

INSPECTION REPORT

Western Power Distribution plc

15 July 2004



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

Western Power Distribution plc

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Western Power Training (WPT) is the technical training department of Western Power Distribution (WPD), a regional company owned by Pennsylvania Power and Light Global. WPD employs 2,600 staff in the distribution and delivery of electricity to over 2.4 million customers in southwest England and south and west Wales. The company's head office is in Bristol with operational sites throughout the Southwest and south Wales. WPT contracts with the Devon and Cornwall and the Somerset Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) to train WPD's learners from these areas. In addition, WPD has contracts with the Devon and Cornwall, the Somerset, and the Wiltshire and Swindon LSCs to train eight learners from a large local electrical contractor.

2. Most of the practical off-the-job training is provided at WPT's main training centre in Taunton, with some specialist facilities for electrical fitting training at Cwmbran in south Wales. The training centre at Taunton provides extensive facilities for training in health and safety, technical, engineering skills and skills specific to the electrical industry. Through open learning facilities the company offers additional qualifications that are validated by a college of further education located in the northwest of England.

3. The Southwest has an unemployment rate of 1.4 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.3 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups is 2.3 per cent in the Southwest, which is well below the national average of 8.7 per cent. In 2001-02, the proportion of school leavers in the Southwest achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 52.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 52.9 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Construction

4. WPT is a specialist provider of work-based modern apprenticeships for young people based at Taunton in Somerset. At the time of the inspection, there are 51 learners on the electrical distribution and transmission advanced modern apprenticeship and eight learners on the electrical installation advanced modern apprenticeship, which is coming to an end in 2004. In addition, all learners are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 3. All of the learners are employed. WPT provides off-the-job training at its Taunton and Cwmbran training centres. A subcontracted college of further education in the northwest of England offers technical certificates through open learning programmes. The subcontractor provides 10 structured, specialist workshops over a period of two years. The advanced modern apprenticeship lasts for 42 months. WPT delivers key skills training and assessment internally, with a team of two staff, and provides on-the-job training together with the electrical contracting company. Formal progress reviews take place every eight weeks. There are 26 members of staff employed in the training schemes. At the time of the inspection there are no female learners and one

learner from a minority ethnic group.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	21
Number of learner interviews	53
Number of staff interviews	19
Number of employer interviews	28
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	16

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. WPT's leadership and management are satisfactory, as is its approach to quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The quality of training in construction is good.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		3

Construction		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		
- Work-based learning for young people	59	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Learners develop good skills.** They work to industry standards on a variety of commercial projects during their on-the-job training. The standard of learners' practical work during the on-the-job training is high and meets the demanding requirements of the industry. Learners are able to direct and control much of the work they carry out and develop supervisory and planning skills.

7. **Retention rates are potentially very good.** The retention rate for learners starting in 1999-2000 is 88 per cent. **Pass rates for key skills and the academic qualifications of the framework are outstanding.** Over the period 2000-04, only one learner has failed to pass the academic qualification supporting the modern apprenticeship framework.

Quality of education and training

8. **The company's on-the-job training is good.** Learners are members of small regional depot teams that include a team leader, mentor and assessor. Regular communication contributes towards a successful and effective training environment. Learners are well supervised and supported in the workplace by experienced and qualified craftspeople. The opportunity of a wide range of work and encouragement to develop vocational and personal skills produces learners who complete tasks to a high standard.

9. **WPT promotes and provides the highest possible standards of health and safety for the learners' working practice.** WPD carries out thorough risk assessments on all workplace sites where learners are placed. Learners receive extensive and detailed health and safety training at induction that is reinforced throughout their advanced modern apprentices. WPT provides each learner with a comprehensive range of personal protective equipment.

10. **WPT provides excellent resources to promote learning.** The training centre facilities include those in which learners develop practical knowledge and skills in a real-life working environment. The company provides each of them with appropriate tools, test equipment and materials and replaces them when necessary. Good-quality classrooms in the Taunton training centre provide a good learning environment for background knowledge sessions.

11. **Resources for on-the-job training are also excellent and learners receive good equipment for their work tasks.** Teaching staff at the training centre are well qualified and have up-to-date industry experience. All staff receive training to teach and most are well qualified. All of WPD's staff who work with the learners are qualified to craftsperson level or higher and the company carefully selects workplace supervisors for their good-quality workmanship and support skills.

12. **Learners have good access to work-based assessment.** Flexible teamworking and the responsiveness of work-based assessors, often carrying out assessment at short notice, ensures that most learners get good opportunities for assessment.

13. **Learners participate in a wide range of enrichment activities and achieve additional qualifications beyond the scope of the advanced modern apprenticeship framework.**

Learners develop good teamwork skills from attending a well-planned outdoor leadership and adventure training course at the start of their course. Additional courses include first aid, safety signs, manual-handling techniques and how to tow trailers. Learners can progress on to national certificates and diplomas in electrical engineering. Many learners take part in social and sporting activities, including rugby and skittles.

14. **Support for the learners is good.** Operational managers and training staff give them good technical and personal support. Each learner is assigned a workplace mentor who they meet regularly to discuss progress and to receive advice and guidance on all aspects of their course. All learners have access to a free and confidential counselling service. Learners receive free travel, accommodation and meals while they are attending the Taunton training centre for off-the-job training.

15. Off-the-job teaching and learning are satisfactory. The quality of formal planning for practical courses is inconsistent and the quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to good. Learners achieve very high pass rates. Teaching resources are well used and learners benefit from the realistic training environment. Vocational training for most learners is consolidated in the workplace but WPT does not formally review whether this consolidation has taken place.

16. The assessment and monitoring of learners' work is satisfactory. NVQ assessment for the earlier years of the modern apprenticeship is well planned, but opportunities are not as frequent during the final two years when some learners, including those completing NVQ knowledge questions, make slow progress. The assessment process is thorough and meets awarding body standards.

17. **WPT has no formal arrangements for the provision of literacy, numeracy and language support.** Such support for the learners is not normally required, as most of them have good literacy and numeracy skills. When learners are identified with additional needs, for example those with dyslexia, WPT supports them effectively and makes additional resources available to them for extra tuition or, if necessary, extra time at examinations.

18. **Learners' reviews in the workplace are weak.** The quality of the learners' reviews, specifically the recording of them, is inconsistent. Targets set in reviews are not specific and do not refer sufficiently to all aspects of the advanced modern apprenticeship, particularly in its later stages.

Leadership and management

19. Off-the-job planning for training, including the timely provision of resources, is good.

Staff meetings are held every month to discuss the learners' progress. WPT has developed appropriate management information systems to monitor key aspects of the programme.

20. WPT invests significant resources to provide good support for learners on the modern apprenticeship programme. Many employees are former modern apprentices and they are very supportive of the learners. Training and depot staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and they are committed and well motivated. Effective teamwork contributes significantly to the success of on-the-job training and assessment.

21. Management processes are insufficiently formal to ensure consistency of practice and continuous improvement. Much communication and decision-making is informal. Internal communications between WPD's and WPT's staff is good but they are mainly informal.

22. WPT promotes fair treatment strongly throughout the company. The philosophy of fair treatment in the workplace extends to customer service and is well promoted to staff and learners. The selection process of modern apprentices is well structured, comprehensive and includes an assessment of their potential ability to complete on-the-job tasks.

23. The equal opportunities policy is satisfactory and the company reviews it regularly.

24. The company provides satisfactory access at the Taunton site for people using wheelchairs, and suitable toilet facilities are available. Learners working towards the advanced modern apprenticeship need to be physically capable of carrying out the tasks required. WPT provides a satisfactory level of support to learners with specific needs when they are identified.

25. The development and promotion of equal opportunities are insufficient. Learners and staff have insufficient training to fully understand the concept of equality of opportunity. Reinforcement during reviews is minimal. Learners have a limited understanding of equality of opportunity. Learners are well treated on the advanced modern apprenticeships and understand the procedures for reporting harassment.

26. WPT has no formal strategy for the promotion of the advanced modern apprenticeship to under-represented groups. There are no females learners. The company collects data on the numbers of applicants from different groups but does not fully analyse it or set targets for the recruitment of women or other under-represented groups to the modern apprenticeship scheme. WPT recognises the need to widen participation and is considering a range of actions, including a review of its publicity literature.

27. Quality assurance policies and practices are comprehensive. The company updates

them and makes them easily available electronically to all employees, including modern apprentices. Many of the quality assurance checks are informal. WPT takes prompt action to secure improvements where the need is identified. Informal communication between managers often leads to actions to create improvements.

28. Internal verification is satisfactory. Each assessor has two assessments of practice each year, including one on-site assessment and one portfolio assessment. WPT provides assessors with a good level of feedback to improve practice and checks the completion of required actions.

29. The internal verifiers hold regular meetings. WPT identifies the training needs of assessors and programmes them into the annual assessors' workshops. The NVQ co-ordinators monitors the work of internal verifiers satisfactorily through a useful and regularly updated computerised record of when internal verification has been carried out.

30. **The company closely monitors the quality of off-the-job training.** Managers make regular visits to the teaching sessions and they, or an outside contractor, carry out formal observations. WPT provides a good range of useful feedback to enable improvements, and managers discuss it with the tutors. Most of the learners report a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the training.

31. **WPT's managers monitor the learners' progress well through the use of data on the company's intranet.** The progress of learners is a key performance indicator for distribution managers, who discuss this management information with their managers each month.

32. WPT does not carry out benchmarking against other training providers. It does not consider this cost effective, as there are few similar providers with a similar number of modern apprentices.

33. The company monitors the quality of subcontracted training provision satisfactorily through analysis of the learners' feedback, which it discusses at an annual meeting. Feedback from learners is generally satisfactory to good.

34. Staff and learners are insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. Managers, assessors and mentors receive an electronic questionnaire seeking their views on the training but the percentage of questionnaires returned was low. WPT's self-assessment report is insufficiently critical in its analysis. Inspectors identified some of the strengths and weaknesses in the report but also identified others.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good investment of company resources in the modern apprenticeship
- good development of appropriate management information systems

- strong promotion of fair treatment throughout the company
- comprehensive policies and practices to assure quality of training

Weaknesses

- insufficiently formal management processes
- insufficient development and promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient staff involvement in the self-assessment process

Construction

Construction crafts

Strengths

- good development of the learners' skills
- outstanding pass rates for key skills and academic qualifications
- good on-the-job training
- excellent training resources
- good access to work-based assessment
- wide range of activities and additional qualifications
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak quality of most learners' reviews in the workplace
- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION PLC:

- working outdoors
- 'working at your own speed'
- working in teams - 'the people I work with'
- the variety of jobs
- the climbing
- 'lots of support from everybody'
- good training and learning good skills
- block-release training
- good outdoor leadership course at the start of training
- free accommodation, free food and travel expenses
- the job - 'I love it'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION PLC COULD IMPROVE:

- clearer questions for NVQ knowledge
- the provision of laptop computers to help with portfolio-building

KEY CHALLENGES FOR WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION PLC:

- maintain current good practice within the modern apprenticeship
- improve consistency and effectiveness of learners' progress reviews
- further develop formal management processes
- develop staff and learners' understanding of equality of opportunity
- widen participation of under-represented groups in the modern apprenticeship
- develop staff and learners' involvement in the self-assessment process as part of a self-critical approach
- further improve quality of teaching and learning
- improve the analysis of data to help develop decision-making and action-planning

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good investment of company resources in the modern apprenticeship
- good development of appropriate management information systems
- strong promotion of fair treatment throughout the company
- comprehensive policies and practices to assure quality of training

Weaknesses

- insufficiently formal management processes
- insufficient development and promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient staff involvement in the self-assessment process

35. The company devotes a significant proportion of its resources to the modern apprenticeship programme. The company is particularly dedicated to training modern apprentices to develop the skills needed to carry out future job roles with WPD. The company has traditionally used apprenticeships to recruit and train young people for future employment. In addition to government funding, the company invests significant resources in the modern apprenticeship. Many of the staff in the company started as learners, gained promotion and are now line managers, mentors and assessors. They are supportive of the learners and appreciate the challenges that they may face as newcomers in the industry. WPD integrates the modern apprentices well with the work teams and values their contribution. During the latter part of their training the company encourages them to apply for permanent posts in the company and many of them achieve designated craftsman status during their modern apprenticeship.

36. Over the past two years, WPT has made significant progress in developing management information systems to monitor key aspects of the modern apprenticeship programme. Staff throughout the company use an effective online progress-monitoring programme to monitor individual learners' progress. The programme is easily accessible to all parties concerned with the training programme, including the learners. In addition, learners' progress has been effectively included as a key performance indicator for WPD's distribution managers, and the programme provides a monthly report to these managers, who have overall responsibility for the learners. They are then accountable for following up individual learners who are not making the progress expected. WPT has also made good progress in developing other management information, such as information on assessment outcomes, internal verification activities, and individual profiles of learners' training and achievements.

37. The off-the-job training programme is extensive and satisfactorily managed. The learners start with a 15-week initial block of training and further blocks of training occur

throughout the programme. This training takes place at the company's training centre in Taunton. WPT arranges satisfactory accommodation for the learners during these periods, and pays their transport costs. The facilities at the training centre are excellent, well managed, and have industry standard resources.

38. The off-the-job training programme is well-planned and resourced. The co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is less well developed. WPT does not have arrangements to formally monitor the effectiveness of the on-the-job training or of learners' progress reviews. The responsibility for managing the on-the-job training is devolved to the managers with whom the learners are placed. However, WPT responds well to problems that arise and is proactive in resolving them. For example, the company took corrective action when it discovered that on-the-job training had not provided sufficiently varied work experience to enable a learner to progress with their NVQ.

39. Staff appraisal and development processes are satisfactory. Line managers carry out the company's performance reviews. Currently, annual performance reviews are not based on individual performance indicators or targets related to improving the effectiveness of the provision. For example, although observations of training are carried out twice a year, the outcomes are not specifically linked to the performance review process. Individual training and development is agreed throughout the year. This ensures that most individuals receive significant training to update their vocational skills. WPT encourages all of its tutors to gain appropriate teaching qualifications at NVQ levels 3 or 4.

40. WPT does not have a strategy for the provision of literacy, numeracy and language skills. However, it recruits learners after a thorough selection process and they generally have GCSEs at grade C or above in English and mathematics before they join the scheme. Learners successfully achieve key skills qualifications at level 2 within the first two years of the training programme. WPT does not have any staff with specialist literacy, numeracy or language qualifications or experience. However, where the company identifies individual learners as requiring additional support, it makes appropriate arrangements.

41. The company's management processes are insufficiently formal to ensure consistency. However, WPT has a genuine commitment to the continuous improvement of its provision. Decision-making is generally informal and unrecorded. Communication about the provision is also largely informal. A newsletter for assessors and mentors is circulated through the company's intranet but this is only produced approximately once each year. The company holds few formal meetings and, where meetings do take place, they are often not minuted. For example, there are few assessor meetings and where action points are recorded, deadlines are not set and action points are not systematically followed up at subsequent meetings. There is no procedure for ensuring that staff who are unable to attend are informed of issues raised or decisions made.

42. The use of data as a management tool is not fully developed or formalised. For example, WPT uses its progress-monitoring programme to follow up concerns about individual learners each month, but does not use the data to identify or analyse trends or

to carry out analysis of progress by the different groups of advanced modern apprentices. The company does not use data systematically to support management decisions, analyse whether training provision is improving or create action plans. The process of action-planning is not well established. For example, although the self-assessment process results in a development plan, WPT does not monitor and review progress in implementing the plan. Monitoring to help to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of actions taken is not fully implemented. For example, the company keeps records of mentors' attendance at the workshops but does not analyse them to identify individual patterns of attendance over the years. WPT does not collect feedback to determine the effectiveness of the workshops in sharing and extending good practice. Overall, the style of management is reactive and, while there is commitment to continuous improvement, practice is inconsistent and monitoring does not deal with problems systematically.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

43. WPT strongly promotes fair treatment to its staff, learners and customers. The company has a code of ethics and aims to deal fairly with all of its employees, including the modern apprentices, and encourages them to treat others as they would wish to be treated. The selection process is comprehensive and planned to be fair. It is well structured and includes an assessment of learners' ability to complete on-the-job tasks. Managers have access to guidance on how to implement fair selection procedures and are keen to ensure that the selection process is fair and thorough. Learners receive a comprehensive pack that contains a copy of the code of ethics, the code of conduct on fair competition, and policies on harassment, complaints, business style and positive discipline. The company asks modern apprentices if they feel they are treated fairly, at the eight-weekly reviews and again by the internal verifiers when carrying out direct observations. Jobs available to the modern apprentices at the end of training are filled through open competition. WPT treats permanent staff and its learners equally. For example, learners have access to a range of support, including a 24-hour confidential advice line, a designated mentor, and free travel, accommodation and meals while attending training at Taunton. To date there have been no appeals or complaints.

44. The equal opportunities policy is satisfactory and the company reviews it regularly. Although it states an intention to comply with the relevant Acts of Parliament, it does not identify the specific legislation. The resources and external affairs director has overall responsibility for the equal opportunities policy, and the safety and training manager has operational responsibility for the implementation of the policy in relation to the modern apprentices. WPT gives a copy of the equal opportunities policy, together with other related policies, to modern apprentices and staff at induction and discusses the policies briefly. Some of the modern apprentices do not remember this part of their induction process and have limited understanding of equality of opportunity, but all of them know who to complain to if they are not treated fairly.

45. The company provides satisfactory access at the Taunton site for people using wheelchairs, and suitable toilet facilities are available. Learners working towards the advanced modern apprenticeship need to be physically capable of carrying out the tasks

required. WPT provides a satisfactory level of support to learners with specific needs when they are identified. For example, the company has given a dyslexic learner extra time at the selection stage and more individual support during the modern apprenticeship. The initial assessment as part of the selection process does not always identify the learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs.

46. The development and promotion of equal opportunities are insufficient. Learners have insufficient training to fully understand the concept of equality of opportunity. Some staff have received training but this was several years ago. All staff and modern apprentices receive a briefing on standards of conduct and integrity, together with a booklet, from WPT's parent company. Staff understanding of equality of opportunity is not at a sufficiently high level to be able to promote the understanding of this to the learners. For example, although learners are asked at reviews if they are treated fairly, there is little discussion of equal opportunities issues to check understanding.

47. WPT has no female learners working towards the advanced modern apprenticeships. The company's publicity material contains few images of women or people from minority ethnic groups. It has no strategy to promote the advanced modern apprenticeship to these under-represented groups. Out of approximately 1,800 applicants during the last recruitment, there were 38 women but none of them attended the selection process. The company is researching the reasons for this. WPT collects data on the numbers of applicants for different groups but it does not fully analyse this information or set targets for the recruitment of women or other under-represented groups to the modern apprenticeship. WPT recognises the need to widen participation and is considering a range of actions, including reviewing publicity literature, but some plans are not specific enough to be measurable.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

48. WPT's quality assurance policies and practices are comprehensive. It updates them regularly and makes them easily available to all employees on the company's intranet. The company has recently written its procedures into a manual and distributed a copy to all staff. WPT no longer uses the ISO 9001 standard, which is an internationally recognised quality assurance standard, but has designed its own quality assurance system to meet requirements more appropriately. Many of the company's quality assurance checks are informal, such as regular visits to the training workshops by training managers. WPT takes prompt action to secure improvements where the need is identified and considered to add value to the company's business objectives. Informal communication between managers often leads to actions to create improvements and the company has recently introduced a regular quality assurance meeting to review its overall quality assurance arrangements.

49. Internal verification is satisfactory. Each assessor has two assessments of practice each year, including one on-site assessment and one portfolio assessment. WPT uses useful checklists for these assessments and provides assessors with a good level of feedback to improve practice. The company checks completion of action required. WPT has reduced the numbers of core assessors to four to improve standardisation and

communication, and sets aside adequate time during the year for these staff to complete internal verification tasks. WPT plans to improve internal verification practice by bringing all learners' portfolios into the centre at Taunton each year for checking. As this is a new initiative and planned for completion in March 2005, it is too early to judge its impact.

50. The internal verifiers hold regular meetings. WPT identifies the assessors' training needs and programmes them into the annual assessors' workshops. To overcome the geographical difficulties in holding regular meetings with assessors and improve their assessment practice, the company has designed an innovative and helpful computer-based training programme. WPT does not fully analyse the results from the assessors' answers to help develop training on standardisation but the internal verifiers follow up difficulties. A useful newsletter has been introduced for assessors and mentors to reinforce good practice and also to provide information following the external verifier's visits. The NVQ co-ordinator satisfactorily monitors work of internal verifiers through a useful and regularly updated computerised record of when internal verification has been carried out. Internal verifiers are allocated assessors but there is no sampling plan to ensure all units are sampled over a period of time.

51. The company closely monitors the quality of off-the-job training. Managers make regular visits to the teaching sessions and they, or an outside contractor, carry out formal observations. The company provides a good range of useful feedback to enable improvements and managers discuss it with the tutors. Learners complete questionnaires at the end of each course they attend. Most of the learners report a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of the training. Sickness and attendance of learners is managed through regular data reports and learners have return-to-work interviews with their managers.

52. The company's managers monitor the learners' progress well through the use of data on WPT's intranet. The progress of learners is a key performance indicator for distribution managers who discuss this management information with their managers each month. Three managers at WPT monitor the reviews on all of the learners and follow up any whose progress is a cause for concern with the relevant managers.

53. WPT does not carry out benchmarking against other training providers. It does not consider this cost effective, as there are few similar providers with a similar number of modern apprentices.

54. The company monitors the quality of subcontracted training provision satisfactorily through analysis of the learners' feedback, which it discusses at an annual meeting. Feedback from learners is generally satisfactory to good. Observations of training are carried out but they are not recorded. WPT plans to include formal recorded observations of training in its quality assurance procedures to monitor subcontractor provision.

55. Staff and learners are insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. They make indirect contributions through meetings, questionnaires and informal communication, but they are not directly involved in its compilation. Managers,

assessors and mentors receive an electronic questionnaire seeking their views on the training. However, the questions asked are not directly related to the 'Common Inspection Framework' and are of limited use in critical self-appraisal or in completion of the self-assessment report. The return rates for the questionnaires were only 30 per cent for the managers and 55 per cent for the learners. However, both groups reported a high level of satisfaction with the training. The self-assessment report is easily available to staff and learners on WPT's intranet, and it was available in draft format for comment, although most of them have not read it. The report covers many of the issues affecting WPT but is insufficiently critical in its analysis. Inspectors identified some of the strengths and weaknesses in the report but also identified others.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Construction		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts - Work-based learning for young people	59	2

Construction crafts

Strengths

- good development of the learners' skills
- outstanding pass rates for key skills and academic qualifications
- good on-the-job training
- excellent training resources
- good access to work-based assessment
- wide range of activities and additional qualifications
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak quality of most learners' reviews in the workplace
- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities

Achievement and standards

56. Learners develop good skills. They work to industry standards on a variety of commercial projects during their on-the-job training. They are fully integrated with the work teams and are given challenging operational work across the whole range of WPD's contracts, including the installation of new cables to business and residential properties and the removal of redundant cables from older installations. Learners are also employed in unscheduled teamwork to restore power supplies following faults in the system, often following storms. The standard of the learners' practical work during the on-the-job training is high and meets the demanding requirements of the industry. Safety standards are high and learners work carefully and confidently in carrying out their tasks, whether at height on poles and pylons or on cables at or below ground level. Learners follow detailed company procedures for cable jointing and overhead line working. Learners are able to direct and control much of the work they carry out and develop their supervisory and planning skills. Learners use the evidence they gather during their on-the-job training very effectively in compiling their portfolios, which are generally neat and well presented. Task assignments and work descriptions are well structured and illustrated effectively with high-quality digital images that provide good evidence of their work.

57. Of those learners who started since 2001, 80 to 90 per cent are still in learning. Of the 75 learners starting since 2000, 56 are still in learning and seven have successfully completed their advanced modern apprenticeship early.

58. Pass rates for key skills and the academic qualifications of the modern apprenticeship framework are outstanding. For 2000-04, the pass rate for key skills each year is 100 per cent, with the exception of 2001 when the pass rate was 93 per cent. Over the period 2000-04, only one learner has failed to pass the academic qualification supporting the modern apprenticeship framework. That learner is scheduled to resit the examination in December 2004.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		15		14		30		16							
Retained*	0		0		0		0		14							
Successfully completed	0		0		1		6		11							
Still in learning	15		14		12		15		3							

*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

59. The company's on-the-job training is good. Learners are full working members of small regional depot teams that include a team leader, mentor and assessor. Daily close liaison contributes to a successful and effective training environment. Wherever possible, the company encourages the learners to lead the assessment-planning process by selecting the work tasks that will contribute to the successful achievement of the NVQ. Learners are well supervised and supported in the workplace by experienced and qualified craftspeople, many of whom are former modern apprentices. Appropriate opportunities to carry out a wide range of work, and encouragement to develop vocational and personal skills, produces learners who complete tasks to a high standard.

60. WPT fully promotes and provides the highest possible standards of health and safety in all its activities and incorporates this into the learners' everyday working practice. Safety standards are high in the electrical distribution industry, as there are potential hazards associated with lethal voltages and the need to carry out installation and maintenance activities on systems at significant heights above ground level. WPD carries out thorough risk assessments on all workplace sites where learners are placed. Learners receive extensive and detailed health and safety training at induction and this is

reinforced throughout their programme. Learners are well taught from the start of the advanced modern apprenticeship to identify hazards and assess levels of risks in the workplace. Learners have a good understanding of safety issues. WPT provides each learner with a comprehensive range of personal protective equipment. The company emphasises the correct use of the equipment throughout the learners' programme.

61. WPT provides excellent resources that promote learning. The training centre facilities include outside training areas, which are equipped with a range of industrial standard pylons, poles and substations. A sheltered training area provides additional poles that enables training to continue even in adverse weather conditions. The good-quality resources enable the learners to develop practical knowledge and skills, such as pole climbing, pole rescue methods and trench digging, in a safe but realistic environment. Learners making transition joints to connect paper insulation to plastic-coated cable can work on live conductors in field conditions. The company provides all learners with an extensive range of personal protective equipment, including insulated gloves and visors to protect them when working on live cables. Appropriate tools, test equipment and materials are provided for each learner and replaced when necessary. All learners have access to reference material that describes procedures to carry out work to industry standards. Good-quality classrooms in the training centre provide a good learning environment for background knowledge sessions.

62. Resources for on-the-job training are also excellent and learners receive good equipment for their work tasks. Teaching staff at the training centre are well qualified and have up-to-date industry experience. All staff receive training on teaching and most are well qualified as trainers. All WPD's staff who work with learners are qualified to craftsperson level or higher, and the company carefully selects workplace supervisors for their good-quality workmanship and support skills.

63. Learners have good access to work-based assessment. Flexible teamworking provides good access to work-based assessment opportunities. As some tasks do not occur regularly, the assessors are very responsive and carry out assessments at short notice.

64. Learners participate in a wide range of enrichment activities and achieve additional qualifications beyond the scope of the advanced modern apprenticeship. The induction course is good and prepares learners well for the range of tasks and duties they carry out in the workplace beyond the scope of the modern apprenticeship framework. Learners benefit from attending a well-planned outdoor leadership and adventure training course at the start of their training programme. The course is used to develop teamwork skills, reinforce outdoor safety procedures and protect the environment. Learners from earlier years attend the course in a supervisory role to assist training staff and help the new learners to settle in.

65. The learners have good access to a wide range of courses, such as first aid, use of fire extinguishers, the identification of safety signs, and manual-handling techniques. Linesmen apprentices attend a course on chainsaw maintenance and pole felling. Most learners attend a course and achieve a certificate for excavating and reinstating street

works. The company encourages all learners with a driving licence to take a driving course that enables them to tow trailers. Most learners have the opportunity to further their academic studies by progressing on to the national certificate course in electrical engineering and then the higher national certificate. Learners are effectively encouraged to develop personal responsibility and are expected to plan and carry out a community project in their first year. Recent examples include the construction and installation of outdoor trails and the restoration of a cottage for young people with special needs. Learners were active in the management of the project, ordering materials and risk assessment. Learners are appropriately encouraged to participate fully in social and sporting activities. Recent activities have included rugby matches and skittles evenings.

66. Support for the learners is good. Operational managers and training staff are very supportive and give good technical and personal support. Each learner is assigned a workplace mentor who they meet regularly, in many cases daily, to discuss progress and to receive advice and guidance on all aspects of the advanced modern apprenticeship. Learners comment on the willingness of managers, team leaders and supervisors to help them with assignments, provide additional coaching and to resolve any technical problems. Learners are encouraged to contact training staff for support at any time during their training programme. All learners have access to a free and confidential external counselling service that they can use independently. Learners receive free travel, accommodation and meals while they are attending the Taunton training centre for off-the-job training.

67. WPT has no formal arrangements for the provision of literacy, numeracy and language support. Learners' abilities in literacy and numeracy are assessed at recruitment. WPT sets an entry standard of three GCSEs at grade C or above, including mathematics and English or their equivalent. Most learners have good literacy, numeracy and language skills that meet the demands of the programme. When learners are identified with additional needs, for example those with dyslexia, WPT supports them effectively and make additional resources available for extra tuition or, if necessary, extra time at examinations.

68. Off-the-job teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teaching staff have teaching qualifications and some of them have certificates in education. Many also have assessor qualifications. The quality of formal planning for practical courses is inconsistent, with some well-established courses having little detailed planning records, and others where every session has a comprehensive lesson plan. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to good. Staff from the subcontracting college deliver background knowledge courses. Learners achieve a very high level of pass rates. The excellent teaching resources are well used and learners benefit from the realistic training environment. Vocational training is well designed to provide learners with sound skills and knowledge, which is then consolidated in the workplace. Most learners are able to benefit from this strategy but, in some instances, where appropriate field learning opportunities are not available within their team groups, the consolidation does not take place. There is no formal method to review whether this phase of training has taken

place.

69. The assessment and monitoring of learners' work are satisfactory. NVQ assessment for the earlier years of the modern apprenticeship is well planned, but opportunities are not as frequent during the final two years and some learners make slower progress. Completion of the NVQ background knowledge questions is also slow for some learners. Some questions are taken directly from the NVQ standard and learners have difficulty in understanding the intended meaning. WPT's assessors now provide the learners with close support to assist them in their understanding and to complete the questions. This has improved progress. The assessment process is thorough and meets awarding body standards. Internal verification is satisfactory and includes verification of the assessment of learners' portfolios and observation of workplace assessment. A recent external verifier's report recommended that the internal verification rate for portfolios is increased in the later years of the modern apprenticeships. Assessment and internal verification plans and records are maintained and available on WPT's intranet. Standardisation meetings do not often take place because assessors and internal verifiers are widely dispersed. However, a comprehensive computer-based training programme has been designed to support the standardisation process. All assessors complete assignments which are then analysed by the internal verifiers. Variations in assessment practice and judgements are identified and action is taken to achieve standardisation.

70. Learners' reviews in the workplace are weak. The quality of the learners' reviews, and in particular its recording, is inconsistent. Reviews are carried out every eight weeks, but the comments on the review forms are not sufficiently detailed to inform learners of targets and deadlines. The reviews are satisfactory while learners are attending the first year of training at the Taunton centre. When learners are in the workplace the reviews are not specific and are insufficiently focused. Targets are not specific and do not refer sufficiently to all aspects of the programme, particularly in its later stages. Learners have regular, often daily, contact with their mentor that allows rapid reaction to changing circumstances, but it does not provide adequate monitoring of medium- and longer-term targets.

Leadership and management

71. Day-to-day management of the advanced modern apprenticeship is good. Off-the-job planning for training, including the timely provision of resources, is good. Internal communications between WPD's and WPT's staff is good but it is mainly informal. Staff meetings are held every four weeks to discuss key performance indicators that include the learners' progress. Training and depot staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Mentors have clear guidance and are issued with a detailed mentor pack containing detailed information about the advanced modern apprenticeship and training plans.

72. Staff are well motivated and committed to their roles. Effective teamwork contributes significantly to the success of on-the-job training and assessment. Team managers, assessors and mentors work closely with learners every day to schedule work and manage the opportunities for assessment.

73. Equality of opportunity is insufficiently reinforced with learners. Most learners could recall equality of opportunity being covered at induction, but little of the detail. Reinforcement of equality of opportunity during reviews is minimal. Learners demonstrate a limited understanding of equality of opportunity. All learners interviewed stated that they were well treated in the workplace and at the training centre and that they understood the procedures for reporting harassment. Staff training in equality of opportunity and changes in legislation is minimal.