified by the inspectors, but did not sufficiently consider the impact of weaknesses on the learners.