

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Dales Agriculture & Rural Training**

**28 September 2006**



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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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

## Dales Agriculture & Rural Training

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Dales Agriculture & Rural Training	2
Grades	3
About the inspection	3
What learners like about Dales Agriculture & Rural Training	5
What learners think Dales Agriculture & Rural Training could improve	5

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	6
Equality of opportunity	7
Quality improvement	7
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	9

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Dales Agriculture & Rural Training (DART) was established in 1999 to provide work-based learning in Derbyshire, primarily for the land-based sector. DART's main business activity is a contract with the Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council to provide apprenticeship training in agriculture, amenity horticulture, animal care, arboriculture, fencing and veterinary nursing. Employed adults are also trained towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 under the Train to Gain programme and through a European Social Fund (ESF) programme linked to the sector skills council. DART also provides training for a small number of Entry to Employment (E2E) learners and for 14 to 16 year old school students through the government's Increased Flexibility Programme of vocational training. A small amount of commercially funded training is also carried out for adult workers and employers.

2. Most training is carried out on the job. In agriculture, horticulture and arboriculture, off-the-job training is offered. DART provides some dedicated specialist training such as additional skills-based and emergency first aid qualifications. It uses hired venues for off-the-job training at Bakewell, Chesterfield, Etwell and Derby. All veterinary nurses have regular weekly off-the-job training provided by a subcontractor, Bottle Green Training. DART also provides assessment and verification training for employers in the workplace. There is a requirement for all veterinary practices providing training in veterinary nursing to have at least one qualified assessor for every two learners.

3. The areas of Derbyshire from which DART recruits its learners have a minority ethnic representation of less than 1 per cent according to the 2001 census, compared with approximately 9 per cent for England and Wales as a whole. In 2005 the proportion of school leavers in Derbyshire achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above was 55.4 per cent, compared with 57.1 per cent for England as a whole.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 3**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** More specifically, DART's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity. Overall, provision is good in agriculture, horticulture and animal care.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** DART introduced a new approach to self-assessment in 2005-06. Staff participated by completing a questionnaire in which they identified the strengths and weaknesses of provision and suggested ways to improve quality. This provided a rich source of feedback. DART also sought feedback from the subcontractor. Learners, employers and other stakeholders were not asked to participate directly. However, the outcomes of annual surveys of learners' and employers' views were taken into account. The self-assessment report is far more evaluative than in previous years and accurately identifies most key strengths and weaknesses, although the effect on learners of some key

## DALES AGRICULTURE & RURAL TRAINING

weaknesses is not fully recognised. All of the self-assessment report's grades matched those given by inspectors, except for equality of opportunity.

### **6. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.**

Since the previous inspection in 2003, success rates have remained high on advanced apprenticeships and NVQ programmes and have risen to around the national average overall for apprenticeships, although this is not consistent across all programmes. DART's post-inspection action-planning to rectify other weaknesses identified and highlighted as key challenges has been inadequate. Target-setting for learners has improved and is now satisfactory. DART has improved equality of opportunity training at induction, but this is not extended into further training. The provider has made little progress towards developing a quality improvement process, in improving the use of management information to monitor performance or in developing strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Overall, provision remains broadly at the same standard as at the previous inspection.

### **KEY CHALLENGES FOR DALES AGRICULTURE & RURAL TRAINING:**

- develop more effective operational management structures
- develop and implement more systematic quality improvement arrangements
- further develop learning in equality of opportunity
- make use of best practice to improve key skills learning and assessment
- improve co-ordination and provision of literacy and numeracy skills training
- continue to improve success rates on apprenticeships
- maintain high success rates on advanced apprenticeships and veterinary nursing programmes

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

<b>Agriculture, horticulture and animal care</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Agriculture</b> Apprenticeships for young people	43	2
<b>Horticulture</b> Apprenticeships for young people	29	2
<b>Forestry and arboriculture</b> Apprenticeships for young people	8	2
<b>Animal care</b> Apprenticeships for young people	18	2
<b>Veterinary services</b> Apprenticeships for young people	42	2
<b>Environmental conservation</b> Apprenticeships for young people	3	2
Other workforce development	3	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Inspectors reported on and graded apprenticeships and NVQ programmes for young people in agriculture, horticulture and animal care. Inspectors also examined evidence from Train to Gain, ESF and E2E programmes, which were not reported on separately, to support judgements in the sector skills area and leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	28
Number of staff interviewed	12
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of subcontractors interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13

## **Leadership and Management**

### **Strengths**

- strong and productive external links to benefit learners
- highly vocationally experienced staff
- good organisation of provision to enable access by rural learners

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficiently structured operational management
- inadequate integration of equal opportunities issues into learning
- insufficiently systematic quality improvement arrangements.

## **Agriculture, horticulture and animal care**

### *Strengths*

- high success rates on advanced apprenticeships and veterinary nursing qualifications
- good development of learners' vocational skills
- wide range of provision to meet learners' and the industry's needs
- particularly good support for learners to achieve NVQs

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficiently developed arrangements for key skills learning and assessment
- inadequate development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills



## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT DALES AGRICULTURE & RURAL TRAINING:**

- friendly and helpful assessors - 'they are always accessible'
- accessible training and assessment - 'fits in well with work'
- well-organised veterinary nursing programme
- the opportunity to achieve qualifications at work that are paid for - 'there is nothing else like DART around here'
- very good support, including support for progress to higher education

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK DALES AGRICULTURE & RURAL TRAINING COULD IMPROVE:**

- the amount of contact with DART that veterinary nursing learners have
- the number of skills training courses

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

#### Strengths

- strong and productive external links to benefit learners
- highly vocationally experienced staff
- good organisation of provision to enable access by rural learners

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently structured operational management
- inadequate integration of equal opportunities issues into learning
- insufficiently systematic quality improvement arrangements.

8. DART has strong and productive external links. These support DART's effective strategic leadership and planning and enable it to respond appropriately to the needs of learners and the industry. The organisation's director is an active member of the local training provider network and staff work closely with the sector skills council and awarding bodies. Links with the industry are very strong and staff have developed an extensive network of contacts with employers. DART attends all local agricultural shows and sponsors events and projects. The company has worked with the Standards Unit of the Department for Education and Skills to develop and pilot a range of learning materials, including a video to demonstrate good practice in conducting progress reviews.

9. DART's staff are particularly well qualified and experienced within the land-based industries. Staff turnover rates are very low. The very good continuity of support provided for learners by each staff member has contributed significantly to the high or improving success rates. Staff are highly committed to the organisation and to developing further their vocational expertise. This commitment has been particularly valuable in the development of new land-based programmes. However, the staff are not sufficiently qualified and experienced in the provision of non-vocational aspects of the programmes, particularly key skills and literacy and numeracy support.

10. The management of resources is satisfactory. DART hires appropriate industry-related premises for off-the-job training conveniently located for learners. Annual staff appraisals are carried out. However, they do not include individual target-setting or performance management. Development activity does not sufficiently develop staff members' expertise in non-vocational aspects of programmes.

11. DART has reviewed its arrangements for literacy and numeracy support and has recently introduced appropriate initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy support needs. It has not yet identified appropriate mechanisms to meet these needs.

12. Operational management is insufficiently structured. The staffing structure does not allocate management responsibility for key aspects of provision including quality improvement, management information and literacy and numeracy support. Informal

communication is extensively used to ensure effective day-to-day management of learning. Formal communication for longer term planning and management is less effective. Regular programme team meetings are well attended, but monthly full staff meetings are not. In response to this, the meeting structure has been changed to include four meetings a year for all staff, which include some staff development activity. The director sends weekly e-mails to all staff informing them of current issues. As one of the main methods of staff updating, some of these are insufficiently focussed on issues relating to learning programmes.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

13. DART organises provision well to enable access by rural learners. Staff meet the needs of rural learners in imaginative and flexible ways. They often provide support outside normal working hours and in locations convenient for learners. Learners routinely contact their assessors by mobile telephone if they have any issues or concerns. Where necessary, transport is provided so that learners can attend off-the-job training. In some cases, transport has been provided through participation in a scheme to provide motorcycles for learners. DART has introduced a central mobile telephone and text messaging service as part of a national project on responding to learners' needs. All learners are issued with a credit card-sized card giving a confidential telephone/text number. The scheme provides learners with a quick and confidential method of contacting DART in the event of any issue or concern. It also enables effective communication with isolated learners in remote areas. However, DART has not analysed the extent to which this service is being used.

14. DART's promotional materials contain statements about the provider's commitment to equality of opportunity and inclusion. The organisation collects and analyses data by gender and ethnicity and aims to increase participation on agriculture programmes by women and minority ethnic groups members. However, it does not have a clear action plan to increase participation rates from these groups. Six of the 43 learners on agriculture programmes are young women and one comes from a minority ethnic group. This is similar to the numbers at the previous inspection.

15. Equal opportunities policies are the responsibility of the director and are updated regularly. The staff handbook outlines DART's equal opportunities and diversity policy. The organisation has a family-friendly policy focused on flexible working hours to suit individual staff circumstances. Equality of opportunity is a standard agenda item at meetings. Some staff have received training on equality of opportunity. DART has a child protection policy and all staff undergo an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The organisation has a designated child protection officer and child protection training is scheduled for all staff.

16. The integration of equality of opportunity issues into learning is inadequate. Equality of opportunity is covered at induction and materials are included in the learners' induction pack. However, no further training is given after the induction. Learners have a limited understanding of equality of opportunity issues. Progress reviews include only a cursory check on whether learners have any concerns related to equality, and are not used to develop learners' wider understanding of the topic.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 3**

17. Internal verification arrangements are appropriate and comply with the awarding

## DALES AGRICULTURE & RURAL TRAINING

bodies' requirements. Sampling plans are satisfactory and internal verifiers routinely observe assessors conducting assessments. Regular meetings are held with assessors in programme teams to share good practice, but little sharing of good practice takes place across teams.

18. Subcontracting arrangements are adequate. The subcontractor's provision is rigorously regulated by the awarding body for veterinary nursing. DART monitors the provision through regular meetings with the subcontractor and visits to learners and work-based assessors. However, DART does not sufficiently monitor the quality of teaching and learning or ensure suitable staffing arrangements.

19. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff were encouraged to participate in the self-assessment process by completing a questionnaire which asked them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and suggest ways to improve quality. This provided a rich source of feedback which DART used to draft the self-assessment report. Feedback was also sought from the subcontractor. Learners, employers and other stakeholders were not asked to participate, but the outcomes of annual surveys of learners' and employers' views were taken into account. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most key strengths and weaknesses and gives the same grade as inspectors in all areas but one.

20. DART's quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently systematic, a weakness identified at the previous inspection. Although overall success rates have continued to rise since the previous inspection, DART does not have formal policies or procedures or a designated member of staff responsible for quality improvement. Data is not analysed sufficiently for quality improvement purposes. Recruitment and success rate data is not analysed at subsector level, nor are targets for improvement set for each programme. Comparisons are not made between the performances of different programmes or different assessors. The monitoring of procedures is insufficiently developed. For example, DART does not monitor the effectiveness of individual learning plans, progress reviews or additional support for learners. Learners' overall progress is not monitored closely enough. For example, although DART centrally records monthly updates on each learner's progress with their key skills qualifications, it does not analyse these updates to identify whether learners are making enough progress to complete the framework on time. Although some observations of teaching and learning and progress reviews are carried out, they are not linked to appraisal or to any systematic continuous improvement.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Agriculture</b> Apprenticeships for young people	43	2
<b>Horticulture</b> Apprenticeships for young people	29	2
<b>Forestry and arboriculture</b> Apprenticeships for young people	8	2
<b>Animal care</b> Apprenticeships for young people	18	2
<b>Veterinary services</b> Apprenticeships for young people	42	2
<b>Environmental conservation</b> Apprenticeships for young people	3	2
Other workforce development	3	2

21. DART offer apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in six occupations in the agriculture, horticulture and animal care sector skills area. It has 104 apprentices, with 35 in agriculture, 14 in animal care, 22 in amenity horticulture, eight in arboriculture, three in fencing and 22 veterinary nurses. It has 39 advanced apprentices, of whom eight are in agriculture, four are in animal care, seven are in amenity horticulture and 20 are veterinary nurses. Three adult learners are working towards NVQs in fencing, funded by the ESF, administered by the sector skills council, Lantra. There are three full time and 14 part time assessors and internal verifiers working directly for DART and four for the subcontractor, Bottle Green Training. Nine E2E learners are working towards level 1 NVQs or skills test certificates in agriculture, horticulture and animal care. DART has a contract to provide NVQs at level 2 for the land-based industries under the Train to Gain programme. At the time of the inspection there were no Train to Gain learners in learning, and too few E2E learners for this area to be inspected separately.

#### Strengths

- high success rates on advanced apprenticeships and veterinary nursing qualifications
- good development of learners' vocational skills
- wide range of provision to meet learners' and the industry's needs
- particularly good support for learners to achieve NVQs

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed arrangements for key skills learning and assessment
- inadequate development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills

### Achievement and standards

22. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships and veterinary nursing qualifications are high and significantly higher than the national average for advanced apprentices. Unvalidated data for 2005-06 indicates that success rates on advanced apprenticeships and NVQ-only programmes, including veterinary nursing remain very high and are approximately twice the national average for advanced apprentices. Success rates for previous groups of adult learners on Train to Gain programmes are also high. For apprentices, the overall success rate has increased from below the national average to just above the low national average of 52 per cent. Success rates are high for agriculture apprentices but are lower for apprentices in animal care and horticulture. Some learners make slow progress towards completing their programmes, which is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Many learners progress to higher-level qualifications. This includes E2E and schools-based learners progressing to apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Although current success rates for advanced apprenticeships are high, some learners are reluctant to progress to advanced apprenticeships or remain on programme with the introduction of technical certificates.

23. Learners develop good vocational skills. Workplaces are selected with care, taking into account learners' individual needs and skills development opportunities. The workplaces include a large country estate garden, a championship football club and suitable farms and animal care businesses. Most learners are given the opportunity to develop skills quickly and in some cases are given significant responsibility for an aspect of work. Learners enjoy their work and many produce work of a high commercial standard.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	18	89	48	72	31
		timely	13	69	30	62	19
	2004-05	overall	7	86	48	86	34
		timely	10	50	31	50	21
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	17	59	47	35	32
		timely	10	0	24	0	16
	2004-05	overall	18	44	50	33	38
		timely	26	31	29	12	21
NVQ training for young people	2003-04	overall	43	58	46	0	0
		timely	49	33	33	0	0
	2004-05	overall	58	81	56	0	0
		timely	50	60	38	0	0
Adult training (long courses)	2003-04	overall	36	95		0	
		timely	35	92		0	
	2004-05	overall	43	89		0	
		timely	42	89		0	

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### **The quality of provision**

24. Learners receive particularly good support to achieve the NVQ and additional vocational qualifications. Assessors use their considerable vocational expertise well to guide learners towards developing skills and gathering appropriate evidence. Learners and assessors communicate well. Assessors plan assessments to fit in with learners' work schedules and assessment opportunities, taking into account seasonal variations. Most employers support learners to collect NVQ evidence well. Learners who are able to achieve their qualifications quickly are assessed more frequently, sometimes in the evening and at weekends. Some learners complete their programmes well ahead of schedule. Off-the-job learning sessions available in some subjects provide good additional support and extend learners' knowledge. Veterinary nursing training provided by Bottle Green Training is highly structured and linked well to work activities. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better in off-the-job learning sessions. Individual coaching is provided to some learners, but not all receive structured learning materials. Target-setting for achievement of the NVQ has been improved and is now at least satisfactory in most cases. NVQ portfolios contain a good range of evidence including job sheets, witness statements and records of observation of work. Evidence is cross-referenced well to the NVQ units. Portfolios are organised well and learners have a good awareness of their progress.

25. DART offers a wide range of programmes to meet the needs of the industries it serves and those of a range of young and adult learners, closely linked to the local skills strategy. Most learners are placed on appropriate programmes. There are good progression opportunities from schools-based programmes to apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. Train to Gain provision is being implemented to enhance the qualifications of local land-based industry employees. Close attention is paid to health and safety at induction and progress reviews for learners, at employers' briefings and at staff meetings. Employers are provided with detailed health and safety guidance, which is reinforced at reviews.

26. Arrangements for key skills qualification learning and assessment are insufficiently developed. Although teaching and the achievement of key skills qualifications have improved in some areas, this is not consistent across all provision. For example, in agriculture and fencing, key skills are integrated with vocational learning well. Key skills are introduced early in the programme and good use is made of work tasks to provide evidence of competence. In other areas, such as animal care, key skills are not assessed until late in the programme. Many learners, their employers and some assessors have insufficient understanding of key skills. Slow achievement of key skills contributes to some learners not completing the apprenticeship framework on time.

27. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are insufficiently developed. All learners take an initial screening test to identify specific needs. DART has recently introduced a diagnostic test to identify skills development needs. However, it has no clear strategy to support learners to improve their skills beyond this stage. There are insufficient qualified and experienced staff to guide this process. Assessors are often unsure of how they should

support their learners. Where learners are receiving additional time for support, there is no clear planning to indicate how this time is used or how skills will be developed. Insufficient use is made of specialist literacy and numeracy learning resources or structured teaching and assessment to raise learners' competence.

### **Leadership and management**

28. Learners and employers benefit from DART's strong and productive links with industry. Staff are highly experienced in their vocational areas and use this experience well to support learners and to develop new programmes. Provision is organised well to meet the needs of rural learners. Premises used for off-the-job training are situated in accessible locations and are of satisfactory quality. Some learners who receive individual tuition in their workplaces do not have sufficient access to learning materials. Operational management is insufficiently structured, with some inadequate communication and a lack of clear responsibility for some key functions including literacy and numeracy support. Equality of opportunity issues are not sufficiently well integrated with learning. While training on equality of opportunity is included in induction, there is little further development or checking of learners' understanding during training. Quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently systematic to ensure continuous quality improvement across all programmes.



