

INSPECTION REPORT

eTraining

16 April 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

ETRAINING

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

eTraining

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. eTraining is a private training provider which is based in Beckenham, Kent. It was established in 1998 by its managing director. The company has contracts with London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver modern apprenticeship programmes for young people and the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs). There are six members of staff, of whom four are assessors contracted on a part-time basis. A part-time administrator supports the work of the managing director. The company currently provides modern apprenticeship training in customer service, hairdressing and business administration. It also provides customer service on the ETP programmes. At the time of the inspection, four learners were training in hairdressing, one in business administration, 13 in customer service and 27 in customer service on the ETP. Learners on the pilot had only been on the programme for a few weeks. Customer service was the only area inspected.

2. In 2002 the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above was 41.3 per cent, compared with 52 per cent nationally. On average, 77 per cent of school leavers in the area stay in full-time education or enter training, compared with 69 per cent nationally. According to the 2001 census the proportion of people in London east from minority ethnic groups is 31.7 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Retailing, customer service & transportation

3. There are 40 learners on work-based learning programmes, of whom 13 are between the ages of 16 and 25, 20 are aged between 19 and 49, and seven are aged over 50. All learners are in employment. Twenty-nine of the learners are women and seven are from minority ethnic groups. All the learners are in customer service, six are advanced modern apprentices and seven are foundation modern apprentices. Twenty-seven learners are on ETP programmes. Learners are recruited directly from employers and training is carried out in the workplace by employers. All assessors are contracted by eTraining. The learners are visited in the workplace every two weeks for assessment. The internal verification of portfolios is carried out by the company's permanent or contracted staff. At the time of the inspection, none of the learners had been identified as needing additional support for literacy, numeracy or language.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of inspectors | 3 |
| Number of inspection days | 12 |
| Number of learner interviews | 12 |
| Number of staff interviews | 10 |
| Number of employer interviews | 5 |
| Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited | 6 |

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Provision for customer services is unsatisfactory. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, but leadership and management and quality assurance are 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 |

| Retailing, customer service & transportation | | 4 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Customer services</i> | | |
| - Work-based learning for young people | 13 | 4 |

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

5. **The standard of work is good on the customer service programmes.** Portfolios show an unusually wide range of evidence. In many cases foundation modern apprentices are producing work of a much higher standard than would be expected at foundation level.

6. **Achievement and retention rates are poor,** and have declined significantly over the past four years, when there was a hundred per cent success rate. Of the 33 advanced modern apprentices who started in 2002, 27 did not complete their programme and four are still in learning. Since 2001, 18 learners of the 93 who started have achieved the national vocational qualification (NVQ) and six are still in learning. Of the 80 learners who have entered for key skills tests since November 2002, a third have passed and over a quarter have not attended.

Quality of education and training

7. eTraining has developed very imaginative work-based projects to enable learners to develop their key skills and work-based skills. Projects include equal opportunities and health and safety as well as specific work-based topics. Learners benefit considerably from these projects and develop their understanding by carrying out research into their employers' practices.
8. Links with employers are very productive. Provision is made for assessment, and employers benefit from the customer service training that the learners receive. In some instances, the benefits are significant as learners develop important communication skills.
9. The monitoring of learners' progress is unsatisfactory. The individual learning plan is not used as part of the review process and is not used to plan learners' progress. There are insufficient links between action plans and the achievement of units, and learners are not clear about their overall progress.
10. None of the learners on the ETP programme have had an initial assessment to identify their literacy, numeracy or language needs. Learners who were observed had difficulty with the language content of the programme.
11. There has been insufficient planning to meet the additional learning needs of learners on modern apprenticeship programmes.
12. eTraining has not prepared adequately for the delivery of the technical certificates for the advanced modern apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, no agreement had been reached about how this element of the programme is to be delivered, although there are proposals to use local colleges.

Leadership and management

13. Effective management action has been taken to improve the training programmes. The revised programmes involve integrated assignments which are work-based and are relevant for learners. Learners are motivated by this approach and produce good work.
14. Internal and external communications are good. There are regular staff meetings and effective links with employers.
15. Staff benefit from a good programme of staff development and a well-established appraisal system which enables them to keep occupationally updated.
16. The company was slow to identify the significance that the introduction of key skills would have on its performance. **Participation, achievement and retention rates have all declined significantly since 1999**, and are all poor. However, there are signs that the measures are beginning to take effect. There are fewer early leavers as learners are now

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on more appropriate courses.

17. The company does not have an effective strategy to identify and implement a programme of support for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs.

Recently recruited learners on the ETP programme did not have any screening for these needs. The company has very recently developed a strategy document, but it has not been implemented.

18. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities as a result of a sound induction and a useful work-based project. They have to research into aspects of their employers' policies and practices.

19. eTraining has responded appropriately to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and **has developed a specialism in dyslexia.**

20. eTraining does not promote equality of opportunity to encourage greater representation from under-represented groups. The marketing materials do not reflect the diversity of the local population, neither do they reflect eTraining's specialism in working with learners who have dyslexia. Currently none of the learners have dyslexia. There are six learners on the ETP programme from minority ethnic groups, but only one learner from a minority ethnic group on the modern apprenticeship programmes.

21. Evaluations from learners and employers are well used and acted upon. They have been used to influence the recent improvements to the programmes. Employers recognise the benefit that they are receiving from the learners' work.

22. The company has been slow to develop and implement revised quality assurance systems, following a significant increase in learner recruitment in 2000 and 2001. These systems are now complete and comprehensive, but have only been implemented for a month.

23. The quality assurance of key stages of the programme is not effective. The current monthly reporting process does not provide an accurate picture of the learners' progress. There are no effective measures for learners who do not meet unit achievement targets.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective action to improve the delivery of the training programme
- good internal and external communications
- good development and appraisal for staff
- good use of feedback from learners and employers
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by modern apprentices

Weaknesses

- late identification of the decline in company performance
- no effective strategy to meet the literacy, numeracy and language needs of learners
- ineffective quality assurance of key stages of the training programme
- slow introduction of a revised quality assurance system
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities to increase participation from under-represented groups

Retailing, customer service & transportation*Customer services**Strengths*

- particularly good work-based projects
- good range and quality of evidence by modern apprentices
- productive links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient planning to meet literacy, numeracy and language needs of learners
- late preparation for the delivery of technical certificates for advanced modern apprentices

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WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ETRAINING:

- the challenge
- the projects
- approachable assessors
- personal time with the assessor
- learning something new
- developing skills
- gaining qualifications that will lead to another job

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ETRAINING COULD IMPROVE:

- the length of time on the programme for ETP learners - it should be longer
- the questionnaires - they should be easier to understand
- the amount of help with key skills - there could be more

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ETRAINING:

- implement the revised quality assurance procedures
- improve retention and achievement rates
- meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs
- closer monitoring of learners' progress
- more effective strategies to increase participation of under-represented groups

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- effective action to improve the delivery of the training programme
- good internal and external communications
- good development and appraisal for staff
- good use of feedback from learners and employers
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by modern apprentices

Weaknesses

- late identification of the decline in company performance
- no effective strategy to meet the literacy, numeracy and language needs of learners
- ineffective quality assurance of key stages of the training programme
- slow introduction of a revised quality assurance system
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities to increase participation from under-represented groups

24. Effective management action has been taken to improve the quality of learners' training. A significant improvement is the revised training programme. The manager and assessors worked together to produce a range of projects which will make key skills an integral part of the vocational training. These projects are imaginative, related to the workplace and can be individualised for each learner. Early signs are that these are effective. Learners are remaining longer on the programme, but it is too early to have made a significant impact on outcomes.

25. Internal and external communications at eTraining are good. Staff are kept well-informed of company processes and procedures, and have been involved in major projects to redesign the training programme. The company has monthly staff meetings to discuss training and personnel matters. All meetings have an agenda, and written action points are produced and circulated to staff. Employers receive frequent communication from eTraining's managing director, in addition to fortnightly or weekly visits from assessors. Employers value the availability of staff from eTraining and feel that the managing director is easily contactable and responsive to queries. Workplace managers and supervisors have good contact with assessors and are well informed about the programmes.

26. Staff development and appraisal are good at eTraining. All members of staff, including those who work part time, have a comprehensive induction, and new assessors have had the opportunity to shadow existing members of staff to ensure early familiarisation with company procedures. All members of staff have appraisals from the

managing director every six months. Good records are kept of appraisal discussions, and staff have good opportunities to contribute to the appraisal statements. Staff training needs and development opportunities are linked effectively to the appraisal process. Clear, regularly updated records are kept of staff training and qualifications. In the 12 months before inspection the company has supported staff to take key skills practitioner courses, a range of training on disability discrimination legislation, health and safety training, dyslexia training and numerous information technology (IT) training courses. Staff value the company's support for training and professional development.

27. The company's management information systems are satisfactory. Learners' data are recorded and analysed through a system which is approved by the LSC. The company administrator has received training in the use of the data system and produces regular monthly reports on registrations and progress for the managing director.

28. Assessors are suitably qualified to assess learners' work and have sound knowledge and experience of the occupational area in which they operate. Verifiers have appropriate qualifications to carry out their activities. Two members of staff are currently taking key skills practitioner awards to continue the improvements made in the delivery and assessment of key skills. However, there has been insufficient access to qualified literacy, numeracy and language specialists. The company is currently working with local colleges to meet this need.

29. The company's induction and monitoring activities for health and safety are satisfactory. Before a training contract is given to an employer, the premises and policies are subject to a thorough health and safety check. Learners are given clear guidance on health and safety responsibilities during induction, and are given an assignment on health and safety practices during their first weeks on programme. Learners are able to recall the content of health and safety assignments and induction materials.

30. The identification of poor performance did not take place early enough. It was not until 2002 that the company started to take action to deal with its declining performance. It currently has 17 per cent of its contract profile for enrolments. There has been a decline in recruitment since 2001, from 61 modern apprentices during 2001 to 43 during 2002, and three during 2003. None of the foundation modern apprentices have completed the framework in the past three years, although the three learners who started during 2003 are still in learning. Four of the 33 advanced modern apprentices who started during 2002 are still in learning. The company has now made considerable efforts to deal with poor performance, including a thorough review of the quality assurance systems, better identification of the correct programme level for learners, improved induction arrangements and enhanced monitoring of achievements. There are signs of improvement. The level of early leavers has decreased and the average length of stay on the programme has increased significantly.

31. The company does not have an effective strategy to identify and deal with literacy, numeracy and language needs. The ETP programme is specifically designed to raise the learners' literacy and numeracy levels, but at the time of inspection no testing had taken place, and there were no measures for skills support. On the modern apprenticeship

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programmes, initial assessment of learners' communication and number skills generally takes place within the first two weeks of the programme, and is based on key skills criteria. The assessment was adjusted in the year before inspection, and now serves as a more accurate and effective mechanism to allocate learners to the correct level of programme. However, it does not effectively identify learners who have additional literacy, numeracy and language needs. Assessors offer support for the learners when weaknesses in literacy or numeracy are identified, but there is no development strategy to meet learners' needs. The support is based on helping learners as needs arise, rather than a planned programme of support. Initial assessment is not yet formally linked to action-planning for each learner, and there is no strategy to identify steps that should be taken by assessors. There is no re-testing over time to help staff identify improvements in learners' skills or to deal with continuing areas of difficulty.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

32. Modern apprentices have a good understanding of equal opportunities. Equal opportunities is included in the induction programme, and learners are given a useful checklist of organisations who could support them if the need arises. As part of their training programme they are required to work on a project which focuses on many aspects of equal opportunities in the workplace. Active engagement in the project helps learners to relate equal opportunities to their own situation and to that of their colleagues. Questions are asked about equal opportunities as part of the review procedures, although it is included within general welfare.

33. eTraining has recently responded satisfactorily to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Staff have been trained and the company has developed a positive and realistic disability statement. It has purchased software and equipment for learners who have dyslexia and knows where to acquire additional aids if they are required. The assessment of employers' premises has become more thorough. Over the past two years, three learners have had additional support for dyslexia. One has recently completed the advanced modern apprenticeship framework and has been promoted at work. Two others achieved their NVQs. A member of staff is qualified to identify dyslexia and is due to complete a dyslexia support certificate. eTraining has been persistent in securing appropriate support for a learner with dyslexia where the awarding body was not prepared to make the necessary adjustments. eTraining's premises are not accessible for wheelchair users, but it has agreed to hire appropriate premises should the need arise.

34. eTraining has very recently revised its equal opportunities policy. The policy has significantly improved and is now satisfactory. It refers appropriately to recent legislation and makes a much stronger statement about the company's determination to challenge discriminatory practices or behaviour. However, staff have not been trained in the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2001. eTraining's appeals and complaints procedures are satisfactory and are understood by learners. Accountability for equal opportunities rests clearly with the company director. Employers are routinely asked about their equal opportunities policy.

35. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities and diversity. The company's current literature makes little reference to equal opportunities, and does not use any examples or graphics that feature people from under-represented groups. It does not reflect the diversity of the local population, neither does it highlight eTraining's growing expertise in dyslexia. The director recognises this weakness and has commissioned a redesigned website to reflect its commitment to equality and diversity. The company collects statistics on race, gender and ethnicity, but makes insufficient use of the information in its formal planning. The participation of learners from minority ethnic groups in training has fluctuated. The company was successful in 2002 in recruiting a significant number of learners from minority ethnic groups, although they all left without achieving a qualification. There is currently only one learner from a minority ethnic group on the modern apprenticeship programmes, although there are six on the ETP programme. This is significantly lower than the areas in which eTraining works. The company has recognised the need for better initial assessment and improved additional support for learners who need support with language. For example, it is currently working with a Chinese employer to provide English for speakers of other languages support for a small group of Chinese learners who are due to start on the ETP programme.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

36. Learner and employer feedback are regularly collected and carefully evaluated. The company gathers feedback from learners at a number of points during their programme, at the end of their programme and also from learners who leave the programmes early. The company's managing director reviews the feedback frequently and it is also discussed at monthly staff meetings. Graphics are generated from feedback to represent learners' views. Employers' views are also gathered in regular surveys and from normal communication. Employers' feedback is used for management decision-making and has been discussed at staff meetings. It has significantly impacted on the changes to the programmes and those that are being planned.

37. eTraining's approach to self-assessment is satisfactory. Staff were involved in the compilation of the most recent self-assessment report, and in a well-recorded annual cycle of self-assessment activity that has recently been established in the company. The self-assessment report was written to the 'Common Inspection Framework', but was insufficiently analytical and self-critical. The action plan developed from the self-assessment report was more thorough and has appropriate actions highlighted.

38. The quality assurance of key stages of the training programme is not effective. There are systems to ensure that assessors provide the managing director with weekly reports on learners' meetings and monthly summaries of learners' progress. Weekly assessor comments may identify learners' poor attendance or failure to complete work, but there is no formal process to initiate follow-up action to deal with these problems. The current monthly reporting process does not accurately represent learners' progress. Assessors are set a monthly target of one unit for each learner, but there are no effective measures if learners do not meet their targets. During 2002-03, there was no management of the verification timetable and many sampling dates were delayed by up to one year. The

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revised assessment and internal verification procedures and processes are satisfactory and meet awarding body standards.

39. The company has been slow to introduce a revised quality assurance system. There were a range of quality assurance measures at the time of the company's previous inspection, but with significant increases in learner numbers, these were not adequate to deal with retention and achievement weaknesses. A comprehensive action plan to revise existing quality measures was drawn up, and is now mostly completed. However, the company has been slow to implement some elements of the plan. A new quality assurance system is now in place, with well-written documents to outline processes and procedures. The managing director signs off all actions, and staff responsibilities are clearly indicated, within a range of effectively timetabled activities. However, at the time of inspection, the system had been in place for less than a month and it was too soon to evaluate it fully.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retailing, customer service & transportation

| Retailing, customer service & transportation | | 4 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Contributory areas: | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
| <i>Customer services</i> - Work-based learning for young people | 13 | 4 |

Customer services

Strengths

- particularly good work-based projects
- good range and quality of evidence by modern apprentices
- productive links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress
- insufficient planning to meet literacy, numeracy and language needs of learners
- late preparation for the delivery of technical certificates for advanced modern apprentices

Achievement and standards

40. The standard of work produced by modern apprentices is good. The range and quality of evidence in learners' portfolios is very good. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. The evidence is well presented and is based on the workplace. Some of the foundation modern apprentices are producing evidence well above the requirements of their qualification, but do not have the job role or the level of literacy or numeracy required to achieve an award at a higher level. The provider has established a standard approach to the presentation of portfolio evidence, which is captured in a variety of ways including voice-recorded discussions, activities on video, use of the assessor's laptop computer, questionnaires and projects.

41. Achievement and retention rates are poor for modern apprentices. The provider did not anticipate the impact of the introduction of key skills testing for communication, application of number and IT. Non-attendance and the fact that learners were not passing their key skills tests reduced significantly the number of learners completing the modern apprenticeship framework. For advanced modern apprentices retention and achievement rates declined from 100 per cent of those who started in 1999, to just over 50 per cent of those who started in 2000. A large increase in numbers starting on the

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programme, together with the introduction of the key skills requirement has led to a significant further decline in performance. Twenty-seven of the 33 learners who started in 2002 did not achieve the targets on their individual learning plan, and none have completed the framework, although four learners are still in learning. eTraining has not recruited any advanced modern apprentices in the current year and has recognised the need to ensure that learners start on the most appropriate programme. Of the 14 foundation modern apprentices who have started since 2001, none have completed the framework and seven are still in learning.

42. High numbers of early leavers have impacted on all aspects of performance. Since 2001, 18 of the 93 learners who started have remained and achieved the NVO, and six are still in learning. Low take-up of key skills tests has impacted on overall performance. Of the 80 learners who have been entered for key skill tests since November 2002, a third have passed and just over a quarter have not attended.

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. | % |
| | Number of starts | 33 | | 60 | | 58 | | 16 | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 1 | | 14 | | 30 | 52 | 16 | 100 | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 2 | | 26 | 45 | 16 | 100 | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 4 | | 2 | | 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 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| | Number of starts | 3 | | 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | 0 | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | 0 | | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | 3 | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | |

*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

43. Learners work on particularly good work-based projects and this was partially identified in the self-assessment report. Learners complete an effective project to enhance their understanding of equality of opportunity. This encourages the learner to

research a variety of aspects of equality of opportunity in their workplace, including the company's recruitment policy. A similar project enhances learners' understanding of health and safety. The project is augmented by a monthly health and safety review with the assessor. Learners are encouraged to complete key skills projects that are relevant to the workplace. The projects cover communication, application of number, IT, working with others and improving own learning and performance. Employers also benefit from the projects completed. They have seen an increase in the learners' confidence and improvements to the workplace have been made as an outcome of the projects. One project dealt with the particular problem of missing price tickets on grocery shelves in a shop. The learner developed a checking control system which is being used in other departments in the store. The line manager intends to introduce the idea to another store. eTraining has developed a new challenge-based approach to motivate learners to complete the frameworks. Learners have to complete 10 challenges which cover all aspects of their programme. One learner who is trialing this approach, has completed two challenges since January 2004 and has given positive feedback.

44. eTraining has established productive links with employers. Most employers provide assessors with desk space and a room for assessment activities with learners. Assessors have a good rapport with employers and line managers and some employers see the assessor as a key part of their team. Feedback from employers about the provider is very positive. Employers recognise the benefits of the learners' work. Employers do not regularly attend the progress reviews but they usually see the review record after the meeting.

45. Resources are satisfactory. Assessors are vocationally competent, but do not have the experience or qualifications to offer support with literacy and numeracy. The provider's premises are only used for learners to take their key skills tests. The premises are not accessible to learners with restricted mobility but the company has made arrangements locally to hire a room which meets accessibility requirements. A variety of resources are available to support learners and assessors, including voice recorders, video and digital cameras, laptop computers, handouts and support materials and key skills resource packs. Some of the materials contain language that is too difficult for learners on the ETP programmes to understand, and some materials contain spelling and grammatical errors. Some learners do not have access to the internet.

46. Assessment and verification processes are now satisfactory. The company has introduced new internal verification systems which are well structured and meet the requirements of the awarding body. Portfolios are sampled across the range of units, and observation of assessment takes place. Assessors are given good constructive feedback. Sampling plans have been in place since August 2003, but the company has not sampled portfolios systematically. Internal verification of learners' portfolios has been up to 18 months after the planned date.

47. The monitoring of learners' progress is ineffective, but this was not identified in the self-assessment report. The individual learning plan is not used for the review and is not used to plan the learners' progress. There are few long-term targets and targets set at review are not specific enough to encourage learners through their programme. Training

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and assessment plans include specific actions for learners, but these are not linked to NVQ units, and they are not always timed. Learners are not clear about their overall progress. Milestones are not established. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are sometimes identified on the learning plan but progress against the plan is not measured. Two of the foundation modern apprentices and one advanced modern apprentice are beyond the expected completion date of their programmes and have only two of the NVQ units signed off. There is substantial evidence in each portfolio which has been assessed, but small amounts of evidence are still needed to complete the outstanding units. Two of these learners have completed the key skills tests, but the other one still has to retake two exams, and has not yet completed key skill portfolio work.

48. There is insufficient planning to meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs on ETP programmes. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. Learners on ETP programmes have not had an initial assessment and their literacy, numeracy and language needs have not been identified. The company has not established ways to meet their needs. On modern apprenticeship programmes, eTraining uses communication and application of number tests at level 1 for initial assessment. A chart is then used to identify the level of framework learners will take. None of the learners were identified from the key skills test as needing additional help. However, needs have subsequently become apparent and assessors do not have a structured programme of support available. Assessors sometimes use learners' evidence to identify areas for improvement, but this is not consistent. The key skills resource pack is not well used.

Leadership and management

49. The company has regular meeting with the assessors. The assessors work from home and there are good communication links. However, the preparation for the delivery of technical certificates for advanced modern apprentices is yet to be completed. The company anticipates outsourcing this delivery to a local college of further education, but this has not yet been agreed. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently thorough and underestimates the significance of the weaknesses identified. The emphasis on equality of opportunity as part of the training programme has been very successful.