

INSPECTION REPORT

Bellis Training Limited

15 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

INSPECTION REPORT

Bellis Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Bellis Training Limited (BTA) is a small, privately owned training company based in Birmingham city centre. There are 66 learners in training. Training for young people is provided in retailing, customer service and transportation, hospitality, sport, leisure and travel and foundation programmes. However, foundation programmes were not in the scope of this inspection. Learners are working towards foundation and advanced apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and are employed or on work placements in local hotels, shops or service providers. BTA has 11 staff, five of whom work full time and six of whom work part time. A business manager runs the centre with the support of a deputy manager, a training manager, four assessors, a quality manager, two administrative staff and a classroom support worker. Four members of staff are internal verifiers. The company provides training and assessment opportunities for a wide range of young people with complex learning and social needs. Learners are taught in small groups or individually at the training centre or in the workplace.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are also good and quality improvement is satisfactory. The training in retailing, customer service and transportation is good.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is well established. The self-assessment report is detailed, but descriptive and not sufficiently critical. All the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were also recognised, to varying extents, by BTA in its own report. The grading in the self-assessment report matched that in the inspection report. The action plan is detailed, reviewed regularly and enables improvements.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Improvements have been made against each weakness identified at the previous inspection. Detailed, written procedures support the training process. A range of measures supports improvement, such as regular use of learners' and employers' feedback. Strategies to improve retention and achievement rates have been very effective. The action plan is kept up to date and is used to monitor progress.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BELLIS TRAINING LIMITED:

- improve programme planning and monitoring for individual learners
- throughout the programme, engage employers to make links between on- and off-the-job training
- set clear and challenging performance targets
- implement quality assurance of key learner processes and related documents

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

Retailing, customer service & transportation			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Retailing			
Apprenticeships for young people	30	2	
Customer service			
Apprenticeships for young people	29	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. Inspectors inspected and graded provision in retailing, customer service and transportation, but reviewed all aspects of BTA's provision, including hospitality and Entry to Employment. All inspection activities were carried out in a final three-day visit.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	21
Number of staff interviewed	7
Number of employers interviewed	16
Number of subcontractors interviewed	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	15

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **Retention and achievement rates are good.** Overall, in the past three years, 69 per cent of the learners have completed their apprenticeship frameworks. Of the 110 learners who have started programmes with BTA in the past four years, only 19 have left without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. Seventy-seven per cent of learners who began the apprenticeship framework have either completed it or are still in learning.

7. **Learners produce good NVQ portfolios.** Key skills assessments use evidence effectively from the workplace and assignments. Challenging targets are set and regularly reviewed.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	3	1	0	4
Total	0	3	1	0	4

8. **Learners receive good training, develop well and make good progress.** Most learners develop considerable personal and professional skills. They make significant progress and improve their confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. Learners are able to articulate their progress and the impact of the programme on their lives and future prospects. Some learners have been promoted to supervisory or management positions during their training programme. Training is interactive, participative and productive. Learners are grouped into project working groups related to their ability and capability.

9. **Learners are well supported and guided.** BTA identifies and recognises learners' specific needs at an early stage in the programme. The company responds immediately by offering additional off-the-job training sessions supplemented by distance learning resources. Off-the-job training sessions are vocationally relevant, and learners are able to use the new knowledge and skills in the workplace. Progress reviews take place frequently but do not effectively monitor progress towards all aspects of the framework.

10. **Learners develop good literacy and numeracy skills.** Those learners who require support with literacy and numeracy skills attend weekly sessions at the training centre. These are vocationally related sessions focused on both personal and qualification requirements. Many learners and employers acknowledge the improvement in learners' reading, writing and number skills. Learners are given more difficult and complex roles in the workplace.

11. **BTA has no overall plan for individual learning.** The individual learning plan does not always detail learners' additional support needs and does not specify the arrangements required to meet these needs. Most learners do not have a copy of their individual learning plan. There is insufficient use of the accreditation of prior experience and learning as a basis for programme choice. There are also insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. Many of the employers have structured in-house training programmes. Often assessors do not use evidence from these training programmes towards the NVQ.

Leadership and management

12. **Communications are strong at BTA.** There are regular and frequent meetings. Staff also communicate informally by sharing ideas, resources and materials while working in the training centre. Staff often discuss the progress of learners. Performance review reports are produced and discussed regularly. Detailed wall charts displayed in the training room monitor individual progress, internal verification and achievement of units. Retention and achievement rates have steadily improved.

13. **Target-setting is insufficient to improve performance.** Although data is collected, analysed and kept up to date, its primary focus is to monitor performance for contract compliance purposes. It is not analysed or used effectively to measure performance trends or to set performance targets for specific groups of learners. BTA has worked hard to establish and maintain strong links with external organisations, particularly employers.

14. **There is inadequate quality assurance of the key learning processes.** There is no observation of the processes used when learners start a programme, including interviews, initial assessments, induction activities or the devising of the individual learning plans. There is no quality assurance of on- or off-the-job training or project reviews. There is insufficient quality assurance of the quality, usefulness and accuracy of the content of completed documents.

15. **Learners and employers speak highly of BTA.** Staff are skilled and knowledgeable about the experiences of the young people on their programmes. They do all they can to remove any barriers to learning. Staff take positive action to protect their learners, carefully monitoring their progress with employers and removing them from the work placement if it becomes necessary. Staff successfully create a warm and open atmosphere in the training centre, which discourages discriminatory behaviour.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good systems to monitor and support progression and achievement
- good implementation of staff development plans
- many developments leading to continuous improvement
- particularly good support for learners to remove barriers to learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient target-setting to improve performance
- inadequate quality assurance of key learning processes

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good development of literacy, numeracy and language skills
- significant enrichment of learners' lives

Weaknesses

- no overall individual planning
- insufficient recognition of employers' training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BELLIS TRAINING LIMITED:

- BTA's staff are very approachable
- the help they receive with spelling and problems
- the help they receive to find a job
- the encouragement they get to achieve - 'my assessor pushes me to achieve a little bit more'
- the effect their training has on their lives - 'I am getting skills which will help me for the rest of my life'
- 'BTA visits my workplace for all my training and assessment, which is good'
- 'the qualifications don't take years, we start achieving straight away with BTA'
- the staff - 'my assessor is brilliant, he really helps me understand my maths'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BELLIS TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the training room - 'it is too cramped'
- the location - 'BTA's premises are difficult to find'
- the amount of off-the-job training - 'more sessions at the BTA training centre, away from work'
- many learners said there was 'nothing to be improved'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good systems to monitor and support progression and achievement
- good implementation of staff development plans
- many developments leading to continuous improvement
- particularly good support for learners to remove barriers to learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient target-setting to improve performance
- inadequate quality assurance of key learning processes

16. BTA has developed good internal systems to monitor and support retention and achievement rates and progression. All staff continuously discuss the progress of learners through weekly meetings with formal agendas and informal working lunches. Performance review reports are produced and discussed regularly to monitor learners' progress. Detailed wall charts displayed in the training room monitor individual progress, internal verification and achievement of units. There is high priority placed on individual's retention and achievement rates and progression. Staff constantly discuss issues related to individual learners. There is a rapid response to dealing with and removing any barriers to learning that learners may experience. This level of monitoring has enabled staff to focus on steadily improving the retention and achievement rates for each learner. However, most assessors do not know the proportion of their learners who complete the framework, they do not know the extent to which apprentices leave the different contributory areas of learning courses or work placements without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan, or whether there is any pattern regarding when learners leave programmes. Although there is an improved system for collecting and analysing data, this is more focused on meeting the requirements of the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), rather than on producing thorough and detailed performance data and targets.

17. Staff effectively match learners' goals with appropriate work placements. BTA is committed to meeting both learners' and employers' needs. Assessors develop positive relationships with employers and encourage employers to understand and become involved in the qualifications their learners are working towards. Employers are given information packs with detailed programme information and learners' individual learning plans. Two employers are currently enrolled on an e-learning assessor training course. Another is already carrying out assessments in the workplace, with the support of one of BTA's assessors. Employers speak extremely highly of BTA and value the speed at which staff react to learners' problems. Visits to work placements are frequent and attendance is effectively monitored, reported and followed up. Learners value the mentor scheme introduced by BTA to continuously support learners in the workplace.

18. BTA effectively plans and implements staff development and training. A detailed strategy in response to major government initiatives such as skills for life, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and language, and 'success for all' outlines the

company's priorities. A strategic aim of the staff training and development policy is to link staff development activities with individual and business needs. BTA aims to develop flexible and qualified staff to support qualification requirements and the needs of the learners. All part-time and full-time staff have a structured annual appraisal. Records are thorough and detailed and provide staff with an individual development and learning plan with prioritised training activities which link to the company's business plan. Staff value the development opportunities and stay with the company for a long time. Learners benefit from this mutually supportive and stable environment. Mentoring and coaching are used effectively to enhance staff development and to share knowledge, skills and experience. Occupational currency for staff is maintained through effective sharing of practice with employers. All staff are occupationally competent and have a planned programme to acquire and regularly update their qualifications in teaching, literacy, numeracy and language reading, assessment practice and internal verification. All staff received recruitment training to support the strategic aim to enrol more learners.

19. Management of resources is satisfactory. To have and keep staff well qualified is a priority and the company makes effective use of local free training. Assessors, training managers and co-ordinators are very good at researching and developing their own resources and materials. For example, files for staff and learners are available on learning disabilities, health issues and employer rights and responsibilities. The company has recently acquired computers to enable online testing and e-learning. Assessors have laptop computers to allow testing in the workplace.

20. Policies and procedures are satisfactory. BTA has detailed policies and procedures for all aspects of staff and learners' involvement with the organisation. Some procedures are easier to understand than others. There is duplication of information in some areas and not all policies and procedures have been updated to reflect current practices. Staff handbooks are comprehensive and give extremely detailed information on rights and responsibilities. All staff have a clear job description.

21. Management of subcontractors is satisfactory. There are clear written agreements with consultants and work-placement providers, outlining BTA's requirements, expectations and ethical standards. This is systematically monitored to ensure adherence to requirements and standards. Work placements are checked and this involves thorough health and safety audits, learner and work-placement risk assessments and identification of an up-to-date equal opportunities policy and procedures.

22. BTA's use of targets to improve performance is based on the requirements of the funding body. The range of data collected has improved since the previous inspection. It is kept up to date and used to monitor performance for contract compliance. However, it is not analysed or used effectively to measure performance trends or to set performance targets for specific groups of learners. Staff do not systematically analyse and discuss reasons for learners not completing their programme, failing or moving from one work placement to another. Neither is it used to further analyse completion rates across a programme, or to identify and set targets to sustain or further improve retention and achievement rates. Regional and national benchmarks are consulted but not used as a basis for target-setting. Recently, the company has introduced general targets for the development of BTA and targets for the implementation of the new skills for life strategy.

23. BTA has a clear strategy to support literacy and numeracy in response to the skills for

life agenda. All staff have a current learning plan which identifies appropriate training to support the adult curriculum. They carry out literacy and numeracy screening at the interview stage and learners then take a Basic Skills Agency test, if appropriate. Learners who are identified as requiring support attend off-the-job training or have access to distance learning materials. Diagnostic assessments are carried out at a further stage to monitor progress and support identified areas for improvement. Learners who have a declared or identified additional learning need are offered support as appropriate. The training manager is trained to recognise learners with dyslexia and engages the support of an external agency, as appropriate, to support individual learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

24. BTA has a detailed equal opportunities policy which refers to relevant regulations and acts, such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Human Rights Act 1998. It has procedures to deal with harassment and bullying, grievance, appeals, health and safety and accreditation of prior learning. Learners sign copies at their induction and a copy is given to their workplace mentors. Copies of workplace provider's equal opportunities policies are checked by BTA's staff. BTA receives regular updates of equality and diversity information and circulates information to workplaces. Learners show their understanding of equality and diversity issues in discussions relating to workplace activities and in their NVQ assessed work.

25. There is particularly good support for learners' personal, social and work skills development, which removes barriers to learning. Most of BTA's learners require additional learning support or have additional social needs. BTA frequently visits learners in the workplace. Staff see learners every two weeks and in some cases every week. At each visit, regardless of the main purpose of the visit, BTA's staff monitor learners' concerns relating to equality of opportunity.

26. BTA has good relations with a range of specialist external agencies and staff respond effectively to learners' personal crises. For example, they help learners find hostel accommodation, refer them to counselling, advise them on cultural issues, and support them with alcohol misuse and emotional issues. Learners have benefited from participating in an external programme aimed at developing confidence. Other motivational specific activities also increase learners' confidence and enable them to progress more effectively in their workplaces. In addition, BTA's staff carry out research to help their learners. For example they find information on specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. BTA's staff spend a lot of time providing individual support to help learners overcome personal and social problems, such as anger management, when they are unwilling to be referred to specialist support.

27. Learners' work skills are enhanced by their improved personal and social skills enabling them to develop positively in their work roles. Workplace mentors are encouraged by these changes and learners have had increased job responsibilities which further increases their self-esteem, confidence and motivation. Learners who started at work placements through BTA's network of contacts have been employed and have good career prospects. Some learners are now progressing onto further qualifications with BTA and the support of their work-placement providers. BTA's learning programmes are very flexible and some learners have all their training, assessment and support in the workplace provided by BTA's staff and their work-placement providers' staff. BTA's staff understand the industries with whom they work. They make particular efforts to arrange visits at convenient times which

cause minimal disruption to work and give learners maximum learning and assessment time.

28. During 2004-05, BTA has focused recruitment strategies on increasing the proportion male learners. In total, there are now 27 male learners, which at 43 per cent is high for the retail, customer service and hospitality industry. BTA has 32 per cent of its learners from minority ethnic groups, which is similar to the representation of minority ethnic groups in Birmingham. Recent marketing materials include black male visual images to encourage increased participation from this particular minority group. There are good visual images to promote equality of opportunity displayed in the BTA's training room. Data is systematically collected for monitoring learners' gender, minority ethnic groups and additional learning and social needs. BTA produces clear reports for the local LSC. BTA has a high proportion of learners with additional learning or social needs at 85 per cent.

29. BTA's premises are on the first floor of an old protected building. The access button is too high for wheelchair users. BTA's training rooms are mainly accessed by stairs, which limits access for people with restricted mobility. Arrangements can be made with the organisation on the ground floor to use their training room should the need arise. Alternatively, BTA's staff visit workplaces to provide training, assessment and support. BTA has the option to move before September 2005 to new adjacent premises which comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

30. There have been numerous developments to enable the continuous improvement of the provision at BTA. Action has effectively been taken to deal with the key weaknesses from the previous inspection in July 2001. The review system is much improved and reviews are completed with detailed notes about learners' progress. There are now regularly produced, multi-coloured monitoring reports of learners' participation and progress displayed on BTA's office walls. They are a useful information source to inform management actions. Equality of opportunity is now systematically monitored in workplaces. BTA's development plans which were produced following the self-assessment process have clear targets for each action to be completed and reviewed.

31. BTA is very responsive to concerns identified by learners and workplace staff or through their own staff meetings. Improvements that have been made include better attendance recording at training, the compilation of a cultural diversity resource file, provision of a laptop computer for use in the workplace for diagnostic assessments, a quality improvement monitoring cycle to ensure information is ready on time for LSC requests, and a compilation file to record the progress that each learner has made, which is used at staff meetings.

32. BTA has a thorough system of using questionnaires for collecting feedback from learners at key stages in their programmes. These and the questionnaires for employers are systematically issued, collected, collated, analysed, evaluated and then discussed at BTA's staff meetings. Appropriate action is taken. BTA's internal verification processes are thorough and, if required, assessors promptly request further evidence from learners. Learning sessions are observed at BTA's premises. This was introduced to quality assure learning sessions during maternity leave cover. It is not an established process, and does not include all BTA's training staff and is not systematically used as a basis for identifying staff development needs.

33. There is inadequate quality assurance of the key learning processes. There is no observation of the processes used when learners start on programmes, including interviews, initial assessments, induction activities or the devising of the individual learning plans. There is no quality assurance of on- and off-the-job training or progress reviews. There is insufficient quality assurance of the quality, usefulness and accuracy of the content of completed documents. The programme source documents and information about learners' additional learning and social needs are monitored to enable BTA to claim funding. There is insufficient monitoring of BTA's staff activities to assure consistency in the quality of the provision, to share good practice, to identify staff development needs or to use the information as a basis for developments. BTA's training materials are not monitored for the appropriate use of language, font, format, layout or visual images to assure their appropriateness for the learners. BTA's policies and procedures are not systematically reviewed. There is no document control to ensure all parties are using the correct version of documents. BTA does not have a quality manual or a similar document to outline quality assurance processes for the various aspects of the provision.

34. The self-assessment process is completed in August each year. It involves BTA's staff who provide detailed information relating to their areas of learning. Staff receive a draft copy of the self-assessment report before the final version is completed. Learners' and employers' views are included in the process and are taken from the completed questionnaires and information gained during workplace visits. The style of the self-assessment report has evolved and the most recent report has been produced using the new Common Inspection Framework's five key questions and four grades. The report used at inspection is insufficiently evaluative, but accurately identified most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. The grades given at inspection are the same as those in the most recent version of the self-assessment report.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Retailing Apprenticeships for young people	30	2
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	29	2

35. There are 30 learners working towards qualifications in retail operations. Twenty-nine learners are on apprenticeship programmes and one learner is on an advanced apprenticeship. There are 29 learners working towards qualifications in customer service, 27 of whom are on apprenticeship programmes and two are on advanced apprenticeships. Learners are either employed or are found suitable work placements at the start of their programmes. There is a wide variety of workplaces, including large national companies, superstores and sole traders. Customer service learners are placed in a range of organisations including call centres, out-of-town retail parks and hotels. Many workplaces have structured in-house training programmes which learners follow in addition to their qualification. There are some off-the-job training sessions available to BTA's learners. Learners are recruited either directly following a personal recommendation, through Connexions, by progressing from an E2E programme, or through direct marketing to employers. Learners are visited in the workplace by their assessor either every week or every two weeks, depending on their needs. Most of the assessment activity takes place at work. Progress review meetings take place at least every eight weeks. All assessors are qualified and have relevant occupational experience.

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good development of literacy, numeracy and language skills
- significant enrichment of learners' lives

Weaknesses

- no overall individual planning
- insufficient recognition of employers' training

Achievement and standards

36. In the past three years, 69 per cent of learners have completed their apprenticeship frameworks. This is a good achievement rate for the retail and customer service industry. In the past four years, only 17 per cent of learners have left their programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. Seventy-seven per cent of learners who have started an apprenticeship programme have either completed the framework or are still working towards it. Assessors continue to work with learners when they get new jobs or work placements to enable them to continue with their programme of learning.

37. Many learners joining the programmes are demotivated, dissatisfied or have learning difficulties or behavioural issues. BTA strives to remove barriers to learning so that learners are able to make progress. Sixty-two per cent of learners have progressed to retail and customer service programmes from the E2E provision. All learners produce good quality evidence for their NVQ portfolios, which meet the required standards. Key skills are effectively assessed and accredited using evidence from the workplace and from assignments set at the training centre. Targets are set for learners and they are regularly monitored to see if they have been completed as agreed. The targets set for learners are challenging.

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	3		0		2		5	100									
Retained*	0		0		2		2	40									
Successfully completed	0		0		2		2	40									
Still in learning	3		0		0		0	0									

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	60		18		8	100	14	100									
Retained*	1		12		6	75	11	79									
Successfully completed	1		12		6	75	9	64									
Still in learning	54		2		0	0	0	0									

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

The quality of provision

38. Most learners make significant personal and professional development. They make significant progress and improve their confidence, self-esteem and self-belief. Learners are able to articulate their progress and the effect that the programme has had on their lives and future prospects. Some learners have been promoted to supervisory or management positions during their training programme. In addition, some employers are former learners themselves and now encourage their staff to enter these programmes. Many learners have grown in confidence since starting their training and have attributed this to the support and encouragement received from their assessors. Several learners have been promoted once or more to positions of responsibility within months of starting their training programme. BTA uses these learners as role models. Employers value vocational competence and provide a positive training environment.

39. Those learners who require support with literacy, numeracy and language skills attend weekly sessions at the training centre. These sessions are related to the vocational training

programme and respond to individual and qualification requirements. Many learners and employers acknowledge the improvement in reading, writing and numeracy skills. Some of these learners are given more difficult and complex roles in their workplaces. For example, some learners are given roles which include accepting, checking and storage of stock deliveries. BTA identifies and recognises specific learning needs at an early stage. The company responds, immediately by offering additional off-the-job training sessions and provides distance learning resources. Off-the-job training sessions are vocationally relevant and learners are able to use their new knowledge and skills in the workplace. For example, an observed numeracy session focused on cash handling and till operations, developing both vocational and numeracy skills. Teaching is interactive, participative and productive. Learners are grouped into project working groups based on their ability and capability.

40. Assessors have frequent contact with learners and are flexible in the timing of visits. Assessors visit learners every two weeks, and every week in some cases. The relationship between assessors, learners and employers is productive. Where necessary, assessors visit learners during unsociable hours to observe them carrying out work activities, such as receiving early morning deliveries. Many assessors have given learners their personal mobile telephone numbers so that learners can contact them at any time. During assessment visits many learners have asked for help from their assessors regarding social or personal problems, such as homelessness, drug-related issues and depression. Regular contact with learners has enabled assessors to identify and resolve learners' problems, helping them to remain motivated and continue with their programme.

41. During assessment visits, learners are set clear and specific targets relating to their programme. Short-term targets are detailed on an action plan which is left with the learner. However, not all targets are specific, detailed or timebound. Most learners and employers have a good understanding of work to be completed and how it relates to the programme their learners are following. These short-term targets are reviewed at the next assessment visit, and feedback is given to the learner and their employer. Many learners report that they feel stretched and challenged by the targets they are set. Some learners request extra visits if they have queries or if they feel they need extra pastoral support. BTA's assessors immediately respond to any requests for additional support.

42. Assessments are carried out to a satisfactory standard. They are scheduled in advance, and take account of learners' and employers' needs. Learners and employers are aware of when assessment will be taking place. A variety of assessment methods are used, and the evidence is clearly cross-referenced to the NVQ and the key skills qualification. Most assessments take place in the workplace.

43. There is no overall plan of training for each learner. Initial assessment is carried out at the start of the programme, but it is not collected and used to produce an individualised plan linking all aspects of learning. The individual learning plan does not always detail learners' additional support needs and does not specify the arrangements to meet these needs. Most learners do not have a copy of their individual learning plan. There is insufficient use of the accreditation of prior learning and experience as a basis for making the decision about the most appropriate course for the learner. For example, there are at least three learners who have been working in the retail industry for at least four years, whose experience and knowledge has not been recognised or accredited. Two learners have A level qualifications and work in supervisory positions but are still working towards an apprenticeship. On-the-job training arrangements are not detailed on the individual

learning plan. Assessors carry out individual coaching in the workplace when required, but this does not follow a structured plan. All learners have learning logs for planning and recording on-the-job training and there are some examples of this being used very well, but many learners do not use them at all.

44. Many employers have structured in-house training programmes. Assessors often do not link this training to the NVQ requirements. There are some learners who are working for retailers who have no planned or formal training. Workplace supervisors are not fully involved in progress reviews to help plan and make links between on- and off-the-job training needs of the learners. There is some, but insufficient, recording and monitoring of on-the-job training. In some cases, assessors are unaware of the training being offered by employers. For example, one learner has completed specific in-house training and produced good-quality written work on subjects directly related to specific NVQ units and which are relevant to key skills, but none of this work is being used as part of the learner's portfolio for the framework. There is no monitoring or evaluation of the quality of training provided by employers.

Leadership and management

45. BTA has good communications. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and work well together. BTA benefits from a very stable workforce. Many staff members have been with the company for many years. Employers and learners value the involvement of BTA. Learners are carefully matched to job requirements. Others are able to clearly articulate the progress they have made. BTA collects and uses feedback from learners, employers and other key stakeholders, to continuously improve the provision. There were many examples of improvements made by the company following analysis and evaluation of feedback. However, there is insufficient quality assurance of the quality, usefulness and accuracy of the content of completed documents, such as that relating to progress reviews, initial assessment and individual learning plans.

46. The atmosphere at BTA is welcoming and supportive. Learners feel that their achievements are recognised and encouraged. Learners from a variety of backgrounds and social circumstances learn together. BTA's staff take time and effort to engender an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

