

INSPECTION REPORT

Alder Training Limited

12 May 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
- **learnirect** 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

Alder Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Alder Training Limited (ATL) is a privately owned training company. It has two training centres, one in Liverpool and one in Southport. ATL is funded by the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning. The company's main area of learning is health, social care and public services, although ATL also operates as a subcontractor to a local training provider called Sysco Training to deliver the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme. Sysco Training was inspected in March 2005 and ATL was visited as part of this inspection. There are currently 363 learners funded through the LSC or by the European Social Fund (ESF) to work towards care, early years or oral health care qualifications. These qualifications include advanced apprenticeships, apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQ) training at levels 2 and 3. Most of the learners are employed or are on work placements. There are 49 staff employed to manage and deliver the programmes. Many of the staff work in teams and with a wide range of employers. In September 2004, ATL was recognised as a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in partnership with two local colleges for its provision in care and dental nursing.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** ATL's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. In health, social care and public services, the provision is good.

3. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is very effective and very closely linked to the business planning and quality improvement processes. The views of learners, staff and employers are used as a basis for the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Self-assessment is an ongoing process and five days are set aside each year to focus on quality issues.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** ATL has been effective in developing and implementing strategies to promote improvement. The quality of the provision has improved. Retention rates and learners' progression rates have improved.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ALDER TRAINING LIMITED:

- improve achievement rates
- sustain improving retention rates
- fully implement the skills for life strategy
- make better use of evidence for all components of the qualification
- maintain the momentum for continuous improvement

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

Health, social care & public services		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Care		2
Apprenticeships for young people	107	2
NVQ training for young people	29	2
Other government-funded provision	42	2
Dental		2
Apprenticeships for young people	67	2
NVQ training for young people	56	2
Early years		2
Apprenticeships for young people	48	2
NVQ training for young people	14	2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. ATL provides one main area of learning which is health, social care and public services. This was reported on with contributory grades for care, early years and dental nursing. ATL is also a subcontractor for Sysco Training to deliver E2E programmes. This provision was not graded as it was covered in the inspection of Sysco Training. However, some learners were interviewed as this programme provides a progression route into the main area of learning.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	44
Number of staff interviewed	30
Number of employers interviewed	21
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	25

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **The achievement of externally accredited qualifications for dental nurses is very good.** Retention and achievement are improving, particularly on the NVQ programme.
7. **Retention and achievements rates for learners on NVQ and ESF-funded care programmes are good.**
8. **Learners in care develop good practical skills.** They work to a good professional standard and are confident when working with their clients and colleagues.
9. **For learners on early years programmes there are some good retention rates and there is good achievement of technical certificates.** Learners who have previously not achieved well are making significant progress. Most learners achieve a qualification that will help them to improve their careers.
10. Retention and achievement rates for apprentices in care is improving. ATL has introduced several actions to deal with historically poor retention and achievement rates. For example, the company has introduced more thorough initial assessment and more effective monitoring of learners' progress.

The quality of provision

11. **High-quality care settings provide good support for learners.** Experienced staff provide supervision and coaching, and managers ensure learners are able to work on tasks that are relevant to their training or assessment.
12. **Learners in care are supported effectively by training staff who are very approachable, flexible and willing to help learners with a variety of personal and vocational difficulties.**
13. **All care staff are very well qualified and experienced,** and most keep up to date professionally by working as agency nurses. Staff go on a wide range of professional development courses to ensure the validity of their knowledge of the care sector.
14. **Individual support for dental learners is good.** Frequent visits by staff encourage learners to attend training and plan assessments.
15. **Good off-the-job training is provided and valued by learners in dental nursing.** It is well planned and flexible, taking account of learners' work hours.
16. **Planning for key skills training and assessment for dental learners is very good.** There is accreditation of learners' prior achievements. ATL has developed comprehensive workbooks to support learners.
17. **Support for learners in early years is particularly effective.** Learners' needs are identified, additional support and key skills training sessions are promptly provided when

appropriate.

18. **Working relationships with employers in the early years sector are good.** The frequent visits by training managers are informative about the learners' achievements and assessment needs.

19. Initial assessment, assessment practices and resources for learners in care are satisfactory. Assessment is thorough and good use is made of resources to support learners with their progress.

20. Induction and reviews in early years are satisfactory. The induction ensures learners understand their programme requirements. Frequent and thorough reviews are valued by learners and employers.

21. There is some incomplete recording of the links between on- and off-the-job training for dental nurses. The links between training and assessment are not recorded on individual learning plans or on progress review paperwork.

22. **For learners in early years there is an over reliance on written evidence to support the background knowledge for the NVQ.** ATL has recognised this weakness and has introduced actions to reduce learners' workload. For example, more diverse methods of assessment are being used.

Leadership and management

23. **ATL has implemented a range of good strategies to improve retention and achievement rates and support its business planning processes.** There is a clear focus on continuous improvement and the experience of the learner. The retention and achievement strategy has successfully reduced the number of learners who leave the programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan.

24. Staff development is continuous and effective. Targets are set and reviewed for staff, and training is prioritised according to the effect it will have on learners.

25. **Communication is good.** Staff are well informed and work effectively in teams. Employers receive an information pack and newsletter to keep them up to date with developments. Wider links with local organisations are productive for ATL's current and future plans for training.

26. **ATL's approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity is very effective.** The equal opportunities officer, through close liaison and training, ensures all staff and learners are aware of and understand equality and diversity issues. A comprehensive equal opportunities action plan is kept up to date to continually promote support for and access to training, and fair practices.

27. **Good monitoring of equal opportunities data helps to make sure staff have a clear understanding of the progress and achievement made by different individuals and groups of learners.** This data is used for action-planning and target-setting but is not shared with all staff in a meaningful way.

28. **ATL's self-assessment process is very well established.** It is central to their approach

to continuous quality improvement and includes feedback from staff, learners and employers. The process is critical and takes account of those aspects of provision which have an effect on the learner.

29. The **skills for life strategy has been developed but ATL has been slow to implement its support programme**. Staff have been slow to gain appropriate qualifications. There has been no monitoring of the effectiveness of the additional support provided.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- good links between self-assessment and business planning
- comprehensive and effective staff development
- very effective internal and external communications
- very effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- good monitoring of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of skills for life strategy

Health, social care & public services

Care

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates on NVQ and ESF-funded programmes
- good development of practical skills
- very good support for learners
- highly qualified and experienced staff

Weaknesses

- weak but improving retention and achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes

Dental

Grade 2

Strengths

- very good achievement of externally accredited qualifications
- good off-the-job training
- good individual support for learners
- very good planning for key skills training and assessment

Weaknesses

- some incomplete recording of the links between on- and off-the-job training

Early years

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention rates
- particularly effective support for learners
- good working relationships with employers

Weaknesses

- over reliance on written evidence for the NVQ

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ALDER TRAINING LIMITED:

- the frequent visits from ATL's staff to provide support in the workplace
- very helpful and approachable staff
- learning from each other
- the work placements

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ALDER TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the timing of classes - 'we need more time to get to night school'
- the number of night school classes available
- the number of desks

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- good links between self-assessment and business planning
- comprehensive and effective staff development
- very effective internal and external communications
- very effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- good monitoring of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- slow implementation of skills for life strategy

30. ATL has a retention and achievement strategy. There has been a noticeable reduction in the proportion of learners who leave training in the early stages of their training programme. For example, in 2002-03 16 per cent of learners left their training programme in the first three months but this had reduced to 4 per cent in 2004-05. Similarly, in 2002-03, 27 per cent of learners left their training programme in the first six months but this had reduced to 7 per cent in 2004-05. ATL has analysed learners' reasons for leaving the programme and has identified when the company should intervene in the future to keep learners in training. A pilot initiative monitored learners' achievements in one area of learning. As part of this, one of the company's directors held regular meetings with individual training managers to review their learners' progress, identify slow progress and set new targets. This initiative has been so successful that it is now being implemented in a second area of learning. An initiative in information technology (IT) has included development of a new website for the company. ATL uses the new website as a marketing tool and has included a section on it which learners can access for support with their training. Through the company's business planning processes, ATL identifies the strategies needed to support the implementation of a successful and well-managed training provision. The introduction of key skills training and assessment for dental nursing has required staff training and the provision of support for learners. The comprehensive business planning cycle has ensured that the company has been able to grow in size while maintaining and improving the quality of training and support for learners. The business plan includes key dates for activities and a timetable for the self-assessment process. Data is used effectively as a basis for the business planning process.

31. Staff have appropriate vocational experience and qualifications. The comprehensive staff development strategy ensures continuous professional development. ATL also supports staff working towards training and assessment qualifications and improving their knowledge of equality of opportunity, and health and safety. All staff receive training on the appraisal process to help them get the most out of it. Staff appreciate the openness and involvement they have in the appraisal process and the feedback they receive. Targets are set and reviewed during appraisal meetings. Staff training needs are identified and prioritised according to the effect the training will have on the learners and the business priorities. Administrative staff have training to develop the skills they require. All staff have

a learning and development file which includes their appraisal and training records as well as updates on their work role and objectives. This file is regularly updated. Staff training also takes account of the company's future plans and developments. Staff are given opportunities to develop in the company and are encouraged to take part in training to support this. Staff feel valued. There are good working relationships and very effective teamwork. The management style is open and all staff appreciate the opportunities they have to contribute to the development of the company.

32. Internal and external communications are well planned and effective. There are staff meetings every month which have recently been restructured following feedback from staff. The new structure is more effective and enables the sharing of business planning information and information and developments in teams. The staff meeting structure now also includes short workshops which are led by programme managers who feed back information to the directors. Communication with employers is good and ATL has worked hard to improve this since it was identified as a weakness in their self-assessment report. Training managers visit learners at least once a month and make contact with the employers. There is an informative and well-designed pack for employers. The first copy of the newsletter has just been distributed and is also included on the new website. Employers feel well supported and value their relationship with ATL. There are productive links with local organisations and networks to support both strategic planning and future developments for learners. For example, ATL has partnerships with other care training providers. In October 2004, ATL achieved CoVE status in health and social care as part of a partnership with two colleges. These external links have enabled ATL to be at the forefront of developments in health and social care.

33. ATL's management of resources is satisfactory. A finance director has been appointed to monitor income and expenditure. The management team has a monthly finance meeting. The accommodation at the training centres is adequate and the facilities at Southport are being reviewed. The need for additional training facilities has been identified and potential sites are being assessed, taking into account the type and quality of accommodation needed as well as the transport links. Up-to-date information and communications technology is available at both training centres and there are sufficient resources to support learners on their programmes.

34. ATL has been slow in implementing a skills for life strategy. This is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. However, the strategy is well thought out and has identified stages building up into a comprehensive support programme. The use of appropriate initial assessment, and identification of literacy and numeracy levels has been implemented and results are included on learners' individual learning plans. Depending on the outcome of their initial assessment, learners are required to attend the training centre for additional group or individual support. The additional support provided for learners is not recorded and they do not have an individual learning plan or targets for this aspect of their training. Learners achieve their key skills qualifications but there is too little reference to achievement and progression during progress reviews. ATL does not monitor the effect of additional support on learners' retention and achievement rates. ATL has reviewed the experience and qualifications of staff and, where available, staff are either attending or will be attending appropriate training. Not all staff are fully aware of the implications of the literacy and numeracy levels identified during initial and diagnostic assessment. ATL has recently joined the local work-based learning working group for skills for life.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

35. The promotion of equality of opportunity is very effective. A member of staff is responsible for raising awareness of and implementing the equal opportunities policy and strategy with staff, learners and employers. The equal opportunities officer liaises closely with all training managers to share information and link equality and diversity issues to the learning programmes. There is a commitment by all staff to fair and anti-discriminatory practice in relation to support for and access to training. Appropriate and up-to-date policies and procedures covering equality and diversity issues are in place. Staff are made aware of these through the induction process and through regular training. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. It is covered in detail at induction, particularly through discussion and the use of a quiz. Learners' understanding of it is monitored at progress reviews, and is part of the values and principles underpinning many programme units. Learners have a good awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities and how to deal with issues such as harassment and bullying in the workplace. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities action plan which is updated regularly and reviewed at the equal opportunities working group meetings. A range of successful initiatives have been introduced to attract more male and minority ethnic applicants, particularly in care. Effective marketing materials are used to promote diversity and help to eliminate inequality.

36. The monitoring and analysis of equal opportunities data is good. Information regarding recruitment, selection and early leavers is evaluated for different groups of learners. Some analysis is also carried out regarding the progression and achievement of different groups of learners. Learners' success and achievements are celebrated. Information is used as a basis for decision-making, action-planning and target-setting but is not always shared with staff in a meaningful way. There are good links with employers and a comprehensive information pack for employers emphasises the importance of equal opportunities. The monitoring of employers' compliance to equality of opportunity is effective and carried out through the review process which explores the circumstances surrounding the learner's experience in the workplace.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

37. Self-assessment is an integral part of the business planning and quality improvement process. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process, and five days a year are set aside for quality assurance and self-assessment. All the activities which are part of the business planning cycle feed into the self-assessment process. Information is collected and evaluated including feedback from learners and employers. Analysis of this feedback is used to prepare an annual report. The results are used in the self-assessment report. Feedback from employers requesting more information on NVQ units has been acted upon and is now included in the pack for employers. Data is used to make judgements about retention and achievement rates and the effectiveness of the training provision. The self-assessment process is critical and has identified strengths and weaknesses that have a significant effect on learners. The self-assessment report is particularly strong for leadership and management. The judgements in the self-assessment report matched many of those made by inspectors.

38. The development plan produced in response to the findings of the self-assessment report is produced every year and is divided into actions relating to the five key questions in the Common Inspection Framework. The development plan is comprehensive, identifies realistic outcomes, targeted success indicators and monitoring activities, and links to other

strategies and actions. Progress on actions is noted on the plan and most target dates are met or completed early. The effect of actions from previous years can be seen in the improvements that have been identified in the self-assessment report.

39. ATL has a quality assurance policy and a range of appropriate procedures for all aspects of business planning, management and delivery of the training programmes. The policies and procedures are comprehensive and well laid out with diagrams and flowcharts. There are in-depth audits of all review paperwork with reports sent to the quality director every month and an audit of a sample of learners' file sent every month. At present, these do not identify the poor recording and reviewing of additional support. For all other areas this process is effective and is improving the recording and reviewing of actions and targets set for learners.

40. The observation of training sessions is satisfactory. Very detailed records are made of the observation and feedback is provided. All staff delivering training are included but there is no planned schedule of observations. ATL is starting to plan peer observation of training sessions.

41. The arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. There are clear processes, sampling and observations. Standardisation meetings are held regularly and internal verifiers meet to standardise verification practices.

42. There is some inadequate monitoring of health and safety for dental nursing. Some workplace risk assessment forms are not consistently or comprehensively completed.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Care		2
Apprenticeships for young people	107	2
NVQ training for young people	29	2
Other government-funded provision	42	2
Dental		2
Apprenticeships for young people	67	2
NVQ training for young people	56	2
Early years		2
Apprenticeships for young people	48	2
NVQ training for young people	14	2

43. There are 178 learners on training programmes in care. Forty-eight are apprentices and 59 are advanced apprentices. Fifty-two learners are enrolled on an NVQ at level 2, including 42 ESF-funded learners, and 19 learners on an NVQ at level 3. ATL works with 72 organisations on Merseyside including residential and nursing homes, hospitals and community-based care services. Learners work with elderly people, people with physical and mental illnesses, and adults with learning disabilities.

44. The care and dental programme achieved CoVE status in partnership with two local colleges of further education in September 2004. There are 123 learners on the dental programme. Of these, 40 are advanced apprentices, 27 are apprentices and 56 learners are working towards an NVQ at levels 2 or 3. There are five male and 118 female learners. Ninety-four learners are employed and 29 are on work placements in dental practices in the Greater Merseyside area. ATL works with 72 general dental practices, including one sedation, one implantology, one endodontic and two orthodontic practices. Nine training managers are responsible for the support, training and assessment of learners. All learners are required to take an examination for an externally accredited qualification. Learners can take the examination at two times in the year. All learners have the opportunity to attend off-the-job training sessions provided in the evening every two weeks. Training is offered in four locations across the region. Training managers arrange individual tutorials for learners who are unable to attend the planned training sessions.

45. ATL has offered qualifications in childcare since 2003. There are 63 learners in training. Fifteen are advanced apprentices and 33 are apprentices. All of these learners are working towards qualifications in early years care and education. Four learners are working towards an NVQ in early years care and education at level 2 and 10 learners are working towards the same qualification at level 3. There is one learner working towards an NVQ at level 3 in playwork. All learners are employed or have work placements in nurseries or schools. The company has one early years programme manager who internally verifies assessment decisions and assesses some learners. Two training managers carry out all assessments in workplaces across Merseyside. There are training centres in Liverpool and Southport.

Care**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates on NVQ and ESF-funded programmes
- good development of practical skills
- very good support for learners
- highly qualified and experienced staff

Weaknesses

- weak but improving retention and achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes

Achievement and standards

46. Retention and achievement rates on the ESF and NVQ programmes are good. In 2002-03, 73 per cent of ESF learners achieved their qualification, and in 2003-04 this increased to 75 per cent. Eighty per cent of NVQ learners achieved their qualification in 2002-03, and 78 per cent of learners who started in 2003-04 are still in learning. All current learners are progressing well.

47. Learners are developing good skills for work. Learners develop good practical skills and show confidence in working with people in care settings. Managers confirm that learners are able to work to a good professional standard. Learners grow in personal confidence, and show greater self-awareness and improved understanding of their work. Learners relate well with other workers and develop good teamworking skills.

48. There is good progression for learners who complete advanced apprenticeship programmes. For example, 25 of the 37 learners who completed programmes in 2001-02 and 2002-03 went on to professional nurse training.

49. ATL has introduced a range of initiatives to improve retention and achievement rates. A range of actions introduced by ATL have had a substantial impact on improving retention and achievement. Initial assessment is now more thorough to ensure that learners are recruited to appropriate programmes. New learners are now initially enrolled for six weeks so that their suitability to their training programmes is reviewed. Specialist staff have been recruited to provide additional training in key skills and to help learners with literacy and numeracy support needs. Work has been carried out to better match learners' work to the requirements of the technical certificate and the NVQ. There is more effective monitoring of management information to monitor learners' progress and identify potential problems. Concerns are discussed with training managers at meetings which take place every month. The proportion of learners leaving their programmes in the first three months has reduced from 20 per cent in 2002-03 to 4 per cent in 2004-05 and the number leaving during the first six months has reduced from 32 per cent to 10 per cent in the same period. Retention and achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes have been weak but are improving. In 2002-03, 29 per cent of advanced apprentices completed the framework and another 12 per cent are still in learning. Those learners currently on programmes are making good progress towards completing their framework.

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		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	38		39	100	41	100	35	100	68	100						
Retained*	1		1	3	16	39	18	51	30	44						
Successfully completed	1		1	3	12	29	15	43	22	32						
Still in learning	33		21	54	5	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	49		32		43		54	100	50	100						
Retained*	1		11		14		35	100	20	100						
Successfully completed	1		9		8		25	100	11	100						
Still in learning	41		6		1		0	100	0	100						

*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																
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24		27		20	100										
Retained*	3		13		14	70										
Successfully completed	3		13		13	65										
Still in learning	21		8		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

Other government funded																
Other government-funded provision	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	42	100	53	100	202	100										
Retained*	0	0	41	77	159	79										
Successfully completed	0	0	40	75	147	73										
Still in training	42	100	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

50. Support for learners is very good. Learners work in good care establishments that provide excellent environments for learning. Very experienced and qualified members of staff supervise learners and provide coaching and support. Learners attend in-house training. This includes statutory training in moving and handling, fire procedures, first aid and food hygiene and more specialised courses such as catheter care, dementia, continence, abuse and understanding diversity. Managers are kept informed of learners' progress by attending learners' progress reviews or through receipt of progress review paperwork and regular discussions with training managers. Managers will rearrange learners' work patterns and create opportunities for them to perform new tasks as part of their training or assessment. Training managers work flexibly to support learners and visit them at their places of work in the evenings or at night to fit in with the learners' work patterns. Learners are visited at least every three weeks, but more often if needed. Learners comment that training managers are very approachable and supportive. Individual training is provided for learners who find it difficult to learn in group sessions. Laptop computers have been loaned to learners with specific learning needs or a disability. Learners who need additional help with literacy or numeracy receive individual tuition. Learners with dyslexia have been provided with written materials in different formats or with coloured acetates. The pastoral care provided is particularly effective in supporting learners through their training. Training managers have helped learners through a range of complex health, relationship, domestic and financial difficulties by making home visits, referring them to local support agencies, providing transport, and contracting them more frequently. Learners attend background knowledge training days for the technical certificate and NVQ every two weeks at the Liverpool training centre. During these training days, learners can meet with training managers to review progress and receive individual guidance.

51. NVQ assessment is effective. Learners go through all the skills required for a unit before starting it to identify suitable work activities for assessment. Assessment plans are detailed with clear recording of the evidence to be collected and target dates for completion of the tasks identified. Assessors make good use of diverse evidence, including witness testimonies, workplace products and learners' personal reflective accounts. Assessment is thorough and evidence, particularly direct observations, is well recorded with accurate referencing to national standards. Learners start their training programmes by working on the technical certificates. This provides some evidence towards the background knowledge component of the NVQ. Too little evidence of performance is collected during this period. Portfolios are well presented and evidence is clearly referenced to the NVQ standards. Pre-set questions and assignments have been developed to help standardise assessment. In some cases these are used excessively and do not take the abilities of individual learners into account. Every contact with a learner is recorded in detail on a continuous progress record that is copied for the learner and on a monitoring document. Progress is formally reviewed every 10 weeks. Copies of the review record are forwarded to the employer. The completion of reviews and achievement of targets are monitored centrally by an administrator. All records of unit achievement are updated every week. Any concerns identified about learners' progress are referred to the programme manager and discussed at a monthly managers' meeting.

52. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners have an initial interview with a training manager, during which their vocational skills are assessed. They are then invited to attend

an induction day at which information about the company, the training programmes, and the company's policies and procedures are given. Learners take computerised literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessments to identify specific support needs. Learners requiring additional support are provided with additional individual guidance and tutoring. A good range of teaching and support materials is available.

53. Resources are satisfactory. There are two training rooms at the Liverpool training centre that are spacious and bright. Learners' work is displayed on the walls. Rooms are well equipped with a video, projector, whiteboards and flipcharts. Trainers have access to a good selection of practical aids for teaching. There is an adequate selection of videos, training packs and books relating to the nursing and medical aspects of care. A more limited range of resources is available for generic care. Training managers make good use of well-prepared handouts, research from the internet and up-to-date articles. There is an IT room with 10 computers.

Leadership and management

54. A range of well-planned strategies have been implemented to improve retention and achievement. Data is effectively used to monitor and manage learners' progress. ATL also regularly analyses data about the reasons for learners leaving their programme early and has identified areas of the programme that need to be improved from this information.

55. Staff are very experienced and well qualified with appropriate qualifications in care, training or teaching and assessment. All have relevant occupational backgrounds and recent experience in care practice. Some staff keep their skills up to date by continuing to work as agency nurses. Annual appraisals identify further development needs and staff attend a wide range of occupationally relevant courses. Staff attend short courses and workshops run by the awarding body to maintain current knowledge. Some staff are members of national network organisations for NVQ assessors and internal verifiers.

56. Internal verification is satisfactory. Internal verifiers observe all assessors every year. Detailed written feedback is provided after the observation and action points for practice development are set. Verifiers have detailed sampling strategies that identify which units, performance criteria and range requirements are to be sampled. Standardisation meetings are held with assessors every month. Internal verifiers meet together every three months to standardise verification practices.

Dental

Grade 2

Strengths

- very good achievement of externally accredited qualifications
- good off-the-job training
- good individual support for learners
- very good planning for key skills training and assessment

Weaknesses

- some incomplete recording of the links between on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

57. The achievement rate for the externally accredited qualification is very good. Ninety-two per cent of level 2 learners and 82 per cent of level 3 learners achieved the qualification in November 2004.

58. Learners' achievements on the NVQ programme are satisfactory. On the apprenticeship programmes 100 per cent of those learners who started programmes in 2004-05 are still in learning. All current learners are making good progress.

59. There has been some poor retention on the NVQ programme but a number of effective strategies have been implemented and are having a positive effect on the learning experience. ATL carries out a regular and comprehensive analysis of the reasons why learners leave their programmes without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. From this information a number of strategies for improvement have been devised and include the introduction of the E2E programme and the programme-led apprentice. The latter commenced four months before the inspection. Learners receive support while working towards the key skill qualification and attend training sessions which introduce them to some of the basic competences required of a dental nurse, such as instrument recognition. To date, 12 learners have attended this programme. All learners have secured work placements and are working towards an NVQ at level 2. Another initiative is the 'pending period' which lasts a minimum of six weeks. This was introduced nine months before the inspection. All costs associated with this initiative are funded by ATL. Learners are either employed or have work placements. They attend induction and the off-the-job training provided every two weeks. Attendance at work and at off-the-job training is closely monitored. Over the six-week period, the oral health staff team meets to discuss individual learners' commitment, ability and potential. Depending on the outcome of discussions, learners either start the oral health training programme or are referred to another programme, a different provider or their pending period is extended. To support the various strategies, the quality director introduced regular individual meetings with the training managers. Targets for learners to work towards are agreed and monitored during the meetings.

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		2000-01		1999-00		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	40		0	100	0	0	0	100	0	0	0		0		0	
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0		0	
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0		0	
Still in learning	40		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0		0	

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		0		0		0		0		0		0		0	
Retained*	0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0	
Successfully completed	0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0	
Still in learning	27		0		0		0		0		0		0		0	

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		87		82		87		0		0		0		0	
Retained*	0		13		46		59		0		0		0		0	
Successfully completed	0		11		38		53		0		0		0		0	
Still in learning	2		46		7		1		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

60. Off-the-job training is good. Training is very well planned and delivered. Learners can start their training at any time of the year. All learners have the opportunity to attend off-the-job training evening classes every two weeks. As examinations dates approach the frequency of the off-the-job training increases. Learners value and enjoy the training they receive and have a good recollection of the information that they receive. Attendance is good.

61. There is good individual support for learners. All learners are visited regularly at work where they have the opportunity to plan assessments and discuss any concerns with their assessor. Learners receive good pastoral support. When learners have had periods of sickness or convalescence they have received individual support either at the training centre or at home. Where learners live some distance from the training centres, ATL provides taxis so that learners can attend the evening classes. All learners are issued with a textbook. In the attempt to further enhance the engagement of employers and workplace supervisors a message book was introduced one month before the inspection. Following meetings with learners a written message is left for the employer or workplace supervisor informing them of what has been agreed and any actions that they need to do.

62. The arrangements for assessment are satisfactory. With the help of their assessor, learners complete a skills match form during assessment planning meetings. This allows them to identify their training needs. Assessors clearly advise learners of the ways in which their knowledge and skills can be achieved and improved. Where necessary, assessors arrange training. Following discussions a continuous progress report is completed. This outlines learners' achievements over a given period and targets for achievement for the next stage of the learners' development. However, there is an over reliance on written evidence. Learners are required to complete too much written evidence in their own time.

For example, oral questions are answered in writing and there is insufficient use of witness testimonies.

63. Progress reviews are satisfactory and carried out regularly. Learners are aware of the purpose of progress reviews and understand what is required of them during the review. Employers are involved in discussions, although they do not receive a copy of the review form.

Leadership and management

64. There is very good planning for the introduction of key skills training and assessment. A review of learners' previous achievements has been carried out. There has been effective use of accreditation of prior learning. Learners have been requested to present certificates as evidence. There has been the development of a level 1 workbook and a level 2 workbook is still in development. Arrangements for staff training and support are ongoing. Arrangements for the support of learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not well established. Significant work and developments are ongoing to improve the current situation.

65. Staffing arrangements are satisfactory. All staff are well qualified and experienced. There is a variety of appropriate staff development activities. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a variety of aids available to support off-the-job training. Resources include dental models, instruments, visual aids and informative handouts. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. There is a detailed sampling plan. The pre-determined units and criteria for verification are changed every year. Standardisation meetings take place every month. Assessors are observed regularly. Additional internal verifiers are currently receiving training to support the expansion of the programme.

66. There is some incomplete recording of the links between on- and off-the-job training. Learners receive good off-the-job training and training at work which includes individual coaching and supervision. The employer information pack provides useful information for employers about on-the-job training, and some dental practices are carrying out assessment against agreed criteria. The identification of training needs is carried out and recorded on the skills match form. However, there is no recording of the links between training or assessment in individual learning plans or progress reviews.

67. Overall, health and safety practices are satisfactory. However, there are some isolated incidences of poor practices. These include a number of learners wearing acrylic, gel and long finger nails. In one practice undergoing refurbishment, screws were left protruding from the reception desk. In another practice a table-top x-ray developing machine had tubes leading to containers of developing fluid that did not have secure tops and were not secured to the floor. This was located in the staff room in close proximity to the tea-making facilities. There are some discrepancies in the completion of work-placement health and safety checklists. These practices pose a risk to some learners and the clients with whom they work.

Early years**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good retention rates
- particularly effective support for learners
- good working relationships with employers

Weaknesses

- over reliance on written evidence for the NVQ

Achievement and standards

68. Retention rates are good on childcare programmes. Seventy-seven per cent of the advanced apprentices who started their training in 2003-04 are still in training and all learners who started on the same programme in 2004-05 are still in training. Fifty-five per cent of apprentices starting programmes in 2003-04 are still in training and 96 per cent from 2004-05 are still in training. Sixty-nine per cent of learners starting NVQ programmes in 2003-04 are still in learning and 88 per cent of those starting in 2004-05 are still in learning. Learners are making satisfactory progress for this stage of their training. ATL's learners achieve externally accredited qualifications well. For example, 89 per cent of all learners entered for the technical certificate have achieved it. Fifteen per cent of these learners achieved distinction grades and 59 per cent achieved merit grade. Fifteen learners took a paediatric first aid course and all of them achieved the qualification.

69. Portfolios are individual, neat and well presented. Learners demonstrate satisfactory attainment with reflective accounts of their practice. Many level 2 learners have low prior achievements, but make significant progress towards reaching their goals and fulfilling their potential. Most learners want to obtain a qualification that will help them gain employment or improve their career prospects. They believe ATL is assisting them well to achieve their goals. Learners have been given additional responsibility and promotion at work. Many learners are key workers for a small group of children. One learner is now deputy manager of her nursery.

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	8	100	10	100	0	0	0	100									
Retained*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0									
Successfully completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0									
Still in learning	8	21	7	18	0	0	0	0									

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24	100	20													
Retained*	0	0	7													
Successfully completed	0	0	1													
Still in learning	23	85	10													

*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																
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8	100	13													
Retained*	0	0	2													
Successfully completed	0	0	2													
Still in learning	7	29	7													

*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

70. Support for learners is very effective throughout their training programme. All learners receive an initial assessment of their literacy, numeracy and language needs. When additional needs are identified, support is put into place promptly. Training managers allocate additional time to these learners but they do not have training or experience of working with learners with additional learning needs. Learners have the opportunity to attend additional key skills training sessions. The initial assessment also assesses learners' understanding of young children and working with them. This information, together with the learners' work role, is effectively used to place learners on an appropriate level of programme. This is particularly effective when learners join ATL with evidence for their NVQ from other sources. For example, ATL supported a learner for 10 months in a work-experience placement. This gave the learner an opportunity to improve her interpersonal skills and learn to work effectively as part of a team.

71. ATL has established good working relationships with employers. Employers are particularly appreciative of the training managers' additional support visits. They regard these as good motivational visits and useful sources of information about learners' achievements. Employers are aware of the activities that learners need to practise for assessment. They arrange duty rotas and areas of work to give learners the opportunity to cover the full range of work for their NVQ. Most nurseries have a small library of textbooks and information packs for learners to use. A recently introduced newsletter has been distributed to some workplaces.

72. Induction is comprehensive and memorable. It effectively informs learners of their employment rights. On completion of induction, learners understand their programme of learning and the requirements of the various components of it. When learners progress from apprenticeship to advanced apprenticeship programmes, new individual learning

plans are agreed. Learners' progress reviews are thorough and take place more frequently than the statutory requirements for training. Many learners have a progress review every month. Employers contribute to progress reviews by commenting on learners' work, activities and performance, their initiative and their growth in self-confidence. Progress towards achieving the NVQ, the key skills qualification and the technical certificates is also reviewed. Learners value and are motivated by these frequent and comprehensive reviews. Training managers visit workplaces between reviews to support and maintain the learners' motivation. Many carry out observations of the learners' practice at work during these visits. A training manager spent time with a learner at work to give feedback about her written work for technical certificates. She explained how the pass grade had been achieved and how the learner could improve her grade. Training managers have recently started to use a microphone and mini disc player to record learners' responses to oral questions. Learners now spend less time producing written evidence.

73. There is effective practical support for learners. For example, training managers provide individual background knowledge training sessions in the workplace. They provide transport for learners living and working in rural areas to take examinations for the externally accredited qualification in the training centres. Unemployed learners complete jobsearch activities. ATL has recently introduced a six-week pending project. Learners who participate in this project are given the opportunity to experience work in a range of childcare settings before committing themselves to training. These learners' progress reviews are satisfactory. Training managers complete continuous progress sheets during each support or assessment visit to the workplace. These are more detailed and inform learners of their achievements and activities they have to complete. Assessment practices are thorough and help the learners to make links between on- and off-the-job training.

74. ATL relies too heavily on learners' written work as evidence for the background knowledge aspect of the NVQ. All learners complete assignments for all units. Learners do not receive enough guidance about the breadth of knowledge they need to demonstrate. Learners with additional learning needs are allocated extra individual assessment time, this is always used to complete written work. The early years team has identified that written work for technical certificates provides much evidence for NVQ. They have started to use the learners' written work for technical certificates to demonstrate background knowledge. Learners will now have to produce less written work. Assessors are becoming more confident in their use of diverse methods of assessment. However, these are recent developments and the effect on learners cannot yet be measured.

Leadership and management

75. Operational management of the early years care and education team is thorough. The programme manager satisfactorily internally verifies assessment decisions. Internal verifiers provide detailed written feedback to assessors. The programme manager also assesses a small number of learners and an appropriate member of staff verifies her decisions. Internal verification is used to monitor learners' progress. This is discussed during monthly meetings with training managers and effective actions are put into place to deal with slow progress. Training managers are vocationally experienced. They have knowledge of current working practices. All of them are qualified to assess and the programme manager is qualified to internally verify assessment decisions and to teach learners over 16 years of age. Two of the team are working towards an NVQ at level 4. Resources for training in the centres and workplaces are satisfactory. All staff have attended training to keep their assessment practice up to date. ATL's observations of assessment practice, training and the staff

appraisal system has captured performance and development needs. Training managers receive company data which is meaningful to them. They consistently meet the targets they are set. Company policies and procedures have been adapted to suit learners on early years programmes. For example, the disciplinary procedure gives comprehensive and simple explanation of how this may relate to learners. Learners have satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity for their clients and themselves. There are no male learners on early years programmes. ATL participates in career fairs and has specifically targeted male school leavers in marketing materials.

