

INSPECTION REPORT

National Tyre Service Ltd

28 April 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*

INSPECTION REPORT

National Tyre Service Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. National Tyre Service Ltd (NTS) is the largest independent fast-fit company in the country employing approximately 950 staff and operating a network of 206 branches in England, Scotland and Wales. The company was purchased from its previous owners through a management buy-out at the end of 2001, and is part of a larger group, Axle Group Holdings, employing over 1,200 people and with an annual turnover of more than £120m.

2. NTS has offered apprenticeship training in motor vehicle service replacement (fast fit), for young people since 1998, supported by funding from Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council. The 27 learners are all employed. The human resources department has prime responsibility for the apprenticeship training programme and is supported by a team of 10 staff. The human resources team includes five qualified assessors, two qualified internal verifiers and one assessor working towards qualified internal verifier status. Two staff are qualified accreditation of prior learning advisers.

3. Training is provided through 12, five-day residential courses at two dedicated training centres in Gloucester and Bootle. On-the-job training is supported by branch managers who are trained as mentors.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. The quality of training in engineering, technology and manufacturing is good.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is satisfactory overall. Self-assessment is well established. The report is detailed, but descriptive and not sufficiently self-critical. All the strengths identified by inspectors were recognised to varying extents, but none of the weaknesses. Most of the grading matched that of the inspectors. The action plan is detailed, reviewed regularly and brings about improvements, but its links to the self-assessment process are not clear.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Improvements have been made against each weakness identified at the previous inspection. Detailed, written procedures support the quality of the training process. A range of measures supports improvement, such as regular observation of teaching and learning and the use of learners' feedback. Strategies to improve retention and achievement rates have been very effective. The action plan is used well as a working document to monitor progress.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR NATIONAL TYRE SERVICE LTD:

- complete a coherent system to enhance continuous improvement
- introduce more checks and balances into the system
- widen participation
- develop and implement an effective additional support strategy

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	27	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. All aspects of provision at NTS were inspected. Inspectors made one three-day, and one half-day visit in the week before the final week of the inspection.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	18
Number of staff interviewed	24
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12
Number of visits	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Retention and achievement rates are good.** For the past four years the overall achievement rate for apprenticeship frameworks is 64 per cent. Seventy nine per cent of those who began the apprenticeship framework either have completed it or are still in

training.

9. Learners produce good national vocational qualification (NVQ) portfolios. Key skills assessments use evidence effectively from the workplace and assignments. Challenging targets are set and regularly checked. The most recent intake of learners has been set more challenging targets and they are well ahead of previous groups at the same stage of training.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	1

10. **Training is good.** It is well planned and consistent at both training centres. Resources at training centres are satisfactory. Tutors have extensive experience of working in the industry and are qualified trainers. They are respected for their knowledge and experience. They make lessons interesting and involve the learners. Comprehensive health and safety training is delivered well.

11. **Learners have good progression opportunities.** Thirteen former learners are now NTS assistant managers or branch managers. Two of the company directors and the chief executive are former fitters. Some managers speak directly to learners and act as positive role models. Progress reviews highlight progression opportunities and encourage learners' aspirations to senior positions.

12. **Learners are given very good support by a mentor at each branch where they work.** Mentors are trained for their roles. All branch staff are supportive. They treat learners respectfully as adult staff members. When learners are identified as having numeracy and/or literacy support needs they receive individual help from tutors. This support meets learners' immediate needs for the qualification, but is not sufficient to improve learners' overall literacy or numeracy skills.

13. **The purpose of learners' progress reviews is unclear.** They are not well structured. Three different types of review are carried out, which is confusing. Reviews are recorded on the same document as the assessment. It is not clear to learners why the different progress reviews take place or how they differ.

Leadership and management

14. **Strategies to improve achievement and retention rates are good.** A very thorough and clearly documented recruitment and selection process establishes minimum entry requirements. Objective testing is used well in selection and training. Branch managers are chosen carefully and trained as mentors before learners are placed with them. Small groups in training sessions ensure good individual attention. The company set and met clear targets to improve staff turnover and stability. The most significant reduction is that in the drop-out rate of learners.

15. **Training takes the highest priority for the company.** The clear annual learning plan ensures that time is set apart for training. Great importance is given to attendance.

Telephone contact shortly before training checks that all required information has been received by learners. Training sessions are up to date and consistent. Clear follow-up to training courses is given in the workplace. Learners' achievements are valued and acknowledged.

16. Emphasis is placed on maintaining good health and safety standards by the most senior staff. All staff receive specific health and safety training and regular branch audits take place. Action to rectify any problems is prompt.

17. Staff development and appraisals are satisfactory. NTS seeks to raise the aspirations of staff and change external perceptions of skills and professionalism in the industry. A range of training is available. Planned appraisals have been on hold since 2001. They were reintroduced at branch and regional manager level in 2004, but have not been re-established at head office.

18. Communications are satisfactory. Communication structures are clear and there are good arrangements to circulate information to branches.

19. NTS collects and uses a range of management information at company level. Retention and achievement rates for learners are monitored, and trends and year-on-year comparisons are identified. Targets set to reduce staff turnover have been met.

20. **Some aspects of the provision of additional learning support are weak.** Individual additional learning support is given, but there is no written additional learning support strategy and no staff are trained to provide such support. The support is sufficient to enable learners to complete their apprenticeship frameworks but not to support further career development.

21. NTS actively promotes equality and diversity throughout the workforce. All staff receive equal opportunities training as part of company induction. This is reinforced for learners during off-the-job training. **Learners have a good recall of equality and diversity regardless of their time on programme.** All training staff are up to date with the latest equal opportunities legislation, but branch managers and supervisory staff have insufficient understanding of the legislation.

22. Company documents have an equal opportunities statement and recruitment posters show a balance of gender and learners from a minority ethnic background. NTS has advertised in a careers publication for minority ethnic communities, but this has not been successful as yet. There are no learners from a minority ethnic background on programme. Most branches, and the training centres, are accessible for people with restricted mobility.

23. A number of quality-related processes have made improvements against each weakness identified at the previous inspection. Detailed, written procedures support the whole training process. **Training courses and materials have been thoroughly reviewed, updated and standardised. Training sessions are observed four times each year to assure their quality.** Learners' feedback is collected from each training course, and improvements have been made. The action plan is used well as a working document. **However, there are shortfalls in some of the systems.** Regular observations of training are clearly recorded but have no objective criteria. Trainers are given feedback, but there is no record of any follow-up to this feedback. Routine self-assessments are well established, but

are descriptive and not self-critical enough. Links between the detailed action plan and the self-assessment process are not made clear.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategies to improve achievement and retention rates
- good planning and management of apprenticeship training
- good understanding by learners of equal opportunities
- successful initiatives to improve the quality of training

Weaknesses

- weak aspects in the provision of additional learning support
- some incomplete aspects of quality assurance systems

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Motor vehicle/cycle

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good-quality training
- good progression opportunities
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- unclear purpose and structure of progress reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NATIONAL TYRE SERVICE LTD:

- going on residential training
- the depth of information given at training centres
- learning at work
- working in the branch, colleagues are always willing to share knowledge
- meeting new people
- good teamwork and getting on with people
- 'learning how to do stuff on cars'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NATIONAL TYRE SERVICE LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- 'not having to travel so far for training would be good'
- 'a centre in Scotland would be nice'
- 'a bit more training on sales'
- the number of support sessions for literacy and numeracy

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategies to improve achievement and retention rates
- good planning and management of apprenticeship training
- good understanding by learners of equal opportunities
- successful initiatives to improve the quality of training

Weaknesses

- weak aspects in the provision of additional learning support
- some incomplete aspects of quality assurance systems

24. Strategies to improve achievement and retention rates are good. A very thorough and clearly documented recruitment and selection process establishes minimum entry requirements for the apprenticeship programme. Objective testing for literacy, numeracy and mechanical aptitude is used well in the selection process and to establish training requirements. The recruitment process is managed comprehensively. Changes to the timing of recruitment and programme start dates ensure that vital time is not lost after learners leave school. Branches and branch managers are chosen carefully for their experience, stability and good personal qualities before placing learners with them. Branch managers are trained for their role as mentors. Training courses are provided to small groups of learners to ensure good individual attention. NTS has worked hard to establish and meet clear targets to improve the stability of staffing. These have been met. The most significant reduction in staff turnover is in the number of learners leaving before completing their apprenticeship framework.

25. Training takes the highest priority for the company. The clear annual learning plan is set well in advance. Good communications with key people, including branch managers, parents and carers, ensures that time is set apart for training. The company gives a very high level of importance to attendance. Learners are contacted by telephone shortly before training begins to check that they have received all the required information. Non-attendance is viewed as a disciplinary matter. Training sessions are reviewed regularly and updated to maintain currency and consistency between training centres. Learners and managers are clear about the support work to be covered in the workplace as a follow-up to training courses. Regional managers meet learners each month to discuss their progress. Learners' achievements are valued and acknowledged.

26. The management of health and safety in NTS's branches and in the training centre is good. Strong emphasis is given to maintaining good health and safety standards by the most senior staff. Guidance materials are clear and detailed. All staff receive specific health and safety training and regular branch audits take place. Action to rectify any issues is prompt.

27. Staff development and appraisals are satisfactory. NTS attempts to raise the aspirations of staff and to change external perceptions about skill and professionalism in the industry.

Investment in training for all staff is seen as a key commitment by NTS. The appraisal process is good, with clear performance indicators and grade descriptors. Plans for company-wide appraisals have been on hold since a restructuring in 2001. Appraisals were reintroduced at branch and regional manager level in 2004 and training needs were identified. Annual appraisals have not been re-established at the head office. All staff have job descriptions, but they are not all dated. It is not clear when the job descriptions were last reviewed and updated.

28. Communications are satisfactory. There are clear structures at national and regional level. Meetings are regular, but not always well recorded. Good arrangements are used to circulate information to branches through centrally produced documents and quarterly bulletins.

29. NTS uses management information satisfactorily. A range of management information is collected and used, especially at company level. Retention and achievement rates for apprentices are monitored. Trends and year-on-year comparisons are identified. Targets set to reduce staff turnover have been met.

30. Some aspects of the provision of additional learning support are weak. Learners' additional literacy and numeracy needs are identified at recruitment and individual additional learning support is given. NTS has no written additional learning support strategy and no staff are trained or qualified in the provision of literacy and numeracy support. Support is given on an irregular basis as and when required, and at one level. It is sufficient to enable learners to complete their apprenticeship frameworks, but not to support further career development. Although none of the learners in the current intake requires additional learning support, 75 per cent of learners required support in the previous intake.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

31. NTS actively promotes equality and diversity throughout the workforce. All staff receive equal opportunities training as part of their company induction. This is reinforced periodically for learners during their off-the-job training. The learners' training centre induction has a comprehensive section about equality and diversity. This is presented in a thought-provoking way and encourages debate around key issues. A refresher initiative on equality and diversity, in the form of a quiz, is given to the learners during their training blocks. Learners have a good recall of equality and diversity regardless of their time on programme. All training staff are up to date with the latest equal opportunities legislation and encourage respect and fairness within the learner groups. Although branch managers and supervisory staff receive updates about equality and diversity as part of their mentors' training, they have insufficient understanding of equality and diversity.

32. Company documents have an equal opportunities statement, and posters advertising the programme show a balance of gender and ethnic background. Currently, there is one female learner on the apprenticeship programme. The NTS website recruitment section carries a positive testimonial from this learner which is being used to encourage more women applicants to the programme. NTS has no learners from a minority ethnic background. The company has placed an advertisement in a publication aimed specifically at careers for members of minority ethnic communities. This initiative has not proved successful yet. Equal opportunities data gathered from recruitment application is analysed and used to identify target areas for future recruitment exercises.

33. All staff receive a handbook which includes sections on equal opportunities and complaints and grievances. Company notice boards display the NTS equal opportunities policy and statement. Learners have a thorough understanding of these documents. NTS has a grievance procedure which is understood by learners. Learners are within the scope of the company's disciplinary procedure. Examples of the disciplinary procedure being invoked by NTS against learners were identified. The learners involved felt that the procedure had been carried through fairly and had accepted the results.

34. Most branches are accessible for people with restricted mobility, as are the training centres. Initial assessment levels are suitable for programme requirements. Additional support is given on an individual basis when the need is identified, and is delivered at a pace and level suitable to the individual learner. Career progression routes are available within NTS and all learners are aware of the career paths available. Although three types of progress reviews are carried out in the branches, none specifically identifies equal opportunities as a discussion point to reinforce the subject in the branch environment.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

35. NTS has developed a number of quality-related processes to successfully improve training since the previous inspection. Improvements against each weakness identified at the previous inspection were noted. Detailed written procedures support the training process, from recruitment and selection through induction, training, assessment and verification. Training courses and materials have been thoroughly reviewed, updated and standardised to support consistent delivery at both training centres. Through participation, senior managers contribute to the evaluation of new training courses. Training sessions are observed, and the conclusions recorded, four times each year to assure their quality. Learners' feedback is collected from each training course, analysed and reported. Improvements in the planning of training and supporting travel arrangements have been achieved. The human resources action plan is used well as a working document to monitor action and progress.

36. Guidance about complaints and appeals is clearly described in the staff handbook and branch manual. Learners understand what they need to do if they have concerns and are confident enough to approach staff. There are no reported examples of complaints.

37. Many quality assurance activities take place that are linked to and reported through the human resources action plan, but there are shortfalls in some systems. For example, the observation of training practice for each trainer is clearly recorded against set headings, but has no objective criteria against which judgements are made. Trainers are given verbal and written feedback, but there is no record of follow-up for any actions required. The system to record assessment and review dates is not always up to date.

38. Internal verification is planned at identified points throughout the year and is mostly thorough and well documented. Assessors are given clear written feedback and any action points are followed up promptly. Internal verifiers are beginning to cross-check judgements within the internal verification team. All necessary internal verification has taken place by the end of the programme, but in-year samples are not recorded. Some learners who had been on programme for nine months had completed a number of units that had not been internally verified. External verifier reports are very positive and rarely identify action points. Training centre re-approval has recently been given unconditionally by the awarding body.

39. Learners' feedback is collected systematically for each training programme, analysed in company reports and used to bring about improvements. However, the exit interview planned for the end of training, or when a learner leaves, is not used effectively. The results are analysed, but exit interview records are not always detailed enough to give sufficient information. Some are not dated. Some current learners do not understand the purpose of the exit interview.

40. NTS has routinely self-assessed the quality of its provision over a number of years. The most recently produced self-assessment report, for 2004-05, was detailed, but descriptive and not sufficiently self-critical. Strengths identified match those identified by inspectors to some extent but the weaknesses do not. Most of the grades given in the report were the same as those given by inspectors. NTS gathers, analyses and monitors a wide range of evidence and data for company reports, but does not always use this information effectively in its self-assessment. For example, insufficient data was used to support key question 1 of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Feedback from learners and other stakeholders such as branch or regional managers is not used well. The detailed human resources action plan is reviewed regularly and used to bring about much improvement in the provisions, but its links to the self-assessment process are not clear.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Motor vehicle/cycle		2
Apprenticeships for young people	27	2

41. NTS has 27 learners working towards an apprenticeship in motor vehicle service replacement (fast fit). Each learner is employed at one of the company's 209 fast-fit branches located in England, Scotland or Wales. Learners attend residential, block-release off-the-job training at one of two training centres owned and staffed by NTS. The apprenticeship framework is targeted to be completed over a two-year period. Learners attend at least 12 residential training courses at one of the company's training centres during this time. At the residential training centres, learners study motor vehicle theory for their technical certificates, as well as practical training in the workshop area. They also study to prepare for key skills tests and carry out NVQ portfolio organisation work.

Motor vehicle/cycle

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good-quality training
- good progression opportunities
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- unclear purpose and structure of progress reviews

Achievement and standards

42. During the past four years, the overall achievement rate for completed apprenticeship frameworks at NTS is 64 per cent. For the fast-fit industry, this achievement rate is good. Of the 76 learners in the past four years, 16 have left before completing their apprenticeship frameworks. Seventy-nine per cent of learners who began the apprenticeship framework either have completed it or are still working towards completing it. This is a good retention rate for this type of programme.

43. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and they produce good NVQ portfolios that meet the required standards. Key skills are effectively assessed and accredited using evidence from the workplace and from assignments set at the training centres. Targets are set for learners and regular checks are made to see if they have been completed as agreed. The targets are challenging. The most recent intake of apprentices recruited is more academically able than past intakes and targets have been made more challenging for them. This group of learners is well ahead of previous ones at the same stage of training.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	18		31		16	100	10	100								
Retained*	0		13		10	62	9	90								
Successfully completed	0		13		10	62	9	90								
Still in learning	15		12		0	0	0	0								

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

The quality of provision

44. NTS provides good-quality training for learners. Training is well planned. The two company training centres provide identical courses to ensure that consistent information is given to all learners. Resources at the training centres are satisfactory. Training materials are up to date, well produced and clearly presented. Tutors have extensive experience of working in the industry and are qualified trainers. They are respected by learners for their knowledge and experience and make lessons interesting and participative. Learners enjoy attending the training centres and the standard of written work produced for their NVQ portfolio is good. One classroom training session was observed by inspectors and was graded as good, a grade 2. Comprehensive health and safety training is well delivered and the training materials are of a very good standard.

45. Learners have good progression opportunities with the company. Thirteen former apprentices are now NTS assistant managers or branch managers. Two of the company **directors and the chief executive are also fitters. These facts are made known to** all learners at their induction. Some of the managers speak directly to learners at their inductions to demonstrate the career opportunities and to act as positive role models. Progress reviews also highlight progression opportunities and encourage learners to aspire to senior positions with the company.

46. Learners are given very good support during their training and assessment periods. A mentor is assigned at each branch. This is usually the branch manager who provides guidance and support for learners at work. Mentors receive effective training for their roles. Learners are considered to be important staff members who will influence the prosperity of the company. All staff are supportive of learners. Staff are respectful towards them and treat them as adult staff members. Company NVQ assessors visit the learners' branches to assess learners' competences in performing work tasks. This process is working satisfactorily. NTS has chosen to internally verify all of the learners' NVQ evidence. Although this system is time-consuming, it gives the company complete confidence in the quality of portfolio evidence being submitted for the NVQs and key skills qualifications.

47. The provision of literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. In some groups, many learners are identified as having literacy or numeracy support needs. Additional support needs are met through individual assistance by the tutors during background knowledge training sessions. One learner has been identified as being dyslexic. He is supported by

one of the other learners who has good literacy skills. This learner checks written work for spelling and grammatical errors and suggests how improvements can be made. This is done willingly and is appreciated and valued. The level of assistance given is successful in meeting learners' immediate needs in completing their apprenticeship frameworks, but is insufficient to improve their overall literacy or numeracy skills for further development.

48. The purpose of learners' progress reviews is unclear. Three different types of progress reviews are carried out, but they are not well structured. One is described as a pastoral review. It is carried out by a member staff from the company's human resources department at one of the training centres during off-the-job training periods. Another is completed at work by the branch manager together with the learner and usually the NVQ assessor. The third progress review is done by the assessor when they visit the workplace to carry out any assessment for the NVQ. This review is recorded on the same document as the assessment and involves the learner, the assessor and the branch manager. It is not clear to learners why the different reviews take place or how they differ. The forms used do not provide the reviewer with clear prompts about what should be discussed and recorded. The pastoral reviews do not focus sufficiently on issues such as personal health and welfare, equality and diversity, and personal effectiveness. The written comments on all the progress review forms are often general statements such as 'no problems' and 'keep up the good work' rather than focusing on what has been achieved and what can be further improved. Target-setting is not always clear because of problems such as poor photocopying and insufficient details about what should be done, by whom and when.

Leadership and management

49. Learners are well supported in their workplaces, and managers allow them time to complete NVQ portfolio work during working hours. Learners are provided with disposable cameras to take photographs of work they have been doing, to use as portfolio evidence. The cost of any processing is paid by the company. On- and off-the-job training is well planned and progress is checked regularly to ensure that learners are not falling behind their expected rate of progress. If progress is slower than expected then remedial work is organised to ensure better progress. Also, if learners are progressing faster than expected this is seen as a positive result and they are moved to other off-the-job training groups that are at a more advanced stage of their programmes.

50. Learning sessions are checked four times each year by managers for the quality of delivery and quality improvement purposes. Course materials are also checked for clarity to ensure that they are up to date and appropriate. The quality of completion and updating individual learning plans varies and is not checked systematically. Progress reviews do not have formal quality checks on the process of reviewing learners, or checks on the quality of written information.

51. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and have good, respectful working relationships with other staff members. A female learner has written an article on the NTS recruitment website about her positive experiences working as a fast-fit apprentice. The article is aimed at encouraging other women to consider a career working at NTS.