

INSPECTION REPORT

GDN Childcare Training Ltd

05 February 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

GDN Childcare Training Ltd is a private training provider based in Salford. It offers work-based learning for modern apprentices and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in early years care and education. It operates throughout the Greater Manchester area.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in early years care and education is unsatisfactory, as are the leadership and management of the company.

GRADES

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	4

Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- particularly good support for individual learners
- effective links between the self-assessment process, business and development plan

KEY WEAKNESSES

- declining retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- weak assessment practices
- poor internal verification
- insufficient training for background knowledge

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at GDN Childcare Training Ltd (GDN) in February 2002. They visited 19 workplaces, interviewed 24 learners and 18 workplace supervisors and employers. Eighteen interviews were held with GDN's staff. Three training sessions were observed and graded. A range of documents were examined, including portfolios of evidence, individual learning plans, training materials, quality assurance policies and procedures and key company documents.

2. GDN completed its latest self-assessment report in November 2001. The grades given by inspectors did not match those given in the self-assessment report.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
Total	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

3. GDN is part of GDN Childcare Training Ltd. The company was established in 1995 and was initially set up to train the staff in its own nurseries. The company now has a training centre based in Salford and offers work-based learning in early years care and education for its own employees and for other childcare providers throughout the Greater Manchester area.

4. GDN employs 10 staff, made up of the training director, finance director, contracts manager, three full-time trainer/assessors, two part-time trainer/assessors, an administration manager and an office assistant. In addition, three senior managers in the company's nurseries are part-time trainer/assessors. The post of training centre manager is currently vacant.

5. GDN has 112 learners on government-funded work-based learning programmes. There are 79 advanced modern apprentices and one foundation modern apprentice working towards early years care and education programmes. Thirty-two learners are working towards an NVQ at level 4 on a programme which started last year. In addition, the company has 26 self-funded learners. All learners are employed. The company also works with 55 pupils aged 14 to 16, who attend a day-release programme at the training centre. Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds the training.

6. High levels of deprivation exist in the area covered by GDN. In Salford, 39.85 per cent of the population are living in wards ranked as being in the 10 per cent most deprived in the country. The unemployment rate in September 2001 for the Greater Manchester LSC area is 3.4 per cent, compared with a national average of 2.9 per cent for England. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 34 per cent in Salford, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Salford is 2.2 per cent, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

7. The retention rates for modern apprentices have declined over the past four years. Retention rates were 85 per cent in 1998-99, 61 per cent in 2000-01, and for the current year so far is 67 per cent. In 1998-99, the achievement rates were good with 77 per cent of learners completing their frameworks. A satisfactory proportion of learners stayed in training and achieved their qualifications in 1999-2000. Twelve learners were unable to complete a management programme as it was withdrawn. This has a corresponding effect on the overall achievement rates of the company. The company has set targets to deal with the retention and achievement rates but they have not made any impact as yet.

8. The company offers good support for learners. Trainer/assessors make frequent visits to learners in their workplaces. Learners are well supported and trainers give good advice and guidance.

9. The quality of training is unsatisfactory. Two of the three teaching sessions observed were unsatisfactory and one was satisfactory. Key skills are not an integral part of the vocational training and assessment. Many learners are unaware of the content or level of the key skills units. Internal verification is poor. There is no sampling plan and there are poor records of the verification that has taken place. Assessment practices are weak and some learners spend time collecting evidence with no clear idea of how it relates to assessment. Assessment planning for observations is not sufficiently detailed. The training given by GDN's staff in the workplace does not identify new knowledge.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

10. GDN is a privately owned company. The owner is the training director and is responsible for the management of the training. GDN employs 10 staff. The post of training centre manager is currently vacant and the training director takes an active role in the training with the five assessor/trainers. The company has expanded significantly in the past two years. The company has an equal opportunities policy and an associated anti-bullying and harassment policy. The training director is responsible for quality assurance. The company has a clear and concise set of policies and procedures to monitor the quality of the training, which has been in place for five years. Self-assessment has been taking place since 1998. GDN completed their most recent self-assessment report in November 2001 using the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Between 1998 and the 2001, the company has produced regular development plans.

STRENGTHS

- effective links between the self-assessment process, business and development plan
- effective staff performance reviews
- good opportunities for staff development
- good use of evaluation from employers and learners
- wide range of strategies for targeting under-represented groups

WEAKNESSES

- lack of effective programme planning
- lack of systematic process for monitoring learners' progress
- poor internal verification
- inadequate health and safety monitoring
- poor monitoring of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed analysis of early leavers
- better records of meetings
- updating of policies and procedures
- better monitoring of effectiveness of new management information system
- clearer reports to employers on learners' progress
- more individual targets for staff

11. The company has established effective links between the self-assessment process, the business and strategic plans. Actions are followed through from the business plan into the self-assessment report and development plan with targets set and an activity

plan for each action. The activity plans have a designated member of the team responsible for the performance, monitoring and delivery of each key action. The plans are updated at regular intervals. The training director monitors performance against the strategic plan. For example, in 2001-02 the company wanted to increase the learner numbers by 50 per cent by the end of the financial year. By January 2002, it had achieved 36 per cent of this target.

12. GDN have an effective system for reviewing staff performance. An internal check carried out by the training director is used as a basis for the reviews. Before an annual appraisal, each member of staff is observed carrying out three different types of training or assessment activity. Written and oral feedback is given to the member of staff and this then forms part of the discussion at the performance review. A development plan is drawn up to identify areas for improvement and is monitored at future reviews.

13. The company places a high priority on the professional development of its staff. One new member of staff is being supported on a post-graduate qualification in early years. Other members of the team are working towards a first degree and assessor and teaching qualifications. The company helps staff financially and allows time for study. New staff have a mentor. GDN is accredited with the Investor in People standard, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

14. Training programmes are not effectively planned. A supervisors' course was started and then withdrawn. The programme was started before the organisation had looked at the standards or were certain of the finance from the LSC. The number of learners is monitored and clear targets are set for recruitment and retention and achievement rates. However, individual staff are not given targets. Three of the full-time trainer/assessors are new in post and the company plans to set individual targets once they are established in their roles. There is no effective financial planning. The company makes projections on the number of learners but they do not match the current financial projections from the LSC. The company identifies this as a weakness in its self-assessment report.

15. Learners' progress is not routinely monitored. Individual assessors record learners' progress, but they use different systems. General progress is reported and recorded at monthly meetings, but there is no overall recording of individual units towards qualifications. Some learners are unaware of the units they have achieved and they are unable to report on progress to their employers. The company sends regular reports to employers, but they do not include specific unit achievement.

16. The company has recently revised its management information systems but the effectiveness of the new system has not been monitored as yet.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

17. GDN has an equal opportunities policy and a related anti-bullying and harassment policy. The company has identified that its policies need updating. Staff and learners are given a copy of the policy during their induction but there are no procedures to put the policy into practice. Some learners remember little equal opportunities from their induction and there is no effective reinforcement of the policy during training. The company has a complaints procedure and learners know how to make a complaint. However, there have been none recorded in the past six years.

18. GDN collects and analyses data on the gender, ethnicity and disabilities of learners and of applicants for training programmes. The company has a target to increase the participation of minority ethnic learners. The data collected are not routinely analysed for performance differences arising from gender, ethnic origin or deprivation. The company is aware of gender in the take-up of childcare training and monitors the progress of the small number of men.

19. The company has a wide range of strategies for targeting under-represented groups. It organises and participates in regular careers events in local settings and often the company is the only training provider at the events. The day release programme for school pupils enables a wide range of young people from different backgrounds and abilities to consider childcare as a career.

20. The company is aware of the need to review the equal opportunities monitoring and there is specific action in the development plan which is designated to a new member of staff.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

21. Good use is made of feedback from learners and employers. Each learner completes three questionnaires about the training programme during their time with GDN. The first is within two months of the start of training, the second at a midway point and a final questionnaire is completed before leaving. The results are then analysed, produced in graphical form and reported to staff at team meetings. The comments are used as a basis for the continuous improvement of the training programme. One example of change is the move from group evening sessions at the training centre to individual training in the workplace. Employers also complete questionnaires and although response rates are low they are followed up with visits and telephone calls to establish satisfaction. The analysis of early leavers is inadequate. Information is collected and recorded on an individual basis but not yet analysed to inform strategy in relation to the declining retention rates.

22. Internal verification is poor. There is no clear policy stating how it will be carried out, by when and by whom. There is no sampling plan and poor records are kept of verification that has taken place. Written feedback to assessors is brief and does not lead to improvement. Assessment practices are weak, but it has not been picked up by the internal verification system. The last visit by the external verifier 10 months before inspection did not identify these problems, as it was before the training centre expanded and increased their numbers of learners.

23. Monitoring of health and safety in the workplace is inadequate. Two members of staff are qualified to carry out health and safety checks and the company policy states that it will take place within four weeks of a learner starting work. Meanwhile an interim check by a trainer/assessor is recorded. Some work placements have not had the full health and safety check within the four-week period and at one placement it was nine months after the learner was placed. There is no clear system to highlight this problem. There are inconsistencies in the way in which the two responsible members of staff complete the paperwork and form judgements.

24. GDN has not updated policies and procedures in line with recent changes. Neither has it ensured that copies are updated in the staff, learner and employer handbooks to ensure consistency of information. Staff meetings are regular and minuted, but they are in different formats, action points are not always clear and are not followed up at subsequent meetings. The company identified this weakness in the self-assessment report.

25. GDN's self-assessment process included all staff and methodically attributed evidence to each of the statements in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. The self-assessment report includes a detailed development plan. All staff are aware of the contents of the report and comments from employers and learners are included. Inspectors gave lower grades than those shown in the self-assessment report as many of the strengths were no more than normal practice.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	112	4

26. GDN is currently training one foundation modern apprentice and 79 advanced modern apprentices who are working towards NVOs at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education. The company introduced the NVO level 4 early years care and education last year and the programme currently has 32 funded learners. All learners are employed in childcare settings and can join the programme at any time of the year. The company recruits learners from schools, GDN's own nurseries and other childcare providers in the surrounding area. At the start of the programme learners attend the training centre for an induction and are given a handbook which contains information about the programme and GDN. Staff give learners a copy of the equal opportunities policy and the appeals procedure. Most learners undergo an initial assessment to identify any additional learning needs. Key skills assessment is carried out at the training centre to determine individual needs. Learners are allocated a GDN trainer/assessor who visits the workplace every four to six weeks for off-the-job training. Training sessions are for one to two hours and are carried out either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Trainer/assessors review learners' progress every four to six weeks. The company has six trainer/assessors, and in GDN's own nurseries the nursery managers undertake training and assessment for their own staff. All trainer/assessors have nursery and/or primary sector experience. Five staff have a teaching qualification. GDN's assessors carry out all work-based assessment.

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

Work-based learning for young people														
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	81		67		29		26						
Retained	54		41	61	17	59	22	85						
Successfully completed	0		17	25	16	55	20	77						
Still in learning	54		24	36	1	3	0	0						

Work-based learning for young people															
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)															
	2001-02														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	1														
Retained	1														
Successfully completed	0														
Still in learning	1														

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training															
	2001-02														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	39														
Retained	32														
Successfully completed	0														
Still in learning	32														

STRENGTHS

- particularly good support for individual learners
- good links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate training and assessment of key skills
- weak assessment practices
- insufficient training for the development of knowledge
- declining retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprenticeships

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider range of resources for level 4 learners

27. Trainer/assessors offer very good support to individual learners with frequent visits to learners in the workplace. The visits are planned to take place every four weeks but additional visits are made in response to learners' needs. Trainer/assessors give clear

explanations about tasks which are set and how to collect evidence for the NVQs. Learners are given the telephone numbers of their assessor so that they can contact them outside office hours. One trainer/assessor is in the training centre each day and it is open on four evenings each week for learners who want individual support.

28. Good relationships are established between employers and GDN's staff during the visits to learners. Employers write comments on learners' review sheets and their views are regularly sought. GDN send frequent written communications to employers to inform them of their learners' progress. A newsletter which contains information on staff and programme changes is sent out three times a year and employers and learners are invited to contribute to this.

29. Training and assessment of key skills is inadequate. Key skills are not an integral part of the training and assessment. Learners are assessed at the beginning of their training programme to identify additional needs, but the training and assessment does not start soon enough. Some learners are achieving most of their qualification before they start key skills training. Many learners are not aware of the content or level of the key skills units and do not know how they will be assessed. Some of the trainer/assessors do not have adequate understanding of key skills. They do not record evidence of key skills when they observe learners for the NVQ. Many learners do not have key skills portfolios and are not able to cross-reference their NVQ evidence to the key skills units. The integration of key skills into the training programme was identified as a strength in GDN's self-assessment report.

30. Assessment practices are weak. Observation of skills in the workplace does not start until late in the training programme and is not always used as an assessment method. Only two of the level 4 learners have been assessed in the workplace. There is an over reliance on written evidence such as written questions, task sheets, reflective accounts and diaries. Assessment planning for observations is not sufficiently detailed. Learners spend time collecting evidence with no clear idea of how it relates to the assessment. Some trainers/assessors do not give specific feedback against the units and elements and learners are unsure about what they have achieved. There is insufficient detail in the assessment of reports in portfolios to show how the learners meet the evidence requirements for the level 3 NVQ. Oral questions are not used sufficiently.

31. Learners are not given enough training for the development of background knowledge. Session plans are unstructured and do not show the timings of activities and there are some inappropriate aims and learning objectives. There is insufficient focus on the learner when planning the training. Individual learning styles are not catered for and sessions lack a variety of teaching methods. Trainers give too much information in a short time and in some sessions there is insufficient participation by learners. One-to-one training sessions in the workplace also lack structure. They are not well planned and have insufficient resources for the depth of knowledge needed for the level 3 NVQ. Learners are unable to answer questions to confirm their understanding of early years principles. There is a lack of clear links between the assignments, the evidence collected and the NVQ standards. On- and off-the-job training are poorly co-

ordinated.

32. Retention rates for advanced modern apprentices have declined over the past four years. The retention rate was good in 1998-99, with 85 per cent of learners staying on the programme. In the same year, achievement rates were good with 77 per cent of learners completing their frameworks. A satisfactory number of learners stayed in training and achieved their qualifications in 1999-2000. Learners are still in training for the years 2000-01 and 2001-02, however, only 67 per cent of learners who started in the current year are still in training. GDN identified declining retention and achievement rates as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

33. The textbooks for the level 4 NVQ are limited. They do not give the range of information needed or support individual studies. Learners are advised to use the library but some books are not available.