

# Alliance Learning Limited Reinspection

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Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 22 September 2006

**Reinspection date**

21 November 2007

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**Inspection number**

316448

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

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

## Description of the provider

1. Alliance Learning (AL) is a private limited company and a registered charity. The head office is based in Horwich, and its three training centres are located in Bolton, Radcliffe and Leigh. AL provides work-based learning for young people and adults. Learners work towards qualifications in health, social care and public services, engineering and manufacturing technologies, retailing, customer service and transportation, information and communication technology, and business administration and professional. The training is funded by Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Lancashire LSC. Government funded work-based learning provision accounts for approximately 65 % of the company's business. AL also delivers training through **learnirect**, and a range of specialised commercial programmes.

## Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

### Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Health, public services and care			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners		Contributory grade
<b><i>Social care</i></b>			<b>4</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	127		4
Train to Gain	257		4
<b><i>Early years</i></b>			<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	99		2
Train to Gain	24		2

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners		Contributory grade
<b><i>Engineering</i></b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	229		3
Train to Gain	32		3

Retail and commercial enterprise		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Warehousing and distribution</i></b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	18	2
Train to Gain	52	2

Business administration and law		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Engineering</i></b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	64	3
Train to Gain	16	3

#### Grades awarded at reinspection

Health, public services and care		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Social care</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	54	3
Train to Gain & ESF funded NVQ	33	2
<b><i>Early years</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	68	2

## About the reinspection

2. Health, public services and care were reinspected. One inspector visited the provider on two occasions before the reinspection. Three inspectors visited the provider for three days in November 2007 as part of the reinspection. The quality of provision at the previous inspection was good for early years, but inadequate for social care. The quality of provision for early years remains good, and the quality of provision for social care is now satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of the provision in health, public services and care is good.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	11
Number of learners interviewed	17
Number of staff interviewed	10
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	11
Number of visits to the provider	3

## Areas of learning

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Social care</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	54	3
Train to Gain and ESF funded NVQ	33	2
<b><i>Early years</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	68	2

#### *Social care*

- Currently there are 87 learners on social care programmes. Of these three learners are on Train to Gain programmes, and 30 learners are funded through the European social fund (ESF) working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2. There are 29 apprentices and 25 advanced apprentices. All learners are employed in nursing and residential care homes, or work in the community. Induction takes place over one day and includes an introduction to apprenticeships, health and safety, equal opportunities and communication. Learners also complete an initial assessment. Arrangements to provide additional support are put in place, and recorded on individual learning plans. All learners progressing from level 2 qualifications are retested for additional learning needs. Training for key skills and the technical certificate, assessment, progress reviews and support for learners is carried out in the workplace. All learners are encouraged to participate in tutorials at the training centres.

#### *Strengths*

- Good training and assessment
- Good employer engagement
- Particularly effective strategies to manage care programmes

#### *Weaknesses*

- No key weaknesses identified

### Achievement and standards

- The success rates for learners taking NVQ only qualifications are good and improving. At the time of the previous inspection overall success rates for apprenticeships were very low; they are now satisfactory. For apprentices, success rates were 18% in 2003/04, 17% in 2004/05 and 39% in 2005/06. For 2006/07 the company's data shows that success rates are continuing to improve and are 60%. Over a three year period from 2003 to 2006 success rates for advanced apprentices have fluctuated from 6% to 40% to 30%. The company's data shows the success rate for 2006/07 has increased to 47%. Most current learners are making good progress, and most pass their key skills test the first time. Most portfolio work is of a satisfactory standard or better and clearly demonstrates the

knowledge gained. Level 3 learners develop skills to carry out independent research and learning. Learners develop good work skills and many take on additional responsibilities in the workplace. Less confident learners quickly develop such personal skills and for some, aspirations they once thought were unachievable are now more realistic.

### **The quality of provision**

5. Training and assessment is good. A more thorough initial assessment has been introduced and the process accurately identifies learners support needs and appropriate qualification level. Learning and development officers visit learners six weekly to carry out progress reviews and more frequently if required. Reviews are closely linked to the assessment plans for short-term targets. Assessment visits are flexible to meet the learners' shift patterns and the employers' needs, with early morning and late evening appointments to see night staff. Some learners are encouraged to record their own assessment plans and gain confidence in taking responsibility for their learning programme. There is an appropriate range of assessment methods used.
6. AL provides flexible arrangements for training. A set programme for key skills and the technical certificate is delivered in the training centres and includes evening sessions. Training is delivered in the workplace for learners unable to attend the centres. Additional 'drop-in' sessions are also available for individual support. Equality of opportunity and health and safety are sufficiently explored during the review process. Learners agree challenging targets which are monitored at the following review. However, some targets are insufficiently recorded. Learners with literacy and numeracy training needs are effectively supported by skills for life trainers. On apprenticeship programmes, key skills are not yet sufficiently integrated. This had been identified by the provider and action taken to further develop the programmes.
7. Employer engagement is good. Training and assessment is coordinated effectively with employers to allow learners to develop new skills and knowledge and then to put their learning into practice. Good use is made of witness testimonies to provide portfolio evidence. Employers are very committed to training and developing learners' to their full potential and encourage learners to attend study days. Most employers incorporate study days into the duty rota, and learners are able to take time out from work for assessment planning and feedback. Employers have a good understanding of framework requirements and support learners to choose the most appropriate NVQ units. They contribute effectively to the review process and provide constructive feedback on learner performance. Good communication between the learning and development officers and employers keeps employers fully informed of learner progress. Learning and development officers work in partnership with employers to manage any issues of slow progress, enabling learners to remain on programme. Several employers enjoy long-standing partnership links with AL and are very confident in AL's ability to deliver flexible training and assessment to meet the needs of the learner and the business. There are good progression opportunities. Many apprentices progress onto advanced apprenticeships. Train to Gain funded learners have the opportunity to progress from Level 2 NVQ up to Level 4.
8. Resources to support teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Lesson plans clearly identify aims and objectives. A wide range of activities are used in teaching sessions. These include group exercises and DVDs. Trainers collect evaluations from learners after



training sessions. The format of the evaluation form has recently been updated, but does not allow learners to identify how they will put learning into practice in the workplace. A range of appropriate text books and handouts are made available for learner use. Staff are appropriately experienced and qualified, with most having or undertaking teaching qualifications.

9. Support for learners is satisfactory. There is good access to learning and development officers and learners can easily contact them for additional guidance. Learners benefit from regular visits for assessment and review. Extra visits are arranged if the need arises. AL liaises well with employers to support learners experiencing personal issues. The assessment and provision of support for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The initial assessment process accurately identifies learners' learning and support needs. Skills-for-life trainers provide support to learners in the training centres or in the workplace. There is an appropriate range of resources to support learning.

### **Leadership and management**

10. Strategies to manage the care programmes are particularly effective. The provision has improved since the previous inspection. The programme of staff development is good. Learning and development officers have a much better understanding of key performance indicators now. These are now used effectively to monitor achievements. Staff benefit from monthly one-to-one meetings with the head of department to discuss individual targets and learner progress. Internal communication has improved and is now good between all levels of staff. There are good opportunities to share best practice between other departments at monthly staff meetings. Learning and development officers are well aware of company targets and know the current success rates. They take responsibility for the recruitment of learners. Thorough arrangements ensure learners are placed on the most appropriate programme. Early indications for this change in procedure suggest a decrease in the number of early leavers. However, like many of the recently implemented quality assurance processes, it is too early to identify improvements in the quality of the provision. Regular observation of teaching, learning and assessment takes place, although this practice is relatively new and too soon to see any impact. The self-assessment report (SAR) is broadly accurate with most strengths identified, and all staff have been involved with its development.
11. Procedures for internal verification are satisfactory. The process is well planned and timely. Regular meetings are used effectively to standardise assessment practice. Learning and development officers receive appropriate feedback following internal verification. However, internal verification is insufficiently rigorous in identifying all appropriate evidence in some portfolios.

### ***Early years***

12. Currently there are 68 learners on early years programmes. Of these 36 are apprentices and 32 are advanced apprentices. Most learners are employed in early years settings including schools, nurseries and play groups. A small number of learners are on a programme led apprenticeship and are on placements. Induction takes place over one day and includes an introduction to apprenticeships, health and safety, equal opportunities and communication. Learners also complete an initial assessment. Arrangements to provide

additional support are put in place, and recorded on individual learning plans. All learners progressing from level 2 qualifications are retested for additional learning needs. Training and assessment takes place at work for most learners. Learners on the programme led apprenticeship attend off-the-job training at one of the centres for the first 12 weeks, complete the technical certificate and start key skills.

### *Strengths*

- Good success rates for apprentices
- Good on and off-the-job training
- Good employer engagement
- Particularly effective actions to bring about improvements

### *Weaknesses*

- No key weaknesses identified

### **Achievement and standards**

13. Overall success rates for apprentices are good. At the time of the previous inspection a strength was the good and improving success rates for apprentices. The success rates for apprentices in 2003/04 were 21%, in 2004/05 they were 63%, but then they decreased to 45% in 2005/06. For 2006/07 the company's data shows an overall success rate of 77% for apprentices. For advanced apprentices success rates for the last three years have been 21%, 28% and 31%. The company's data for 2006/07 show that improvements have been made and the overall success rate is 60%. All current learners are making good progress, and most learners are passing their key skills test the first time. Most learners' portfolios contain a good standard of written work.

### **The quality of provision**

14. On-and-off-the-job training is good. It is well planned, with detailed schemes of work and session plans that are used effectively. Lessons are lively and well paced and meet the learning needs and styles of different learners. All lessons have a wide range of activities enabling learners to work at their own pace. Effective use is made of workplace experiences to develop learning and understanding. Learners make good use of the effective and flexible academic and personal support that is available to them through the learning and development officers. Communication is good; learners have mobile phone numbers and email addresses of the learning and development officers which they can use to contact them at any time. Additional and key skills support is now available both in the workplace and at the training centres.
15. Employer engagement is good. Employers are fully informed of all aspects of the learners' programme and have good knowledge and understanding of the learners' progress. The review process and supporting documentation is used particularly well to ensure learners' workplace roles meet their training and assessment needs. Employers speak positively about the process and the liaison with the learning and development officers. Effective working relationships have been established with a range of employers to ensure that the provision matches local labour market needs, for example, in the development of the early

years academy and the use of in-house assessors. AL has been responsive to specific requests to meet the needs of childcare providers, such as the provision of twilight learning. Learners and employers are particularly positive about the key skills support being provided in the workplace.

16. The range of health and social care programmes is satisfactory and meets the needs of both learners and employers. Very effective use is being made of programme led apprenticeships to provide learners and employers with knowledgeable and confident apprentices. A sufficient range of progression opportunities are in place, with increasing numbers of learners progressing from the academy for 14-16 year olds to Level 3 programmes. Careers education and guidance is appropriate and provides learners with sufficient information about progression opportunities and vocationally related employment.
17. Recruitment and selection of learners has improved since the previous inspection and learning and development officers now have responsibility for all aspects of the learners' programme. Initial assessment is appropriate and correctly identifies learners who need support. Support for literacy and numeracy is now satisfactory and is available both in the workplace and at the three centres. Learners who do not have the required levels of literacy and numeracy skills are now supported to improve these before enrolling on an apprenticeship programme. Induction is satisfactory and comprehensive, covering all key aspects of the learners' course. Health and safety and equality of opportunity are covered appropriately and

learners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to these areas. AL staff place a high emphasis on health and safety, which is thoroughly monitored at learner reviews.

18. Learning resources are satisfactory. Teaching rooms are appropriately furnished with a wide range of teaching and learning resources. Learners have access to computers and the internet at all training centres. In addition assessors have laptop computers that are taken to the workplace to support learning. Staff are appropriately qualified and vocationally experienced. Arrangements are in place for staff to update their vocational skills.

### **Leadership and management**

19. A range of particularly effective actions have been implemented to improve quality. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement. Staff now have detailed, well monitored performance indicators that are closely reviewed at monthly individual meetings. Staff understand their targets and the actions needed to achieve them. Senior managers are supportive and have created a comprehensive staff development programme to ensure that staff are equipped with specialist skills and knowledge as well as being responsive to the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. Communication within the team is now good. Good practice is shared well and has been used very effectively to bring about improvements.
20. Managers work well with staff to ensure that teaching and assessing is of a high standard. Good staff development and teamwork ensure learners receive good quality provision. Communications are effective. Improved progress monitoring of learners and more focused target-setting is beginning to have an impact on timely and overall success rates. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of these actions. Staff now have a good understanding of success rates, in particular the difference between timely and overall. Internal verification is satisfactory and the process now provides opportunities for assessors to develop skills and to share good practice. The self-assessment report provides a mainly accurate assessment of the provision.