

INSPECTION REPORT

Medivet

22 September 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Medivet was established in 1986 through the formation of two veterinary practices. The company has grown considerably since then and now has 50 practices. Medivet has been offering government-funded training since it started, to meet an identified shortage of trained veterinary nurses in the industry. Since August 2003, it has held a contract in its own right to provide national vocational qualification (NVQ) training in veterinary nursing and the animal nursing assistant qualification. Most learners are employed in a Medivet veterinary practice, although three of the animal nursing assistants are not yet employed. Medivet practices are located across London, Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Middlesex and East Anglia. All learners attend the training centre in Watford once a week for off-the-job training.

2. Medivet is a partnership of 11 senior and 16 junior partners, with three of the senior partners responsible for the organisation's Pet Health Education (PHE) department. A head of education is responsible for the operational management of the government-funded training. PHE has four full-time and three part-time staff with direct responsibility for training and supporting learners.

3. Medivet has a contract with Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision. Key skills and literacy, numeracy and language support is subcontracted to Hertsmere Worknet, but at the time of inspection this had not yet started for the current group of learners. One learner's off-the-job training is subcontracted to Writtle College.

4. According to research published by the Sector Skills Council in 2004, 98.7 per cent of veterinary nurses are women and 96.7 per cent are white British.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Medivet and PHE's leadership and management, its arrangements for quality improvement, its approach to equality of opportunity and the training in veterinary services are all good.

6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** PHE produced its first self-assessment report in 2005. The process involved most PHE staff and one of the partners. It made good use of learners' and workplace supervisors' feedback. Although the organisation has made good use of equal opportunities data to make judgements, retention and achievement data used in self-assessment is incomplete. Staff are self-critical in identifying appropriate strengths and some weaknesses. The process overlooked two key weaknesses that the inspectors found. The self-assessment development plan has resulted in improvements being made to the provision, and some identified weaknesses are now satisfactory.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** PHE has a very positive approach towards quality improvement. It uses a wide range of feedback particularly well to improve the provision. Course evaluations and reviews are

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very effective, resulting in action and improvement. PHE uses data well to identify retention issues. Commitment from partners towards ensuring a good-quality training programme is very strong. PHE has good arrangements for developing veterinary surgeons and nurses as assessors and trainers to ensure continuous support for the head office team.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MEDIVET:

- widen the range of teaching and learning activities in background knowledge sessions
- improve the rate of completion of NVQ portfolios
- identify and meet staff equal opportunities training needs
- further develop the appraisal and performance management systems
- strengthen target-setting in learners' progress reviews

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		2

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Veterinary services		2	
NVQ training for young people	55	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. The inspection took place over two visits, both in September 2005.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	9
Number of learners interviewed	16
Number of staff interviewed	11
Number of employers interviewed	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	9
Number of visits	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. Retention rates on veterinary nursing and employed animal nursing assistant programmes are very good, and in some years they are 100 per cent. Achievement rates on both of these programmes are satisfactory. Learners achieve well in external examinations.

10. Learners develop good practical skills at work. They have access to the full range of veterinary procedures at work. Learners are competent and confident in assisting veterinary surgeons and qualified nurses. In some smaller practices, learners are quickly given significant responsibilities.

11. Retention rates for the small group of non-employed animal nursing assistant learners are low. PHE recognised this as an issue and improved its recruitment and selection process before the 2004-05 group started. There has been improvement in the current year's group of learners, with 68 per cent of those who started the programme still in learning.

12. Many of the learners are slow to complete their NVQ portfolios. Although learners have regular and frequent progress reviews, some target-setting is insufficiently specific, particularly in guiding learners towards timely completion of their portfolios.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	0	3	4	0	7
Total	0	3	4	0	7

13. Learners receive very good practical training and coaching on the job. Practical training is well planned and closely linked to background knowledge training and examination requirements. Many learners have a wide range of different experiences at work, including experience of animals requiring specialist treatment. A well-devised structure to the practices enables learners to work in other locations, experiencing a variety of environments.

14. Learners receive very good support in planning their learning. Tutors have regular contact with learners. Individual support for those learners who have had difficulties in passing the external examination is particularly good. Medivet supports learners with personal difficulties well so that they continue in employment and resume their training at an appropriate time. Animal nursing assistant learners have good literacy and numeracy support, and many of them are making good progress towards achieving accredited qualifications.

15. Career progression opportunities within Medivet are good. Once learners have qualified, there are well-structured and clear progression routes to senior nursing positions. The organisation has a systematic career structure to reward achievement at different levels

of training. Learners on the animal nursing assistant programme progress well onto NVQ training in veterinary nursing.

16. Assessment is well planned and clearly structured. Medivet has a high proportion of assessors to learners. Internal verification is thorough and comprehensive.

17. Background knowledge training is satisfactory, with good involvement of learners in training sessions. In the best training sessions, tutors make good use of the learners' practical experiences to illustrate background knowledge. Learners have access to a wide range of resources and assessment opportunities at work and at the training centre to support their learning.

18. Learners receive a satisfactory induction to their programme, with good attention to health and safety. Medivet uses appropriate initial assessment tests to identify learners' literacy and numeracy support needs. Learners have fully completed individual learning plans, although some changes are not always recorded.

Leadership and management

19. PHE is well managed, with strong support from Medivet's partners. The organisation has established effective partnerships with subcontractors to meet learners' individual needs. Resources are well managed.

20. Staff are well qualified and experienced. PHE arranges and delivers a wide range of relevant training and development for all of Medivet's staff. Support and development for assessors and tutors is particularly strong.

21. Communication is regular, useful and very effective. PHE has established good opportunities for the sharing of best practice. Team meetings are regular, with very thorough discussions of learner and course issues.

22. Medivet has a good ethos of equality of opportunity and inclusion within all aspects of the training. It promotes equality of opportunity and diversity successfully, with the effective removal of barriers to training. It uses data about participation well and the proportion of learners participating from minority ethnic groups has increased from 2003-04 to 2004-05, which is better than industry rates.

23. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity and their rights and responsibilities is good. Medivet monitors equality of opportunity at work regularly and appropriately. PHE's equal opportunities policies and procedures are adequate, but do not fully reflect the organisation's strong ethos and commitment.

24. PHE uses learners' and staff feedback particularly well in developing and improving its training. Learners have very effective mechanisms for giving feedback. PHE has introduced many successful initiatives as a result of this feedback. There is good consultation with veterinary surgeons and nurses about issues and proposed changes. PHE uses staff views and experiences well to develop learning materials and activities. A very thorough review of the animal nursing assistant programme resulted in appropriate changes being made to the following year's programme.

25. PHE has well-established, thorough and effective arrangements for quality improvement and assurance, and internal verification. It observes tutors regularly through a very supportive and developmental process. PHE uses detailed feedback and action plans well to develop tutors, training and support. It has effective arrangements for dealing with complaints and appeals. PHE uses external feedback and acts upon it swiftly to improve the provision.

26. Medivet has adequate appraisal systems, where it reviews performance and sets personal development targets. Although there are few targets set that relate to PHE, it has implemented appropriate initiatives to improve and sustain retention and achievement rates. Staff use management information systems well to monitor most aspects of the programme.

27. Staff receive insufficient formal training on equality of opportunity. Medivet does not thoroughly explore some of the wider equality of opportunity and ethical issues with the learners. Some tutors do not sufficiently promote male role models or examples in their teaching.

28. Self-assessment is sufficiently critical and detailed in recognising strengths and some weaknesses. However, the process is insufficiently thorough in identifying all of the key weaknesses.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good management and development of training programmes
- good development and support for staff
- very effective communication
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- good use of feedback to improve training programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient training for staff on equality of opportunity
- insufficient identification of some key weaknesses in self-assessment

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Veterinary services

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention rates for veterinary nursing and employed animal nursing assistant learners
- very good practical training
- high level of support for all learners
- good career progression opportunities
- well-managed learning programmes

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for non-employed animal nursing assistant learners
- slow completion of NVQ portfolios by many veterinary nursing learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MEDIVET:

- good practical training
- the college teaching
- experiencing a wide range of cases and the use of specialist equipment
- the good support for learning from vets and veterinary nurses
- friendly, approachable and supportive staff at head office
- good support to continue studying while overcoming personal problems
- being given responsibility at work
- the opportunity to work in a busy 24-hour practice

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MEDIVET COULD IMPROVE:

- the very long day when attending college
- the lecture theatre at college

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good management and development of training programmes
- good development and support for staff
- very effective communication
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- good use of feedback to improve training programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficient training for staff on equality of opportunity
- insufficient identification of some key weaknesses in self-assessment

29. PHE is well managed, with strong support from Medivet. There are close links between the strategies, values and visions of PHE and Medivet. Medivet's structure of senior and junior partners and veterinary surgeons provides a good route into PHE's decision-making. Partners and vets are highly satisfied with the training that learners receive from PHE. Medivet has managed change very well, particularly in setting up its own contract, establishing the status of the off-the-job training facility and recent changes in the organisation's leadership. It has established effective partnerships with subcontractors. Resources are well managed and Medivet makes a significant financial contribution towards training given by PHE.

30. PHE arranges and delivers a wide range of personal development for veterinary surgeons and nurses that is relevant to the workplace and the learners' development. Staff are well qualified and experienced. PHE has good arrangements for developing assessors and tutors to ensure continuous support for the head office team. Partners promote the value of veterinary surgeons and nurses becoming work-based assessors. There is good involvement of Medivet's staff in training, including two veterinary nurses who are being developed as part-time tutors and some veterinary surgeons providing specialist lectures on subjects like radiography. New tutors are supported well through individual in-house training and frequent opportunities to shadow experienced tutors. PHE's staff are taking higher-level NVQs and degrees to develop their management, teaching and veterinary nursing skills and knowledge.

31. Communication is regular and very effective. Learners, veterinary surgeons and nurses, receive timely and useful feedback about a range of issues, including progress, attendance, test results and performance at off-the-job training. Purposeful and helpful assessor meetings are held twice a year. PHE has established good opportunities for sharing best practice. Assessors and tutors receive a good range of helpful guidance to help them in their role. The PHE team has regular meetings, with good discussion of learner and course issues.

32. Medivet has an adequate appraisal system for all staff and learners, where it reviews performance and sets personal development targets. However, there is little setting of

targets related to PHE, including the improvement or maintenance of retention and achievement rates. The organisation has implemented appropriate initiatives for raising and sustaining retention and achievement rates. Management information systems are adequate for the current number of learners. PHE's staff use systems well to monitor assessors, internal verification, progress reviews and examination results.

33. PHE has set up appropriate arrangements with a subcontractor for dyslexia, literacy and numeracy support. Many animal nursing assistant learners achieve additional externally accredited qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Subcontractors are well managed and monitored effectively.

34. PHE's staff regularly check health and safety as part of their monitoring arrangements of the workplace and learners' progress reviews. A recently recruited health and safety specialist has introduced a new, and exceptionally thorough, inspection and audit system with support material. The new system has identified some additional health and safety actions for some of the veterinary practices. Staff at these practices have started work on meeting health and safety actions.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

35. Medivet and PHE have a good ethos of equality of opportunity and inclusion within all aspects of the training. Development of programmes that widen participation is good. PHE's innovative non-employed animal nursing assistant course has brought new learners into veterinary nursing, without the qualification or age entry requirements for the mainstream courses. Publicity materials about PHE are visually attractive, informative and include images of men. Medivet promotes PHE courses very effectively internally, ensuring any possible barriers to participation are removed. Training is available to veterinary nurses of all ages, regardless of whether funding is available. Many participants in PHE's training have entered the industry later in their working life, after deciding to change careers. Learners with dyslexia, literacy and numeracy support needs receive appropriate support enabling participation. PHE has established effective links with counselling and support services. Data about participation and success by different groups is analysed and used well in self-assessment. The proportions of men, learners from minority ethnic groups and learners with additional learning needs participating in courses have all increased from 2003-04 to 2004-05. Participation by under-represented groups on PHE courses is better than the industry rates. Men and learners from minority ethnic groups complete their qualifications with PHE as well as, or slightly better than, women and white learners.

36. Learners' awareness of their rights and responsibilities, in particular towards customers, is good. PHE monitors equality of opportunity in the workplace regularly and appropriately through progress reviews. It follows awarding body guidance that learners in wheelchairs would not be able to demonstrate the full range of occupational standards. Some workplaces are not accessible for learners with mobility difficulties. The training centre has lift access, but no accessible toilets. PHE has adapted Medivet's equal opportunities policies and procedures to make these more appropriate for learners. While the equal opportunities policy is adequate, it does not fully reflect the ethos of PHE or Medivet. For example, it makes no reference to age discrimination, yet this is clearly an aspect that the organisation approaches very positively.

37. PHE and Medivet have not given formal equality of opportunity or diversity training to staff. Staff are often reliant on their own research or contacts to keep them up to date.

Some of the wider equal opportunities and ethical issues are not thoroughly explored with learners. Learning materials are carefully checked to ensure they are gender neutral, but some tutors do not sufficiently promote male role models or examples in their teaching.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

38. PHE has very effective mechanisms for gathering learners' feedback, including the use of class representatives to express the views of the group, and regular, anonymous questionnaires about the programme. It takes learners' views seriously and discusses them thoroughly, with good record-keeping of issues raised and agreed solutions. PHE has introduced many new initiatives as a result of learners' feedback, including making the teaching more fun and interactive, and providing a new microwave, chairs and heating in the learners' rest and resource area. It evaluates, summarises and uses learners' questionnaires well to develop action plans during regular reviews with tutors. Where learners have requested changes that have a major effect on the business, PHE follows this up carefully with all interested parties. For example, learners were not happy with the length of the off-the-job training day. Learners, veterinary surgeons and nurses were asked to vote on two preferred options. PHE collated and analysed the results and used the most popular option for the next year's programme. It uses staff views and experiences well to develop learning materials and activities. PHE has introduced the library system, strengthened the tutorial system and started mock practical assessments as a result of staff initiatives. A very thorough review was completed for the non-employed animal nursing assistant programme last year. A wide range of sources contributed to the review, including retention, attendance and test result data, learners' feedback and evaluations, exit interviews and feedback from nurse mentors and the PHE team. PHE carried out detailed analysis and made proposals for the current programme, which it implemented successfully. Changes to the recruitment process are already having a positive effect on this year's retention data, results of learners' evaluations and learners' motivation.

39. PHE has well-established arrangements for quality assuring, improving and internally verifying the quality of learning opportunities, resources and assessment. These are very thorough and particularly effective at picking up issues. Assessors receive action plans, which are followed up well at subsequent visits. A comprehensive annual review is carried out of the on-the-job learning and support at each veterinary practice that has learners. In recent months, some of these visits have not always been carried out on time. However, PHE's staff carry out regular, informal monitoring that supplements the annual reviews. Observation of teaching and learning happens regularly and is a supportive process. Tutors receive detailed written feedback, resulting in strengths and identified areas for improvement. PHE has effective arrangements for dealing with appeals and complaints, most of which are handled informally by PHE's staff, resulting in swift and appropriate action. The organisation uses external feedback well to improve the provision.

40. PHE's staff are self-critical in identifying appropriate strengths and some weaknesses through the self-assessment process. PHE's first self-assessment report is detailed and thorough. PHE has not recognised in its self-assessment two key weaknesses that the inspectors found. Although it has used equal opportunities data well to make judgements, retention and achievement data used in self-assessment contains a few inaccuracies. The self-assessment development plan has resulted in improvements being made to the provision, and some former weaknesses have been rectified.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Veterinary services		2
NVQ training for young people	55	2

41. Fifty-five learners are working towards veterinary services qualifications. Two employed learners are on a 12-month programme working towards the animal nursing assistant qualification. Eleven learners, three of whom are not employed, are working towards the animal nursing assistant qualification over 18 months. Twenty-seven learners are working towards NVQs at level 2 in veterinary nursing, with a further 15 working towards NVQs at level 3. All learners are registered with Medivet as the veterinary nursing assessment centre. Most learners attend off-the-job training one day each week at Medivet's training centre in Watford. One NVQ level 2 learner attends off-the-job training at Writtle College. Medivet has 56 veterinary surgeons and nurses who assess in the workplace.

Veterinary services

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention rates for veterinary nursing and employed animal nursing assistant learners
- very good practical training
- high level of support for all learners
- good career progression opportunities
- well-managed learning programmes

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for non-employed animal nursing assistant learners
- slow completion of NVQ portfolios by many veterinary nursing learners

Achievement and standards

42. Retention rates for veterinary nursing and employed animal nursing assistant learners are high. Retention rates on the NVQ at level 3 training programme between 2003 and 2005, and at level 2 in 2003-04, were 100 per cent. On the employed animal nursing assistants' course, retention rates improved from 83 per cent in 2003-04 to 85 per cent in 2004-05. Retention rates for the non-employed animal nursing assistants' course, which started in 2003-04, are low, which is recognised in self-assessment. In 2003-04, only two of the seven learners who started the non-employed course were retained. PHE recognised this as an issue and improved its recruitment and selection process. There has been some improvement in 2004-05, with 68 per cent of learners remaining in learning mid-way through the programme. Eight of the current 11 learners in this group have been employed

by Medivet since they started training, which is higher than the previous year.

43. Learners develop good practical skills. They have access to the full range of veterinary procedures at work, and are given good opportunities to assist veterinary surgeons and qualified nurses. Learners are confident and competent. In some smaller practices, learners are the only nursing staff and are quickly given significant responsibilities. Most learners have the opportunity to work in a number of practices to widen their experience. Animal nursing assistant learners are given equally good opportunities to develop their skills and are well prepared to progress to veterinary nurse training.

44. Achievement rates on veterinary nursing courses and on the animal nursing assistants' course for employed learners are satisfactory. Examination pass rates on the NVQ training programme are high. Learners who do not pass at the first attempt are supported well to resit examinations at the next available opportunity. However, many learners are slow to complete the portfolio requirements and some remain in learning beyond their expected completion date. Some target-setting in progress reviews is insufficiently specific, particularly in guiding learners towards timely completion of portfolios. Only one learner from the first group of non-employed animal nursing assistants achieved their NVQ.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		46		40											
Retained*	0		25		34											
Successfully completed	0		8		20											
Still in learning	16		28		11											

*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

The quality of provision

45. Practical training and assessment is well planned and closely linked to background knowledge training and examination requirements. Learners receive very good-quality practical training. They work or are placed in appropriate veterinary practices to enable them to fully meet course requirements. There is a strong commitment by the partners, veterinary surgeons and nurses to support training. Most of Medivet's veterinary surgeons and nurses are qualified assessors and are enthusiastic about this role. They provide a high level of individual practical coaching to learners and help them identify appropriate assessment opportunities. Some make good use of information about learners' individual learning styles to plan on-the-job learning. A well-devised structure to the practices enables learners to work in other locations, experiencing a variety of working environments. Many learners carry out work in other practices to enable them to follow the progress of animals requiring specialist treatments.

46. Learners receive very good support from veterinary surgeons and nurses at work and from PHE's tutors. They help learners plan their learning well and give regular tutorials to link background knowledge to practical veterinary tasks. Tutors are in regular contact with learners through weekly attendance at the training centre and regular progress reviews in

the workplace. There is particularly good individual support for learners who have difficulties with training. Learners who have had difficulty in passing the examination receive additional coaching, and PHE supports them to re-enter the examination. Learners with personal difficulties that have disrupted their learning have been supported well to continue in employment and resume their training at an appropriate time.

47. Career progression opportunities within Medivet are good. Once new employees have completed a probationary period, the organisation makes every effort to enable them to start on the training programme as soon as possible. Medivet has a systematic career structure to reward achievement at different levels of training. There are good opportunities for veterinary nurses who become fully qualified, to progress to senior nursing positions within Medivet. Good opportunities are available for learners who do not have the required qualifications to enter veterinary nursing training directly to do the animal nursing assistant qualification.

48. Background knowledge training is satisfactory overall. In the best learning sessions, tutors make good use of the learners' practical experience to illustrate concepts. In most sessions, all learners are involved and learning is checked regularly. In some sessions, learners are included in discussion or in answering questions. Good use is made of veterinary equipment and other learning aids. In other learning sessions, overhead transparencies are difficult to read and learners spend too much time copying notes. Some background knowledge sessions take place in a lecture theatre, and when tutors use the whiteboard the writing is often difficult for learners to see. There is insufficient consideration for the welfare of the small number of learners under 18 years of age having to travel long distances by public transport after evening attendance at the training centre. Resources at the training centre are satisfactory and some of them are good. Learners have suitable access to a laboratory, computers, libraries and a practical assessment room.

49. Assessment is well planned and clearly structured. Where appropriate, there is good identification of additional skills development and learning following assessment. Learners' portfolios and case logs are well constructed. PHE has a high proportion of assessors to learners. Internal verification is thorough and comprehensive, commenting on all aspects of the training and assessment.

50. Learners receive a comprehensive induction, with some good examples of effective learning taking place. Tutors pay good attention to the teaching of health and safety. Information on tutorial help is explained thoroughly, but there is insufficient promotion of counselling and advisory services.

51. Individual learning plans are completed fully and clearly set out planned learning, support arrangements, progress reviews and assessment. Changes to completion dates are not always recorded. Learners have very regular and frequent progress reviews, but some of the targets set in reviews are too general.

52. Support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. At induction, all learners complete an appropriate initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy levels and preferred learning styles. Animal nursing assistant learners receive good support from a subcontractor, Hertsmere Worknet. Most are making good progress towards achieving the literacy and numeracy qualification targets in their individual learning plans. Key skills initial assessment has been introduced for NVQ learners this year before

the anticipated introduction of apprenticeships in 2006. However, there has been insufficient initial assessment of non-employed learners' aptitude or motivation for veterinary nursing work.

Leadership and management

53. Learning programmes are well managed. Learning is well structured to provide good practical training opportunities, linked to effective background knowledge training and preparation for external examinations. Assessors are well supported by training centre staff, to enable them to provide regular and systematic assessment of learners' practical skills development. Learners have access to a wide range of resources and assessment opportunities at work and at the training centre, to support their learning. All learners are provided with good and equal opportunities to gain experience and progress in their careers. Communication between training centre staff and assessors and between learners, assessors and training staff is very good. Subcontractors that provide literacy and numeracy support and background knowledge training for some learners are monitored adequately. A range of effective quality assurance procedures is in place, including regular internal verification, observation of teaching and learning. PHE makes good use of learners' feedback to improve training and support.