

INSPECTION REPORT

RWP Training Limited

08 June 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

RWP Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. RWP Training Limited (RWP) is a private training company based in Carlisle. It offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in hairdressing, engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional, and information technology (IT). IT was not graded at the inspection. The company provides work-based learning programmes from its headquarters in Carlisle and has another recently acquired smaller centre to deliver engineering training. Learners work or have placements in Carlisle and the surrounding area, where on-the-job training and assessment takes place. The technical certificate for the engineering programme is subcontracted to Carlisle College of Further Education. RWP offers other non-government-funded training, which was not in the scope of this inspection.

2. Since 1996, the company has been delivering work-based learning through a direct contract with Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC). RWP is managed by its two partners, who employ 14 staff and two self-employed specialists that provide health and safety training. Currently, there are 126 learners on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes. This represents a 27 per cent increase on the number of learners in training at the reinspection in 2003. Only one learner is registered as having a disability. Two-thirds of learners are women and all are white. At less than 1 per cent, the proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups is low, compared with the national average of 5.2 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** RWP's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The provision in business administration, management and professional is good, and it is satisfactory in engineering, technology and manufacturing. The provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy is inadequate.

4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report contained useful information and accurate data. However, leadership and management in the areas of learning are not dealt with adequately and no overall judgement is made of this key area in the area of learning reports. The standards of training are not adequately evaluated or sufficiently referred to in the key strengths and weaknesses. RWP does not use data on retention and achievement rates effectively to contribute to judgements in the report. Key items that were omitted from the self-assessment report are also missing from the quality improvement plan compiled from the findings of the self-assessment process.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Following the reinspection in 2003, RWP has made improvements. Retention rates are good. The company has rectified weaknesses identified at the reinspection. Learners' progress towards achieving their qualifications is slow due to significant staff loss and

difficulties in recruiting suitable replacements. RWP has not planned sufficiently well to reduce the effect of these changes on the learners. Strategic and business planning are good and RWP's staff understand and contribute effectively to set targets.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR RWP TRAINING LIMITED:

- improve contingency planning for staff changes
- improve key aspects in self-assessment process
- accelerate the learners' progress
- improve management of the hairdressing programme
- improve target-setting for learners

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		3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Mechanical engineering Apprenticeships for young people	21	3	

Business administration, management & professional			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Business administration Apprenticeships for young people	44	2	
NVQ training for young people	3	2	
Management NVQ training for young people	6	2	

Hairdressing & beauty therapy			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Hairdressing Apprenticeships for young people	43	4	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Business administration and management, hairdressing, engineering, technology and manufacturing were reported on and graded. At the time of the inspection there were too few IT learners for this area to be reported on separately. Evidence was examined before and during the inspection, and a team of five inspectors visited RWP for three days. An additional day was spent at RWP before the main inspection to inspect a recruitment and induction day for engineering applicants.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	37
Number of staff interviewed	25
Number of employers interviewed	19
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	3
Number of visits	11

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. Learners develop good vocational skills in the workplace and in off-the-job training. Workplaces offer highly appropriate opportunities for skills development and progression. Many employers support learners to carry out a wide range of tasks and projects outside of their normal duties. Employers encourage learners in their training and are interested in their progress.

8. Retention rates are good in engineering and business administration and management, and they have improved continuously from 2003. In hairdressing, retention rates are satisfactory and have risen from 9 per cent in 2002-03, to 77 per cent in the current year.

9. Learners are making slow progress towards achieving their qualifications in all areas of learning. In engineering and hairdressing, staff changes and problems with recruiting new staff have had a significant effect on the learners' assessment opportunities and progress. In business administration and management, training staff are not setting learners sufficiently challenging targets at review. Training staff do not motivate and encourage timely progress through setting challenging targets. Many learners who could complete early are not motivated to do so.

10. In hairdressing, attendance by some learners is poor, with all those in one apprenticeship group absent at least once in the past seven weeks. Lateness is recorded on registers, and these indicate poor punctuality regularly across all groups. RWP has recognised these issues and it has recently devised a system to better monitor and provide

information for discussion at reviews and reports to salon employers.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	0	0	2
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	1	2	1	1	5
Total	1	4	1	1	7

11. The table above only shows areas of learning in which two or more learning sessions have been observed and graded.

12. **Teaching and learning sessions are mostly good.** Training sessions are generally well planned and taught. In hairdressing, some staff are less experienced at using the teaching resources available. Some practical sessions are insufficiently focused and learners do not use their time effectively. There are regularly insufficient numbers of customers for all of the learners.

13. **RWP's training centre is well resourced and provides learners with a modern, comfortable learning environment.** Teaching rooms have modern, up-to-date equipment to help tutors present information to learners using a variety of methods.

14. **RWP's programmes are meeting the needs of learners and employers.** Opportunities to progress on to higher-level courses are good, particularly in business administration and management. In some hairdressing placements, learners participate in courses provided by professional hairdressing manufacturers, and in skills courses such as basic cutting. All engineering learners take additional qualifications in addition to their advanced apprenticeship.

15. **Induction and recruitment practices are thorough.** RWP interviews all learners and provides them with good advice and guidance on programmes and courses that the company offers. Learners who are not suited to the programmes at RWP also receive good information about other providers in the locality that may be able to meet their needs.

16. **Learners' progress reviews are frequent and RWP applies them consistently.** In most cases, workplace supervisors and mentors are involved in the discussion to support learners' achievement in the workplace. Target-setting at reviews is weak. In engineering, there is insufficient short-term target-setting in most reviews to help the learners to deal with slow progress in national vocational qualification (NVQ) unit achievement. Hairdressing tutors do not use all of the information available to ensure that learners are set appropriate targets. The targets set for business administration and management learners are insufficiently challenging and some are not progressing through their qualifications as fast as they are able to do so.

17. Learners receive satisfactory initial assessment and support. RWP uses the results of initial assessment to help develop the learners' individual learning plans. Those with additional literacy and numeracy needs receive satisfactory training and support.

18. Assessment is satisfactory and is effectively planned and well recorded. Evidence of

learners' work and assessment records are appropriate. In hairdressing and engineering, assessment opportunities have recently been infrequent due to staffing problems. RWP is recruiting more staff to improve the learners' assessment opportunities.

Leadership and management

19. Programmes in business administration and management and engineering are well managed. Staff meet regularly and communication is good. In hairdressing, programme management is poor. All of the hairdressing team has changed in the past six months and the new hairdressing team is not yet fully staffed. This has had an adverse effect on the learners' progress. The delivery of the programme is unbalanced. The programme is not well planned or delivered to sufficiently take into account learners' individual needs.

20. The strategic management of the company is good. The business plan is thorough and meets the strategic direction and mission of RWP, and it is linked to regional and national training targets and aims. The chief executive is involved in regional strategic planning of work-based learning. Staff understand the company's strategic objectives and RWP encourages them to contribute to the service that it provides.

21. RWP is involved in developing learning and training regionally with other partners, especially in providing good opportunities for young people aged 14-19. The company is working with local schools to offer their pupils NVQ training at level 1. RWP has developed a pre-apprenticeship programme with a local Entry to Employment (E2E) training provider. In business administration, RWP has developed a foundation degree with a local university and this starts in January 2006.

22. Communication at RWP is good. Directors and managers operate a very effective open and responsive management style, which is much appreciated by staff. Staff are well informed and contribute effectively to all aspects of RWP's business. The company's structure is clear and staff understand their roles and responsibilities.

23. RWP uses management information well to monitor training. The system to collect and provide information on learners and their performance is very effective. Managers use collated data to produce detailed reports, which they use to review and monitor learners' progress and to help develop actions to maintain or improve the learners' achievement and progress.

24. RWP is effectively improving employers' commitment to training. The company has developed a mentoring programme to improve employers' involvement in the apprenticeship programme. A training programme is available to mentors that is linked to an external award. RWP has recently developed a useful framework to accredit its employers for their standards in engagement, commitment, and participation in work-based learning. The concept has been adopted by a regional small business service.

25. RWP has developed and implemented a number of strategies to promote and extend learners', staff and employers' understanding and application of the equal opportunities policy and diversity issues. It has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and an implementation plan that sets out the company's annual strategy. The objectives in the plan are precise, responsibilities and timescales are clear and the outcomes are measurable. The equal opportunities group regularly monitors and reviews the plan.

26. **RWP makes good use of data to analyse and monitor performance against equal opportunities targets.** The company sets targets with the LSC to improve the gender balance in all programmes and to widen the participation of learners from under-represented groups. RWP is having some success towards meeting these targets and it has improved the participation of men in hairdressing courses. The company has not yet attracted any female learners to engineering programmes.

27. **The promotion of equal opportunities at the training centre is good.** Effective posters in training rooms and on corridor walls emphasise equality and diversity. There is satisfactory access to the ground floor of RWP's premises and facilities for those with restricted mobility.

28. The company's arrangements with subcontractors are satisfactory. There is a satisfactory service level agreement between RWP and Carlisle College of Further Education and appropriate reports of progress are received.

29. The internal verification process is satisfactory. Internal verifiers and assessors hold regular meetings to share good practice assessment and to ensure standardisation of practice between the occupational areas. External verifiers' reports are positive about the standard of assessment and internal verification.

30. Staff are set appropriate targets based on the requirements of the company. RWP monitors targets during the annual staff appraisal, which the directors carry out fairly and satisfactorily. The professional development needs of staff are identified at appraisal and meet the business objectives and the individuals' training and development needs.

31. The self-assessment report is the fourth produced by RWP. The views of learners, staff, employers and directors contribute to self-assessment. The self-assessment report is generally an informative document. **However, there is insufficient attention to key aspects of training in self-assessment.** Leadership and management in the areas of learning are not adequately covered and no overall judgement is made of this key area at occupational level. Teaching and learning and the standards of training are not adequately evaluated or sufficiently referred to in the key strengths and weakness. Inspectors agreed with three out of the six grades in the self-assessment report.

32. **RWP has insufficient contingency planning to replace staff who leave the company.** Staff turnover during the past two years has been very high, with 14 staff leaving RWP or having long breaks in their employment. This has affected the learners' progress significantly in hairdressing, and to a lesser extent in engineering, where training, assessments and reviews of learners' progress have been delayed or cancelled.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- successful strategic direction
- particularly effective open and responsive management style
- good management information system

- good initiatives to improve employers' awareness and commitment to equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- insufficient contingency planning for staff changes
- insufficient attention to key aspects in self-assessment

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good retention rates
- thorough introduction to training
- very supportive employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress by learners towards achieving NVQ units
- insufficient workplace assessment

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- high retention on apprenticeship and NVQ programmes
- good progression opportunities
- well-managed programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficiently challenging targets for learners

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Strengths

- good standards of practical skills

Weaknesses

- slow progress in completing NVQ units
- poor programme management

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT RWP TRAINING LIMITED:

- the supportive, helpful staff
- the training and support days at RWP
- meeting employers before signing up
- the training centre resources
- the workshops
- salon training
- 'RWP helps you get a job'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK RWP TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the number of workshops
- the number of assessors
- the car parking
- the changes of assessor - there are too many
- 'we need to know what we will be doing each week at RWP'
- the communication of staff changes

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- successful strategic direction
- particularly effective open and responsive management style
- good management information system
- good initiatives to improve employers' awareness and commitment to equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- insufficient contingency planning for staff changes
- insufficient attention to key aspects in self-assessment

33. RWP sets a clear and very successful strategic direction for work-based learning. The business plan is thorough and meets the strategic direction and mission of RWP and is carefully linked to regional and national training targets and aims. The chief executive is involved in regional strategic planning of work-based learning. Business objectives and targets are reviewed regularly with managers at staff meetings. Staff are well aware of RWP's strategic objectives and the company encourages them to contribute to the service provided. RWP is involved in developing learning and training regionally with other partners, especially in providing good opportunities for young people aged 14-19. The company is involved in a number of initiatives to extend its provision. It is working with local schools to offer their pupils NVQ training at level 1. RWP has developed a pre-apprenticeship programme with a local E2E training provider. In business administration, the company has developed a foundation degree with a local university and this starts in January 2006.

34. Directors and managers operate a very effective, open and responsive management style, which is much appreciated by staff. Directors and managers are freely available to staff and effectively operate an open-door policy. Formal and informal communications are good and staff are well informed and contribute effectively to all aspects of RWP's business. The company's structure is clear and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. All staff have up-to-date job descriptions. Managers are very responsive and supportive of staff needs. RWP operates a family-friendly policy for staff and learners.

35. Managers make good use of management information to monitor training. The system to collect and provide information on learners and their performance is very effective. This includes a wide range of useful data that includes details on recruitment, gender, ethnicity, additional learning requirements, and achievement of qualifications. Managers use collated data to produce detailed reports, which they use to review and monitor learners' progress and to help develop actions to maintain or improve learners' achievements and progress. The widely circulated reports are often produced graphically or in tabular format for easy reading and monitoring of learners' details or progress. RWP also has a useful and informative website.

36. RWP has recently developed a useful framework to accredit its employers for their standards in engagement, commitment, and participation in work-based learning. The concept has been adopted by a regional small business service. To date, 11 employers have achieved the bronze standard and three the silver award. Learners are benefiting by employers becoming more motivated, focused and involved in their training programme.

37. RWP's financial management and its deployment of resources are satisfactory. The deployment of staff and accommodation is appropriate and is meeting the needs of the training provision and the company's administration functions. Staff are provided with graphs for each programme that indicate their viability. The business is operating within its budget, which the directors manage centrally, assisted by a small team. There are adequate and regular checks and monitoring to ensure that the company spends funds appropriately. External auditors, including the local LSC, carry out financial auditing. The most recent audit took place earlier this year.

38. Arrangements to manage literacy, numeracy and language support are effective. The initial assessment process accurately identifies the learners' additional support needs. However, there is some poor attendance in hairdressing. All learners receive vocational assessments to ensure that they are offered the most appropriate programme to meet their needs and career aspirations. Where appropriate, learners receive an assessment for dyslexia. Those identified with support needs receive good support. However, RWP does not have a written strategy or plan for the implementation of literacy, numeracy, and language support. It does not produce written reports on the effectiveness of this support.

39. Health and safety arrangements and monitoring are appropriate to meet the needs of the company.

40. There is insufficient contingency planning to replace staff who leave RWP. Staff turnover during the past two years has been very high, with 14 staff leaving RWP or having long breaks in their employment due to ill health or maternity leave. This has affected learners' progress significantly in hairdressing and, to a lesser extent, in engineering, where training, assessments and reviews of learners' progress have been delayed or cancelled.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

41. RWP is effectively improving employers' commitment to training. The company has developed a mentoring programme to improve employers' involvement in the apprenticeship programme. RWP is effectively encouraging employers to work towards a framework that accredits their commitment to training, engagement and participation in work-based learning. Employers are responding positively. RWP is raising employers' awareness of good training, and the company is widening the participation of learners from under-represented groups and improving standards.

42. RWP gives equality of opportunity a high priority. It has developed and implemented a number of strategies to promote and extend learners', staff and employers' understanding and application of the equal opportunities policy and diversity issues. It has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy that sets out the principles to be applied by staff, learners and employers. An equal opportunities implementation plan sets out the company's annual strategy. The objectives are precise, responsibilities and timescales are clear, and the outcomes are measurable. The equal opportunities group regularly monitors and reviews the plan. The company is achieving objectives in line with the plan. For

example, the company's website has been improved and the introductory page carries information on 'what's new', giving brief details of the improved equal opportunities page. The dedicated webpage on equal opportunities carries the company's equal opportunities policy and procedures, which employers can download and adopt, and it has useful links to other agencies that promote equality and diversity. An easy-to-use online complaints page allows learners and employers an alternative way to raise issues that they are dissatisfied with.

43. RWP makes good use of data to analyse and monitor performance against equal opportunities targets. Detailed analysis takes place on recruitment patterns. For example, the company collects data on applications by postcode, gender, age, and where applicants found out about or were referred by others to RWP. Further analysis takes place on how many of these applicants start the programme. This allows RWP to further target under-represented groups. There have been some female applicants for engineering, and male learners have been recruited on to hairdressing programmes. However, the number of male learners on business programmes has decreased this year. The company has not succeeded in attracting learners from minority ethnic groups on to any programmes. Analysis has not yet taken place of the achievement of learners from different groups. For example, no learner with additional needs has yet completed their training programme and, as such, analysis cannot take place. The company analyses and compares the performance of different programme areas.

44. RWP's staff take positive action when learners have identified issues regarding their health and safety at work. The company records and takes action relating to complaints quickly. Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities. Training on equal opportunities at induction is good. Equal opportunities is promoted at review. The review document lists a number of questions on equal opportunities to check the learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. In reviews observed by inspectors, some staff gave insufficient attention to the questions, and learners' responses to the questions were poor. Staff training has taken place to improve assessors' and tutors' understanding and the company plans further training.

45. The promotion of equal opportunities at the training centre is good. Effective posters in training rooms and on corridor walls emphasise equality and diversity. There is satisfactory access to the ground floor of RWP's premises and toilet facilities for those with restricted mobility. There is no lift to the first floor, although alternative arrangements can be made to accommodate those with disabilities.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

46. RWP has a satisfactory quality improvement plan. Its quality improvement policies and procedures cover the essential aspects of the company's training and administration. It has identified 11 key stages for learners' training and development, which are covered by detailed and regularly updated procedures. All details of the quality improvement process are contained in the manual, which is readily available on RWP's intranet. Some of these procedures are accessible to learners, employers and the subcontractor. A quality improvement monitoring team carries out observations and audits of the key policies and procedures.

47. The internal verification process is satisfactory and is managed by the internal verification co-ordinator. Internal verifiers and assessors hold useful quarterly meetings to

share good practice assessment and to ensure standardisation of practice between the occupational areas. External verifiers' reports are positive about the standard of assessment and internal verification.

48. Feedback questionnaires completed by learners and employers provide information on the standard of training provision. Learners are surveyed at various key stages of their training. The company analyses and evaluates data from the questionnaires. It circulates the findings to staff through easy-to-read booklets. Only learners with problems are seen on an individual basis to resolve their concerns. The company does not feed back survey findings, which are often good to learners and employers. Examples of improvements made because of feedback include improving learners' work-based learning opportunities.

49. Staff are set appropriate targets based on the requirements of the company. Targets are monitored during the annual staff appraisal, which the directors carry out fairly and satisfactorily. Staff's continuing professional development needs are identified at appraisal, which meets the business objectives and the individuals' training and development needs. Regular staff training workshops are held on key aspects of learner training or operational procedures. RWP also uses good practice information obtained locally or nationally on work-based learning performance to develop its staff and as a comparison of their performance against other providers.

50. RWP has improved the weakness identified at reinspection of unsatisfactory subcontracting arrangements. There is satisfactory monitoring of the subcontractor. The monitoring ensures that the standard of training is meeting learners' learning and development needs.

51. RWP has established arrangements for self-assessment. The views of learners, staff, employers and directors contribute to the self-assessment. The self-assessment report is generally an informative document. However, there is insufficient attention to key aspects of training in self-assessment. Leadership and management in the areas of learning are not adequately covered and no overall judgement is made of this key area at occupational level. Teaching and learning and the standards of training are not adequately evaluated or sufficiently referred to in the key strengths and weakness. Information and communications technology (ICT) provision is not included in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report has a quality improvement plan stating how weaknesses are to be resolved and how strengths can be maintained or improved. However, the key items not included in the self-assessment report are also missing from the quality improvement plan. The action plan forms an integral part of the business and development-planning process. The company's most recent self-assessment report is its fourth.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Mechanical engineering Apprenticeships for young people	21	3

52. There are 21 learners on engineering training programmes. Twenty are on a four-year advanced apprenticeship and one is on a two-year apprenticeship. All of the learners are men and are employed in local industries. Learners attend either RWP or Carlisle College of Further Education on day release to work towards a technical certificate and key skills, if appropriate. Learners' progress reviews take place at least every 12 weeks in their workplace. Learners have an initial assessment at the start of their programme. Induction takes place in the training centre and on employers' premises. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills and industrial knowledge are assessed at interview and during induction at RWP. Learners apply directly to RWP or are referred by their employer or the Connexions service.

Strengths

- good retention rates
- thorough introduction to training
- very supportive employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress by learners towards achieving NVQ units
- insufficient workplace assessment

Achievement and standards

53. Retention rates for advanced apprentices are good and have improved since the reinspection in 2003. Of those learners recruited in 2003-04, 85 per cent are still in training and this has increased to 100 per cent for new learners in 2004-05.

54. There is slow progress by learners towards framework achievement. In 1999-2000, 80 per cent of learners completed the advanced apprenticeship framework, but framework completions for subsequent years are delayed. Few learners have progressed as far as could be expected for their time on the programme and many targets set for NVQ unit achievement have been passed. Learners from the 2001-02 intake of advanced apprentices are nearing the end of their programme, but they still have units that they have not started and are not as close to completion as would be expected for learners on programme for almost four years.

55. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Portfolios of evidence are well structured and well presented. Most learners have a good understanding of the requirements of the qualification and are regularly collecting evidence related to practical work. Good use is

made of a wide range of evidence such as written reports, job cards, witness testimony, photographs of work tasks and examples of projects to support competency.

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	5		7		15		10		17	100						
Retained*	0		0		0		3		5	29						
Successfully completed	0		0		0		3		5	29						
Still in learning	5		6		4		5		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	0		0		8	100	3	100	6	100						
Retained*	0		0		2	25	0	0	3	50						
Successfully completed	0		0		2	25	0	0	2	33						
Still in learning	0		0		1	12	0	100	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

56. Learners receive a thorough introduction to their training. RWP invites engineering applicants to an initial introduction day at the company's offices, to meet staff and prospective employers. An initial assessment is satisfactory and is thoroughly and consistently applied by RWP. All learners have literacy, numeracy, language and key skills assessments, which are supported by an in-depth interview to identify the level of their previous learning. The company also carries out a vocationally specific assessment. The results of the assessments are accurately recorded onto individual learning plans. Learners who have literacy and numeracy needs are recommended for additional learning sessions. Further induction takes place between three days and one week at the centre and on employers' premises. Learners are made aware of their role and responsibilities in training and are able to recall the content of induction when transferred to the workplace. Good attention is paid to equality of opportunity.

57. Learners receive good support from their employers. Most have a good understanding of their learners' NVQ qualification requirements and the assessment process. They allow time during the working week for learners to collect evidence and build portfolios. Learners are well supported in the workplace by effective mentors, who are provided with a useful manual containing information about the programme. One workplace mentor is a qualified assessor and is a member of RWP's assessment standardisation committee. RWP and employers encourage learners to achieve additional qualifications, such as health and safety certificates, scaffold erection and technical qualifications. Some learners progress to

higher national certificate and diploma awards.

58. Teaching and learning are good. Sessions are well planned and tutors use a variety of activities to motivate and interest the learners. Teaching rooms at RWP are well equipped with ICT equipment and comfortable furnishings. A newly equipped mechanical workshop has recently been acquired in Carlisle. Key skills training is incorporated into the early stages of training and the company encourages learners to complete the key skills in their first year. Key skills are taught at RWP as part of the day-release programme. Learners receive good advice and guidance on compiling portfolio evidence.

59. Assessment practices are satisfactory. There have been recent staff changes and RWP has been unable to successfully recruit for the post of full-time assessor. Many learners are close to completion of their NVQs but have workplace evidence still to be assessed. As a temporary measure, the internal verifier and a workplace mentor are carrying out some assessments.

60. Support for learners is satisfactory. Progress reviews are frequent and are consistently applied by RWP's staff. In most cases, workplace supervisors and mentors are involved in the discussion to support learners' achievements in the workplace. Health and safety and equal opportunities are regular agenda items and learners are encouraged to discuss any concerns that they may have. There is insufficient short-term target-setting in most reviews to help learners to deal with slow progress in NVQ unit achievement. Learners who are identified as needing additional support have their learning needs met. Assessors support learners with additional help in portfolio-building and background knowledge sessions.

Leadership and management

61. Programmes are well planned and managed. A recently introduced introduction-to-engineering day is well planned and has proved to be popular with apprentices and employers. Applicants receive good information to enable them to make an informed choice of the most suitable programme for them.

62. Resources to support the programme are good. RWP has recently acquired and equipped a useful mechanical engineering workshop, which it uses to support the learners' acquisition of practical skills.

63. Arrangements with subcontractors are satisfactory. There is a satisfactory service level agreement between RWP and a local college and appropriate reports of progress are received. RWP's staff meet college staff each month to discuss progress and learners' programmes. The self-assessment report for engineering was informative but did not discuss retention and achievement, programme management, or the quality of teaching and learning, or use this information to help develop judgements. The inspector agreed with the self-assessment grade.

64. Internal verification is well planned. There are regular assessment and verification standardisation meetings. There is an appropriate sampling plan that includes assessor activity and examination of learners' evidence. Not all internal verifiers' recommendations are recorded as completed.

65. Staff changes and problems with recruiting appropriate staff have caused delays in learners' progress. RWP has made great efforts to recruit appropriate staff and has now

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identified a new member of staff who will join the company in July 2005. However, some learners have been without an assessor for some weeks and this has contributed significantly to their slow progress.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business administration</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	44	2
NVQ training for young people	3	2
<i>Management</i>		
NVQ training for young people	6	2

66. There are currently 53 learners on the business administration and management programme. Twenty-four of these are apprentices, 20 are advanced apprentices and nine are on NVQ programmes. All but one of the learners are employed. Employers and placement providers include manufacturing and construction companies and the local council. Approximately 96 per cent of learners are women. Of the learners recruited in the current year, one has a disability and none are from minority ethnic groups. Learners are recruited through the Connexions service, from schools or by direct referrals from employers. A 10-week programme of off-the-job training is available to most learners on a fortnightly basis and is delivered at the provider's headquarters. The rest of the programme is mostly delivered on the job. Progress reviews are carried out every 10 to 12 weeks in the workplace.

Strengths

- high retention on apprenticeship and NVQ programmes
- good progression opportunities
- well-managed programmes

Weaknesses

- insufficiently challenging targets for learners

Achievement and standards

67. The retention on apprenticeships and NVQ programmes are high. For apprentices, retention rates were 60 per cent in 2002-03 and on NVQ programmes they were 33 per cent. Of the learners recruited to all programmes in subsequent years, 95 per cent are either still in learning or have completed their programme successfully.

68. Achievement rates are satisfactory for apprentices and advanced apprentices. Seventeen per cent of learners on NVQ programmes successfully completed their programmes in 2002-03. In 2003-04, one-third of NVQ learners completed their programmes, with a further third still in learning. There is good achievement of the technical certificate.

69. Portfolios of evidence are generally well presented and contain a good range of appropriate generated in the workplace evidence.

70. Progress in unit achievement for many learners is slow, particularly at the start of the programme. Tutors do not set learners sufficiently challenging targets at their progress

reviews. Apprentices are only expected to complete one unit in the first three months. Learners state that it is not a problem if they do not reach their targets. Tutors simply extend the unit completion targets dates and reviews subsequently record that the learner is still on target. One apprentice has achieved only one unit in five months, another has been on the programme for six months but has not completed any units. An advanced apprentice has completed only one unit in 11 months. Most learners finally complete all of the units by the end of their programme and some do complete early. However, the opportunity is lost to motivate and encourage progress through setting challenging targets. Many learners, who could complete early, are not motivated to do so.

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					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		13		8	100	14	100	15	100	12	100				
Retained*	0		0		6	75	7	50	11	73	8	67				
Successfully completed	0		0		4	50	6	43	11	73	8	67				
Still in learning	6		12		2	25	0	100	0	0	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																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	11		24	100	20	100	23	100	44	100	0	100				
Retained*	0		8	33	12	60	16	70	25	57	0	100				
Successfully completed	0		6	25	12	60	16	70	25	57	0	100				
Still in learning	11		13	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	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		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		7	100	3	100	5	100	6	100						
Retained*	0		2	29	1	33	4	80	2	33						
Successfully completed	0		2	29	1	33	4	80	4	67						
Still in learning	3		5	71	1	33	0	100	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

71. Support from employers is very good. Learners receive good on-the-job training. They work in well-equipped, busy offices, and they are employed in positions which, in most cases, adequately cover the evidence requirements of their qualification. Where a learner's

job role cannot generate evidence for a specific unit, for example in the case of a level 3 NVQ learner taking the accounting options, employers arrange for the learner to spend time in another section of the company. Employers receive a copy of the scheme of work for the off-the-job training sessions and many adapt their learners' work to link with this training. Most mentors are fully aware of the qualification requirements and provide good learning environments. Employers encourage learners in their training and are interested in their progress. Mentors attend learners' progress reviews and participate in discussions and offer help to learners in generating evidence. Learners are particularly appreciative of the high level of support that they receive.

72. Progression opportunities are good. Over the past four years, 25 per cent of apprentices have progressed to advanced-level apprenticeships or qualifications at level 3. A number of learners have progressed on to management NVQs at levels 3 and 4. Learners are keen to progress and most of them have clear ideas of their preferred progression routes following their current qualification. RWP is keen to develop progression opportunities and is currently in discussion with a local university to implement a foundation degree.

73. The off-the-job training sessions successfully prepare learners for the technical certificate and IT-related additional qualifications. Learners find the training enjoyable and useful. Many would like the workshops to continue beyond the 10-week programme. Learners taking management NVQs do not have off-the-job training sessions. They do not have the opportunity to explore and discuss the implementation of management theories in a group situation and share experiences and ideas with their colleagues, which is an important aspect of their qualification. Teaching and learning sessions are well planned and use a variety of activities. RWP uses the learners' experiences to develop learning points. However, there is insufficient planning to show how it will meet the different levels of ability and confidence.

74. Assessments meet awarding body requirements and are well planned and recorded. There is at least one work-based observation for each NVQ unit. Key skills are well integrated through assignments, usually from the start of the programme. Learners are very well supported by RWP's staff and employers. Assessors visit learners every two to four weeks and learners can contact them by e-mail and telephone in between visits. Detailed action plans are agreed at each visit. There is one learner with additional literacy and numeracy needs and these are met during the off-the-job workshops.

75. Programmes are relevant to the learners' work roles and meet employers' needs. Employers are pleased with the development of learners' confidence and competence as a result of the training programme. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Programmes and levels for individual learners are identified at enrolment through a thorough initial assessment process. This information is also used to good effect to select appropriate employment or placements in order to meet the learners' career aspirations.

Leadership and management

76. Programmes are well managed. Relationships between the provider's staff, in particular the assessors and workplace mentors, are excellent. Employers speak highly of the well-organised and well-structured programmes that RWP delivers. An identified workplace staff member is appointed as a mentor for each learner. RWP provides an optional mentor workshop to train and accredit these staff, to improve the support for the

learners in the workplace. A mentors' handbook supports employers and gives good programme information.

77. There are regular team meetings and good communication within the administration team. RWP shares and uses data effectively. Staff performance targets relate to business objectives. Thought has been given by managers to the workload of assessors and the maximum number of learners assigned to them to ensure that they deliver an effective service.

78. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the sector. Resources include textbooks and online information on the qualifications. Employers provide good office environments and suitable rooms for assessor' meetings and reviews.

79. There is a positive culture of equality of opportunity, which all staff practise and promote. There is a traditional female gender bias of learners. RWP is using a number of initiatives to attract male learners on to business administration and management programmes.

80. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements and is satisfactory. Regular standardisation meetings take place.

81. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. The content of the self-assessment report provides useful information. However, identified strengths and weaknesses were not all substantiated within the text and inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses but agreed with the self-assessment grade.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hairdressing</i> Apprenticeships for young people	43	4

82. RWP has provided hairdressing training since January 2003, following the transfer of learners from another local provider. There are 43 learners. Nine are on a 15-month advanced apprenticeship programme taking an NVQ in hairdressing at level 3 and key skills. The remainder are on the two-year apprenticeship programme taking an NVQ at level 2 in hairdressing, the technical certificate and key skills. There are three male learners and seven learners receiving additional learning support for literacy and numeracy. All apprentices are employed in salons in Carlisle and the surrounding areas. Most learners start at RWP following recommendation from their workplace salons. RWP helps the prospective learners who are referred by Connexions, or who respond to their advertisements, to find a salon workplace. Learners mostly start their training at RWP in the summer months. They attend the company training centre for off-the-job training once a fortnight.

Strengths

- good standards of practical skills

Weaknesses

- slow progress in completing NVQ units
- poor programme management

Achievement and standards

83. Learners develop good practical skills. They receive regular training in their workplace salons. This includes on-the-job training for carrying out their salon duties and additional specific training sessions where they work on their own customers. In the better salons, their hairdressing skills are further enhanced by participating in courses by professional hairdressing manufacturers, and skills courses such as basic cutting. RWP and some learners' salons also encourage skills development by the participation in hairdressing competitions. The fortnightly practical training on the apprenticeship programme at the RWP salon enables learners to practise specific hair techniques, mostly using head blocks.

84. Data for achievement of the apprenticeship framework for all three years is incomplete, as there are still learners in training.

85. Progress in completing units of the NVQ at level 2 throughout the programme is slow. Most assessment is being carried out at the end of the learners' programmes. Despite being in training for nearly two years, some learners still have up to seven of the nine NVQ at level 2 units to complete. Achievement of key skills unit targets is poor. Achievement of NVQ at level 3 skills by advanced apprentices is satisfactory.

86. Retention rates are generally satisfactory. Attendance by some learners is poor, with

one apprenticeship group having all been absent at least once in the past seven weeks. Lateness is recorded on registers, and shows regular poor punctuality across all groups. These issues have been recognised by RWP and a system has been recently devised to better monitor and provide information for discussion at reviews and reports to salon employers.

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	7		3		18	100	0	100								
Retained*	0		0		5	28	0	100								
Successfully completed	0		0		5	28	0	100								
Still in learning	5		3		1	6	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																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		31	100	35	100	0	100								
Retained*	0		21	68	13	37	0	100								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	13	37	0	100								
Still in learning	10		21	68	3	9	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

The quality of provision

87. Teaching and learning at RWP are satisfactory. Learners have a good rapport with RWP's staff and enjoy relating their salon experiences in the knowledge sessions. The planning of the training sessions has been improved recently by the introduction of new standard hand-outs and lesson plans. Teaching rooms are well resourced to support a range of learning strategies and are equipped with modern furniture and equipment, such as an LCD projector, a wall-screen, a flip-chart, a whiteboard and a computer. In the best sessions, the resources are used extremely effectively, giving a good pace to learning, varying activities to engage learners and include regular checking of learning. Some staff are less confident in using the teaching aids. In less successful training sessions, the use of the learning resources is poor. Instructions given to learners for completing activities are unclear and explanations of new concepts confuse many learners. Learning is not systematically checked and some learners record information inaccurately.

88. RWP's training salon is modern and bright. This salon's practical sessions are mostly well planned. There are clear objectives to enable learners to practise specific skills on the head blocks. However, some practical sessions are insufficiently focused and learners do not use their time effectively. In practical sessions there are regularly insufficient numbers of customers for all the learners. Most learners regularly have practical skills training in their

work-placement salons. Records of the work learners complete during these training sessions is inadequate.

89. RWP's staff carry out regular reviews of the apprenticeship programme with each learner and their employer. These take place approximately every 10 weeks at the workplace salon. The reviews do not always take place in a private area and this limits the opportunity for the learners to discuss confidential information away from customers and other staff. The reviews do not effectively use the information available to contribute to discussions about the learners' progress. RWP does not set realistic new training and assessment targets. It does not always include the employers in these decisions, despite needing their support to achieve many of them. There is insufficient detail about learners' salon training and work activities to accurately contribute to appropriate NVQ and key skills target-setting.

90. Practical hairdressing skills NVQ assessment is satisfactory and is carried out frequently following requests from learners. The three RWP assessors have caseloads of designated learners. In addition, the work-based assessors regularly assess their own apprentices' practical skills in their salons and complete the NVQ assessment records. However, on the NVQ at level 2 programme, the assessments are not well planned to make best use of the salon opportunities and usually focus on one specific NVQ unit at a time. On the level 3 programme, RWP makes good use of assessment opportunities, with many skills from various NVQ units being assessed effectively on one occasion. This has increased the pace of level 3 assessment completion.

91. All learners systematically complete the same thorough initial assessments and interview process before recommendations are made about their suitability for the hairdressing programmes. There are clear information sheets about the two types of hairdressing apprenticeship programmes available at RWP. Learners who have literacy or numeracy support needs identified are referred to the programme co-ordinator, who arranges additional learning support sessions for them. Grade predictions for general certificates of secondary education and previously achieved key skills awards and other qualifications are recorded for use in designing individual learning plans. However, no account is taken of learners' prior experience and learning in hairdressing to help develop effective planning.

Leadership and management

92. There is poor management of the programme. All the staff in the RWP hairdressing team have changed in the past six months, and the new hairdressing team will not be up to its full complement until September 2005, when one member returns to full-time employment after maternity leave. This has had an adverse effect on the learners. Some have been without an assessor to visit their salons for about eight weeks and have missed set target completion dates. Others have had three tutors in this period. This has slowed progress, although additional sessions are now planned over the summer months to give learners the opportunity to catch up.

93. RWP's training is not organised well for the benefit of the learner. There is unbalanced delivery of the programme overall. Many learners are being introduced to the two difficult units of cutting and perming late in the programme. The programme does not sufficiently take into account learners' individual needs. For example, all NVQ optional units are planned to be delivered at RWP at the end of the level 2 programme. This includes the

reception skills unit, which learners usually choose because they are performing these skills every day at work, with frequent practical assessment opportunities. Learners are frequently waiting for NVQ at level 2 knowledge input and assessment in order to complete NVQ units as their practical assessments have been completed. Learners in the same NVQ at level 2 knowledge class can be at completely different stages in their programme, some struggling with new work while others are bored and repeating work. The arrangements are inflexible and learners' time at RWP is not used effectively to meet their individual needs.

94. RWP has three appropriately qualified hairdressing staff with industrial salon experience. Two are teacher-trained and assessors, one is also an internal verifier. A hairdressing staff member who joined RWP in April 2005 is working towards the assessor qualification. RWP has three salons with work-based assessors. A part-time internal verifier is employed for the NVQ at level 3 qualifications. The new programme co-ordinator is teacher-trained, has a business and IT background and good experience of co-ordinating work-based learning programmes.

95. RWP is not using management information effectively. There is a broad range of data available that is not using effectively to help develop management decisions. Some of these reports do not contain adequate detail for useful analysis. The new programme co-ordinator has started to develop these and has further plans to create more useful reports.

96. Equal opportunities is covered well at induction. Most learners understand their rights and responsibilities for equal opportunities. However, at the learners' progress reviews, equality and diversity issues and salon health and safety points are dealt with only superficially.

97. Internal verification is appropriately planned. However, it has not identified significant issues in slow NVQ achievement and poor practice in assessing learners' practical skills before the knowledge input has been completed.

98. The self-assessment used at inspection contained useful information but did not take into account the significant effect that the staff changes had on the learners and their progress. Only the strength relating to good standards of learners' work is supported by the inspection. Weaknesses identified during inspection were not included in the self-assessment report. The development plan was based on the self-assessment outcomes and has not been revised following the significant changes over the past six months.

