

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Omega Training Services**

**17 September 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

## Omega Training Services

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Omega Training Services Limited (Omega Training) was established in 1996 to provide work-based learning for the care sector, specialising in the care of the elderly, in the Birmingham and Shropshire regions. Omega Training has foundation and advanced modern apprentices and learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in health and social care. There are 66 foundation modern apprentices and 19 advanced modern apprentices. Seven learners are on 'Train 2 Gain' which includes essential skills and an NVQ in care at level 2. The company also trains 91 employees of care homes for NVQs in care and offers assessor training on a private basis, both of which are out of scope of this inspection.

2. The senior management team consists of two company directors. One manages the contract, finances and resources, and the other manages the quality of the training process including internal verification. Omega Training employs 10 staff including the directors and eight others. The manager is responsible for the staff, including workloads, holidays and the initial part of the disciplinary process. Other staff include three full-time training co-ordinators who are responsible for the NVQ and assessor delivery, two full-time key skills co-ordinators, one part-time co-ordinator for literacy, numeracy and language training, and one part-time systems support administrator.

3. Omega Training contracts with Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills council. All learners are employed. The company currently works with 38 employers, two of which are in the Shropshire area. The Birmingham and Solihull areas, from where Omega Training recruits its learners, have a minority ethnic representation of 29.6 per cent for Birmingham and 5.4 per cent for Solihull, according to the 2001 census, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally. Currently 21 per cent of learners are from a minority ethnic group.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Health, social care & public services

4. There are 19 advanced modern apprentices, 66 foundation modern apprentices and seven learners on a pilot NVQ programme in health, social care and public services. Eight of the learners are men. All learners are employed and work in nursing homes or residential homes, with a range of client groups including those for elderly care, mental health and learning disability. Most learners are supported by work-based assessors and they all have a nominated training co-ordinator who provides training and support throughout the programme.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	28
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of employer interviews	9
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of visits	14

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Omega Training's leadership and management are satisfactory, as is its approach to equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The quality of the health, social care and public services training is also satisfactory.

## 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

Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Care</b>		
- Work-based learning for young people	85	3
- Employer training pilot	7	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

6. **Rates of achievement are poor for modern apprentices.** Only 16 per cent of learners who started a foundation modern apprenticeship in 2001-02 and 2 per cent of those who started in 2002-03 completed their full frameworks. For advanced modern apprentices, 22 per cent of those who started in 2001-02 and 12 per cent of those who started in 2002-03 completed the framework. A number of apprentices are waiting to take the technical certificate test.

7. Retention rates are satisfactory. A range of actions have been taken to improve the retention rates. Of the 38 learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships in 2003-04, 34 remain in learning. Of the 12 advanced modern apprentices, 10 are still in learning for the same period.

### 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
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

8. **Assessment is effective.** A holistic approach to assessment is taken with good use of direct observation. Evidence is efficiently and accurately cross-referenced to several units. Formal reviews are held in the workplace every eight weeks to monitor the learners' progress, review learning needs, set future targets and highlight any difficulties encountered by learners.

9. **Support for learners is good.** Training co-ordinators give good levels of support that are appropriate to the needs of learners. Learners are visited at least every fortnight in their workplace.

10. **The development of learners' skills is good.** Learners are motivated and training is raising their aims. The quality of care received by service users is being raised in the care homes where learners are working.

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Inspectors observed individual coaching sessions in the workplace and four off-the-job teaching sessions which were judged to be satisfactory.

12. Resources are satisfactory. There is a well-resourced training room. All learners are provided with an appropriate textbook and internet access is available. Staff are occupationally competent and experienced.

13. Internal verification is satisfactory. There are three qualified internal verifiers and two

in training. Internal verifiers support assessors working in geographical areas.

14. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy abilities are assessed and a detailed diagnostic test is arranged when necessary. Learners receive effective guidance and encouragement on career development.

15. **The planning of individual learning programmes is poor.** Individual learning plans include the content of programmes, but do not show the sequence, targets or timescales for progression through the NVQ, key skills and technical certificate.

### **Leadership and management**

16. **The company has recently introduced a range of good strategies to improve learners' progress and retention.** Staff now give priority to retaining learners on their training programmes and improving the rate at which they achieve units of their qualification. This is now having a direct impact on learners' progress.

17. **Support for staff is good.** Managers have good working relationships with staff, with effective teamwork and a productive working environment. Many of the staff have been employed by the company for a considerable time, and they have a good knowledge of the care industry in Birmingham. Staff development opportunities are promoted by the company, and staff are encouraged to attend appropriate training courses.

18. **The company has effective links with a wide range of local employers in the care industry.** Managers and supervisors in residential care and nursing homes who are responsible for the assessment of learners are supported by Omega Training to achieve assessor qualifications. Employers value the very regular contact they have with Omega Training. The company has a good reputation in the care industry in Birmingham.

19. The management of support for learners with additional literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. Omega Training does not have a policy or strategy for this support, but recognises its importance. Learners are assessed initially, provided with effective feedback and a support programme is initiated when required.

20. **Managers carry out insufficient formal planning of training programmes.** They do not have a process by which they co-ordinate the different parts of the modern apprenticeship and plan how they will be achieved. Some learners and employers have a poor understanding of key skills and technical certificates. There has been some difficulty in ensuring learners are able to take the technical certificate, as at present this is only available three times a year.

21. **The company makes insufficient use of management information for target-setting.** Managers do not produce regular reports which allow staff to monitor the learners' progress towards achieving their qualification. Staff are not set challenging targets for improving retention and achievement rates.

22. **The company does not promote diversity effectively in its promotional material.**



Omega Training is currently not reaching targets for male learners or learners from minority ethnic groups.

**23. The implementation of quality assurance arrangements is incomplete.** The company does not have an up-to-date quality assurance framework or policy for monitoring training programmes.

**24. The self-assessment and development planning process is ineffective.** The most recent self-assessment report, which was updated for the inspection, does not reflect the changes in the provision, and does not identify some key strengths and weaknesses, particularly in leadership and management. The company's development plan is not formally monitored on a regular basis and some actions identified in the last plan have not been completed in the anticipated timescales.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good recent strategies to improve learners' progress and retention
- good support for staff
- particularly effective links with employers

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient formal planning of training programmes
- insufficient use of management information for target-setting
- insufficient promotion of diversity in marketing materials
- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance

## **Health, social care & public services**

### **Care**

#### *Strengths*

- good NVQ assessment
- good development of skills by learners
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor planning of individual learner programmes

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT OMEGA TRAINING SERVICES:**

- really good support
- 'given feedback on my work straight away'
- cheerful and friendly staff
- 'staff always there'
- 'helped me to enjoy learning again'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK OMEGA TRAINING SERVICES COULD IMPROVE:**

- better explanation of key skills at the beginning of the programme
- the training for work-based assessors - it should be better
- the number of training sessions

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR OMEGA TRAINING SERVICES:**

- improve achievement rates for apprentices
- co-ordinate individual learners' programmes to ensure all aspects of the framework are covered
- develop a planning framework for all aspects of the training programmes
- develop, implement and evaluate a management information system
- develop a culture of target-setting
- ensure all marketing materials promote and celebrate diversity
- develop, implement and evaluate a quality assurance system

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

#### Strengths

- good recent strategies to improve learners' progress and retention
- good support for staff
- particularly effective links with employers

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient formal planning of training programmes
- insufficient use of management information for target-setting
- insufficient promotion of diversity in marketing materials
- incomplete arrangements for quality assurance

25. Omega Training has recently introduced a range of good strategies to improve learners' progress and retention. Managers recognise that retention rates have been poor and that learners have made slow progress towards achieving their qualification. They now give priority to retaining learners and improving the rate at which learners achieve units of their framework. Retention rates, which were poor in 2002-03, are starting to improve. Of the 50 learners who started in 2003-04, few have left early. Staff are encouraged to focus on identifying learners who are most at risk of leaving early and to agree a strategy for supporting them. The company's procedures for interviewing and induction have been reviewed and are now more effective and thorough. Learners are now given more time to consider whether they are on the right training programme before they are signed up by Omega Training. Cash bonuses are available for learners who achieve parts of their qualification. Learners are supported well by staff, with regular additional support for those with particular needs. The number of qualified work-based assessors is increasing and the assessors who work in residential care homes now have fewer learners to assess.

26. Support for staff is good, but this was not identified in the self-assessment report. Managers have good working relationships with staff, with effective teamwork and a productive working environment. The directors of the company take an active role in the operation of the training programmes. Many of the staff have been employed by the company for a considerable period of time, and they have a good knowledge of the care industry in Birmingham. The staff have excellent working relationships with local employers, which helps support the learners' training experience. Staff are supported well by the training manager who discusses their workloads and personal issues at regular individual meetings. A new staff appraisal system has recently been introduced which incorporates views on the employees' performance from other members of staff, employers and learners. Staff are given positive and supportive feedback during annual reviews of their performance, although most staff have only recently started to have a

formal appraisal. Staff development opportunities are promoted at the weekly team meetings and staff are encouraged to attend appropriate training courses, some of which are related to their leisure pursuits. One member of staff has been supported to complete a degree course which he started before joining Omega Training. All staff spend time each year working in the care industry to update their practical knowledge.

27. Omega Training has effective links with a wide range of local employers in the care industry. Managers and supervisors in residential care and nursing homes who are responsible for assessment are trained by Omega Training to achieve work-based assessor awards. The training is provided free of charge, and 25 assessors have achieved the awards so far. A further 33 employees are currently working towards the qualifications. Workplace managers value the very regular contact they have with Omega Training, and particularly appreciate the rapid responses they receive to problems. The company has a good reputation among local employers. Omega Training holds regular meetings with work-based assessors to agree assessment plans, update assessment practices and review changes in paperwork. Detailed service level agreements clearly identify the responsibilities of employers and Omega Training for the learners' training. Regular informal and formal health and safety checks of employers' premises are carried out by staff.

28. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. Omega Training does not have a policy or strategy for this support, but recognises its importance. Two of the training co-ordinators have specific responsibility for supporting learners with their additional learning needs and key skills, and another member of staff has recently been appointed to provide this support on the pilot programme. All learners have an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and they are given immediate feedback on the results of their assessment. If learners are too busy to attend the training centre, staff use a laptop computer to carry out the assessments in the workplace. Some learners are supported well to achieve key skills at higher levels than they require for their modern apprenticeship. The key skills sessions are satisfactory.

29. Managers carry out insufficient formal planning of training programmes. Achievement rates for the completion of frameworks have been poor, although many learners have almost completed their qualification. The tests for the technical certificate are presently taking place three times a year. Managers do not have a formal planning process for training programmes to co-ordinate the different parts of the modern apprenticeship framework. While the NVQ assessments include a wide range of diverse evidence, some learners and employers have a poor understanding of key skills and technical certificates. Individual learning plans do not always identify how learners are going to complete the framework. Staff who are responsible for key skills do not always receive copies of the co-ordinators' progress reviews. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report.

30. Omega Training makes insufficient use of management information for target-setting. The company does not produce regular reports which allow staff to monitor the learners' progress. A monitoring file has been developed, but this is not regularly updated and the records are inaccurate. The three-year development plan acts as the

company's business plan but the objectives place very little emphasis on the future development of the training programmes. Staff are insufficiently aware of the achievement targets set in the plan, and were not involved in agreeing them. They are not set challenging targets for improving retention and achievement rates, and are not regularly updated on trends in key performance indicators. There is no annual planning cycle to link strategic and business objectives to target-setting, self-assessment and business planning.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

31. There are satisfactory policies and procedures for equality of opportunity. The policy clearly sets out company values and there are procedures for dealing with harassment. Learners are familiar with the procedures for harassment and complaints. The policy is reviewed annually, although the contact information for registering complaints was not updated following the company move to new premises in June 2004.

32. The monitoring of equality of opportunity with employers is satisfactory. Omega Training carries out an initial assessment on employers which includes evaluation of their equality of opportunity policies. Employers sign an initial agreement with Omega Training which states that they will abide by Omega Training's equality and diversity policy. However, there is no ongoing monitoring of employers' compliance with equal opportunities policies or their commitment to diversity.

33. Learners display a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. Learners are able to describe clearly instances of discrimination and have an accurate view of what constitutes prejudice and how service users need to be treated with respect and dignity. At each review equality of opportunity is discussed and recorded, and the information is passed to the employer, except in cases where the learner specifically asks for confidentiality to be respected. There are examples where problems have been raised by learners and they have been dealt with effectively through the review process. For example, one learner considered that she was being discriminated against because of her age. The matter was raised at the progress review and dealt with effectively by the staff at Omega Training and the employer.

34. The collection of data to support diversity and equality is satisfactory. Data is collected regularly by management and fed back periodically to staff. Equality of opportunity targets are set by the company for minority ethnic learners and male learners, but the company is currently not meeting the targets it has set. There is a commitment to attract more men into the care profession, and Omega Training works with Connexions to place male learners into care settings. However, despite these efforts there have been no successful placements of male learners through this recruitment method. Recently Omega Training has commissioned a post code analysis of learners and employers across the Birmingham area, with a view to developing a marketing campaign which would target under-represented groups in the city. Data is not currently being used to influence recruitment policies.

35. The training for staff on equality of opportunity is satisfactory. One of the directors

has attended diversity training recently and all staff have attended a day's training with an outside agency. This training has been attended in the last month, and there is no record of any other training attended by staff.

36. There is insufficient promotion of diversity in marketing materials. Omega Training promotes training opportunities in a disability promotion magazine, but there is no reference to diversity being welcomed by the company, nor any details of how a learner who has a disability would be supported. Leaflets contain stereotypical images and do not reflect the diversity of the learners or care agencies in the area. The text is written in such a way that learners with literacy problems would have difficulty in reading it. Flyers contain out-of-date information.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

37. Quality assurance is satisfactory and is the responsibility of the two directors. Omega Training does not have a quality assurance policy or a range of appropriate procedures to cover all aspects of the work-based learning programmes such as induction and initial assessment. However, staff carry out internal audits of learners' files to ensure that important paperwork is completed correctly. One of the directors samples learners' paperwork to check the appropriateness of the targets and comments made by the training co-ordinators. The outcomes of this sampling are not always formally recorded, or reviewed as part of the bimonthly review meetings with individual members of staff.

38. The implementation of formal quality assurance arrangements is incomplete. Omega Training does not have an up-to-date quality assurance framework which links the arrangements for monitoring training programmes. Regular informal communication takes place between managers and staff and formal staff meetings are held every week and are well attended. Actions identified at each meeting are incorporated into a detailed action plan by the training manager and are followed up at subsequent meetings. Actions are only removed from the team meeting agenda once they have been completed. Some improvements have been made from this process; for example, learners are now starting the technical certificate at the beginning of the programme. Detailed anonymous questionnaires are used on a regular basis to gather learners' and employers' feedback on the quality of the training programmes. The feedback is analysed but the summary reports are too general to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the company.

39. The procedures to observe training sessions are satisfactory. Although the observation system has only recently been introduced, most of the training co-ordinators have been observed carrying out a range of training activities, including induction and teaching sessions with individual learners. The policy for observations of teaching and learning is detailed and places a clear emphasis on learning. The feedback given to staff at the end of a learning session is sometimes not sufficiently evaluative and the grades given do not always reflect the written comments made by the observer. The outcomes of classroom observations are not moderated.

## OMEGA TRAINING SERVICES

40. The arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. Omega Training has an appropriate internal verification policy and procedure. Internal verifiers use a sampling framework to identify the units that will be internally verified across a range of learners and work-based assessors. Appropriate paperwork is used to record the outcomes of internal verification, and assessors are given detailed feedback to help them improve their assessment practices. Omega Training holds standardisation meetings with work-based assessors three times a year, and carries out useful postal exercises with assessors to evaluate their assessment skills. However, internal verifiers do not meet formally to discuss issues raised through internal verification or to moderate their judgements, and the lead verifier does not regularly audit the records of the other internal verifiers.

41. The self-assessment and development planning process is ineffective. Omega Training has produced four annual self-assessment reports and its most recent self-assessment report was written in September 2003. This report was updated in July 2004 for the inspection. The updated report does not reflect changes to the quality of provision since the previous report, and does not identify some key strengths and weaknesses, particularly in leadership and management. Although learners' views are used to contribute to the report, it is not clear how the staff's evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision is used in the most recent report. The company's development plan is not formally monitored on a regular basis and some actions in the plan that was produced in September 2003 have not been completed by the identified target date. An updated development plan was written in March 2004, but some of the timescales have not been changed to reflect delays in the implementation of actions.



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, social care & public services

Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Care</b>		
- Work-based learning for young people	85	3
- Employer training pilot	7	3

#### **Care**

##### *Strengths*

- good NVQ assessment
- good development of skills by learners
- good support for learners

##### *Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor planning of individual learner programmes

### **Achievement and standards**

42. Rates of achievement for modern apprentices are poor. Only 16 per cent of learners who started a foundation modern apprenticeship in 2001-02 and 2 per cent of those who started in 2002-03 completed their full frameworks. For advanced modern apprentices, 22 per cent of those who started in 2001-02 and 12 per cent of those who started in 2002-03 completed the framework. However, attainment of NVQs is satisfactory. Thirty-three per cent of the 66 foundation modern apprentices and 33 per cent of the 19 advanced modern apprentices have achieved their NVQ. Most current learners complete one unit a month and some awards have been achieved in less than two months. Sixteen of the learners have achieved their NVQ and key skills, and are waiting to take the technical certificate test in December 2004.

43. Retention rates are satisfactory at 55 per cent for 2001-02 and 47 per cent for 2002-03 for foundation modern apprentices. For advanced modern apprentices the retention rates are 34 per cent and 19 per cent respectively for the same period. A range of actions have been taken to improve the retention rates. Of the 38 foundation modern apprentices who started in 2003-04, 34 remain in learning and 10 of the 12 advanced modern apprentices are still in learning for the same period.

## OMEGA TRAINING SERVICES

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		12		16		44									
Retained*	0		0		3		15									
Successfully completed	0		0		2		10									
Still in learning	1		10		7		1									

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		38		51		42									
Retained*	0		2		24		23									
Successfully completed	0		0		1		7									
Still in learning	4		34		20		8									

\*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

44. Assessment of NVQs is effective. A holistic approach to assessment is taken with good use of direct observation. Evidence is efficiently and accurately cross-referenced to several units. Preset questions are used to ensure standard assessment of background knowledge, and while learners usually provide written responses, oral questioning is used when appropriate to the needs of the learner. Portfolios are well presented with clear referencing of evidence, which is good and at an appropriate level to demonstrate competence.

45. Support for learners is good. Training co-ordinators give good levels of support, appropriate to the needs of the individual learner. Learners are visited at least on a fortnightly basis in their workplace to fit in with shift patterns and rotas. Learners can contact co-ordinators by telephone at any time between visits and reviews. There are 25 qualified work-based assessors and a further 33 in training, and learners are supported well in the workplace. Work-based assessors are well supported by training co-ordinators, and individual development plans are maintained for all work-based assessors. If work-based assessors are not available for assessments, training co-ordinators carry out this task. Learners participate in a wide range of training courses in the workplace including health and safety, moving and handling, care of the dying and

dealing with abuse. Learners are given time at work to meet their training co-ordinator and to attend study days for key skills and the technical certificate. Effective individual coaching is provided in the workplace for key skills and the NVQ.

46. Learners develop good practical care skills and show competence with service users. Learners have the opportunity to broaden their experience and enhance personal development. They understand and are confident in what they are doing and what they need to improve. For example, one manager confirmed that she started as a foundation modern apprentice with Omega Training and she is now committed to assessing and supporting learners in her own establishments. Learners' skills have raised the quality of care in homes in Birmingham.

47. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners are given clear and concise information, but this is not always sufficiently challenging learners. Study days are held for technical certificate and key skills training. Additional support is provided on an individual basis either in the workplace or at the centre.

48. Resources are satisfactory. There is a small training room at the provider's office which is well equipped with a video, a projector, a smart board, an overhead projector and five laptop computers. Access is poor, but alternative training venues are used when necessary. There is an adequate collection of up-to-date reference and training materials. All learners are provided with a textbook and internet access is available. Staff are occupationally competent and experienced. They are given two weeks each year to work in the health and social care sector to keep up to date with current practice. Formal health and safety checks are carried out each year in workplaces by training co-ordinators. Informal reviews are carried out quarterly to ensure learners are working in safe environments.

49. Initial assessment is satisfactory. New learners have a pre-start interview to identify appropriate programmes of learning. Learners attend a full-day induction workshop where the requirements of their programme of learning are explained. During induction each learner completes a computerised initial assessment which produces an analysis of their literacy and numeracy abilities. If required, a detailed diagnostic test is arranged. There are three learners with identified additional learning needs and seven learners on the pilot programme who receive 30 hours' additional support. Support for learners includes individual support, the provision of aids for learning, or referral to external agencies such as Connexions for specialist input. Learners receive effective guidance and encouragement in career development. Some learners have progressed to higher-level awards or have become NVQ assessors.

50. Formal reviews are held in the workplace every eight weeks to monitor the learners' progress, review learning needs, set future targets and highlight any difficulties encountered by learners. Specific health and safety issues or training needs are identified and appropriate actions are agreed. Questions are also asked about the learners' experience of equal opportunities in the workplace. Action plans are agreed, copies are given to the learner and employer, and individual learning plans are updated. Training co-ordinators keep detailed records of every contact with learners and maintain close links

with managers. Any issues of concern can be raised at the weekly communications meeting.

## **Leadership and management**

51. The planning of individual learning programmes is poor. They record the content of programmes, but do not show the sequence, targets or timescales for progression through the NVQ, key skills and technical certificate. Different parts of the learners' programmes are not well co-ordinated. Most learners start by being assessed for their NVQ and when they have finished, they start the key skills. The technical certificates are taken at the end of the programme, and are not used effectively to support NVQ development. However, this has now been recognised by staff as a factor in delaying achievement and action has been taken to deal with it. Learners who have recently started are now taking the technical certificate at the start of the programme to provide background knowledge for the NVQ. The awarding body offers technical certificate testing three times a year.

52. Internal verification is satisfactory. There are three qualified internal verifiers and two in training. Internal verifiers support assessors in geographical areas and all assessors are observed working with learners twice a year. Assessment standardisation meetings are held on a quarterly basis. Assessors are required to attend two meetings a year and attendance is recorded and monitored. Meetings are minuted and circulated to all assessors, along with information or handouts. Postal standardisation exercises have been used effectively as a further means of monitoring the assessors' competence. These are reviewed by one internal verifier who provides written feedback to the assessors. Issues arising may form part of the agendas for subsequent standardisation meetings. Some aspect of the work of every assessor is sampled on a monthly basis. Internal verifiers create effective sampling strategies and assessors are given clear written feedback to identify actions required. These are followed up in the next sampling to ensure they have been resolved. Every unit of the NVQ is sampled, which is beyond awarding body requirements. Internal verifiers do not have standardisation meetings, although verification can be raised at weekly communication meetings. Inspectors have noted inconsistent use of centre documents. There is no internal monitoring of the performance of internal verifiers.

53. The self-assessment report was not sufficiently evaluative and inspectors identified some additional weaknesses.