

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **The Training Partnership**

**08 February 2007**



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*

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## The Training Partnership

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Training Partnership (TTP), was established in April 1998 and is a privately owned company limited by guarantee. It provides training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in hairdressing, customer service, retailing, business administration and hospitality. All learners are employed full time in local businesses in Staffordshire. TTP contracts with Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for its approved apprenticeship provision.
2. TTP's managing director has overall responsibility for the daily management of the partnership. The two owners and executive directors also continue to play an active part in strategic and daily management. The managing director is supported by a team of 78 other staff working from the company's main premises in Stoke on Trent. Specialist assessors support employers and learners, spending most of their time with learners in the workplace.
3. There are 42 learners on programmes funded by Staffordshire LSC, of whom 17 are advanced apprentices and 32 are apprentices.
4. TTP is part of a national consortium of 24 colleges that provide training for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and vocationally related qualifications to a further 1,682 employed learners. TTP provides assessment for these programmes under contract with the colleges. TTP was previously inspected by the Training Standards Council in 2000 and by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2003.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 3**

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** TTP's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Training in retail and commercial enterprise is good, and training in business administration and law is satisfactory.
6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process involves feedback from staff, learners and employers. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, although others were judged to be no more than normal practice. The report did not fully identify the weaknesses found during the inspection, and was insufficiently self-critical of key weaknesses in areas such as progress reviews. However, after the self-assessment report was published, TTP carried out further work that identified most of the weaknesses in the provision.
7. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** TTP has effective quality improvement processes. Key assessment activity is quality assured, and valuable feedback provided by learners and employers is now used effectively to promote improvement. Much good work has recently been done to move from quality

## THE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

assurance to the management of quality improvement. Some significant staff turnover among key personnel has delayed the introduction of new initiatives. Weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been remedied effectively.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP:

- further develop learners' knowledge of current equality and diversity issues through progress reviews
- improve the focus and awareness of all learning opportunities for apprentices
- move the focus from assuring the quality of the provision to managing and promoting its improvement
- improve coaching and mentoring on quality improvement for staff
- ensure progress reviews promote progression through improved target-setting

### 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>Retail and commercial enterprise</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>Hairdressing</i>			<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	27		2

<b>Business administration and law</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>Customer service</i>			<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	15		3

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Three inspectors inspected, graded and reported on work-based learning programmes for young people in hairdressing and customer service. The inspection took place during one four-day visit.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	4
Number of learners interviewed	12
Number of staff interviewed	26
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13

### Leadership and management

#### Strengths

- very open and responsive management

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and management of training and learning

### Retail and commercial enterprise

#### *Hairdressing*

##### *Strengths*

- very good resources to support learning
- good and improving success rates for level 2 apprentices
- good skills development

##### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning of training for some learners
- weak progress reviews for learners

### Business administration and law

#### *Customer service*

##### *Strengths*

- thorough and highly effective learner induction
- good development of learners' skills

##### *Weaknesses*

## THE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

- weak progress reviews for learners
- insufficient co-ordination and planning of learning

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT THE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP:**

- 'good support to get me through my qualification'
- 'being paid while I train as an apprentice'
- 'doing the apprenticeship has kept me interested in my job'
- 'lots of one-to-one time with assessors'
- 'good support from assessors'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK THE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP COULD IMPROVE:**

- 'nothing - it does all I need'
- the amount of hands-on training

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

#### Strengths

- very open and responsive management

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and management of training and learning

9. The management style at TTP is open to comment and responsive to staff and learners' needs. Very approachable senior staff respond to staff needs, providing a good working environment and effective leadership. The management team responds to staff issues and has invested heavily to provide a very effective personal development programme for staff. Regular weekly and other staff meetings are attended by all senior staff. A company staff meeting requires the attendance of all staff. The standard agenda includes staff development, health and safety and learners' progress. The management team responds readily to ideas from staff and learners. Communication between staff, employers and learners is very effective. Communication channels are good and colleagues pass on information to those who cannot attend. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Managers frequently review learners' progress and support staff where difficulties are encountered. Staff openly discuss any difficulties facing them or learners.

10. Strategic and operational development are managed adequately with appropriate structures, meetings and target-setting. Clear key performance indicators are established to monitor performance. Plans are made for a three-year period and linked appropriately to management and operational issues. The use of management information is satisfactory. Information on learners is recorded and monitored appropriately. A new management information system, which is not yet fully operational, is expected to improve this further. Staff development is effective and is used to identify some training needs. If performance issues are identified, staff in contact with learners may receive up to 12 reviews a year with their manager. This regularly leads to in-house training workshops for all staff. Staff are encouraged to identify and attend training courses that may not be directly related to the business. However, too little has been done to support staff in gaining teaching qualifications, or key or basic skills qualifications. There has been some in-house training to support staff, but this has had little effect on apprenticeship programmes. Staff induction is appropriate, with all new staff completing a month-long induction programme which includes a number of training courses and the completion of a personal development portfolio.

11. The management of quality assurance at TTP has been significantly affected over the past 10 months by the loss of three key staff with responsibilities in this area. Other staff have managed their roles temporarily, but have been unable to put in place some of the planned initiatives.

12. In both areas of learning inspected, the organisation and delivery of training is not managed effectively. The various training programmes are poorly co-ordinated and there is insufficient planning in response to learning and training needs. Employer-led training is

not used to plan or support other learning. For example, the workbooks assessors use to support learning in customer service are not effectively linked to the employers' in-house training. The equality and diversity training given by employers is not developed or used to build learners' skills. Background knowledge sessions delivered by assessors are poorly managed. Learners do not have a plan of their learning activity linking the training they receive from TTP with their employers' and their own needs. Assessors do not prepare session plans for their visits to learners. Employer-led training is not monitored sufficiently or observed to assure its quality. There is a significant focus on assessment but not enough on training and learning needs. Assessments are completed regularly, but assessors do not always set appropriate targets for learners, either for assessment or to support learning and the improvement of skills. Some learners receive training from their employer that is not tested or capitalised on by assessors.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

13. TTP has appropriate policies and procedures for the management of equality and diversity. Stand-alone policies have been written to provide staff and learners with clear guidance and information on how they should behave when working and relating to others. Statements in the policies are extensive and cover all of the broader issues of equality of opportunity, diversity, harassment, sexual orientation, age discrimination, grievance and complaints. Staff responsibilities for equality and diversity are clearly identified in the staff handbook.

14. During the staff induction there is an appropriate programme of equality and diversity training, which includes an explanation of the policies and a discussion about diversity. Staff do understand many of the equality and diversity issues that affect learners, and there are regular discussions during staff meetings. Staff identify and provide effective support for learners who have additional learning and social needs.

15. Equality and diversity are covered appropriately during learners' induction. Learners receive an appropriate guide to the topic, and there are discussions to raise their awareness. They also complete a questionnaire which tests their understanding and prejudices. A further training session six weeks after the induction introduces learners to their rights and responsibilities at work, and some equality and diversity issues are discussed again at this time. Learners sign a charter to say that they have read it and understood how they are expected to behave. This is a well-written document that outlines their rights and responsibilities. Some employers provide equality and diversity training to learners as their employees, but assessors do not follow this up at learners' progress reviews to test understanding. All the learners interviewed demonstrated an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity issues and how these can relate to their work.

16. Learners have regular progress reviews, managed by assessors, but these are not used effectively to test or further develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Equality and diversity are not managed well during learners' reviews. Written guidance has been produced for staff leading reviews, and this includes a clear indication of the depth of answer the assessor should elicit. Nonetheless, learners are asked closed equality and diversity questions and minimal information is recorded on review forms. Review records do not indicate any discussion, and many state that there are no issues. Assessors do not use reviews to test and reinforce learners' understanding based on recent media coverage or their experiences. Instructions and guidance on reviews cover

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most aspects of the process in detail, but equality and diversity is explained less well. There is insufficient focus on ensuring learners are being treated fairly at work.

17. Employers are fully supported and developed by TTP staff in their understanding of equality and diversity. They are provided with support in the development of their equality and diversity policies, if they do not have their own. Most learners are recruited by employers, but TTP does not have any promotional strategies to encourage employers to extend programmes to under-represented groups. However, where it directly recruits learners, TTP does promote programmes to the wider, less-easy-to-reach populations. Work has been done in prisons and with Muslim and minority ethnic groups.

### Quality improvement

### Contributory grade 3

18. TTP has an effective set of quality improvement policies to manage its staff and most of their work with learners. The procedures are well documented and are used to help new and existing staff develop their skills. There is an effective framework of internal auditing, monitoring and validation of assessors' work to ensure that correct procedures are followed. This framework focuses strongly on the learning and development process for staff. Assessors are generally observed monthly, working with learners, by their line managers. There are appropriate, clearly defined and agreed standards for measuring staff performance. The observations are adequately recorded, although they are more quantitative than qualitative, and the outcome is fed back to the assessors. Data from observations is collated centrally, monitored and standardised during meetings with verification staff. Regular monitoring of this data has appropriately identified staff training needs. However, these internal processes do not extend to training given by employers or assessors, concentrating instead on assessments and reviews. The recent loss of key staff has delayed the introduction of initiatives to promote quality improvement rather than just quality assurance.

19. Management information and data on learners is satisfactory and is used effectively to monitor assessors' and learners' performance and progress. Senior staff now monitor learners' performance weekly. A new management information system has recently been installed but has yet to affect the provision. Achievement and success rates are improving on the apprenticeship programmes.

20. Internal verification systems are satisfactory. They are managed appropriately and documented well. In general, the planning of internal verification activities is appropriate. External verifiers' reports are positive. The internal verification system is thorough and is used well to improve assessment practice and learners' performance. It covers the observation of assessments and the content of learners' portfolios and assessors' decisions. Learners' portfolios are checked regularly by the internal verifiers, who generally provide clear and simple written feedback to assessors and learners. The team of internal verifiers and assessors discusses and manages concerns raised by assessment and evidence gathering.

21. Learner surveys are carried out at key points during training. The results are used effectively to produce an overall evaluation and as a tool to improve provision. Response rates for these surveys are high and many make very positive comments about the provision.

22. TTP has established an appropriately inclusive self-assessment process that includes

the views of staff and all stakeholders, and reflects the operations across the partnership. The process of self-assessment is a significant part of the quality improvement framework, linking well with various plans and operational management. The self-assessment report is informative and identifies some of the provider's strengths and weaknesses. However, it omits some significant weaknesses and does not give sufficient weight to others. Some areas identified as strengths are no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report underestimates the effect of the weaknesses on the learners. Inspectors identified several key weaknesses which were not in the self-assessment report. Action plans developed since the self-assessment report was produced indicate that TTP recognises most of the issues identified during inspection as well as others which have already been dealt with. Learner and employer surveys and questionnaires are completed regularly and used to plan developments and devise the self-assessment report.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Retail and commercial enterprise

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Hairdressing</b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	27	2

23. TTP currently has 27 learners working towards qualifications in hairdressing. Of these 12 are advanced apprentices and 15 are apprentices. All learners are employed in salons in Stoke on Trent and the surrounding areas. They are supported in the workplace by experienced work colleagues or managers who often act as mentors. None of the employers or supervisors currently operates as an assessor. All training and assessment is carried out in the workplace. Before starting a programme, all learners are interviewed to establish their existing qualifications, interests and previous work experience. Inductions to the learning programmes are conducted in the workplace over a series of six visits by the assessor. During induction, all learners complete literacy and numeracy assessments and two skills scans to establish their NVQ and key skills training needs. A training and assessment plan records the results of the initial assessments, identifying poor achievements, details of learning objectives and planned completion dates for each element of the training programme. Most employers carry out the practical skills training in the workplace while assessors provide the background knowledge and key skills support. Some learners are trained jointly by their employer and TTP's assessors, who carry out all the assessments. Assessors visit learners in their salons every two to four weeks. Formal progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks and generally involve the employer, the learner and the assessor. TTP has two qualified assessors and one internal verifier. Both TTP's assessors hold an introductory teaching qualification.

### **Hairdressing**

#### *Strengths*

- very good resources to support learning
- good and improving success rates for level 2 apprentices
- good skills development

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient planning of training for some learners
- weak progress reviews for learners

### **Achievement and standards**

24. Learners complete practical work to a very high standard that often exceeds the expectations of the NVQ. They work proficiently and demonstrate good skills with foils and meche while colouring. Apprentices were observed demonstrating high levels of awareness of health and safety, and displaying some very good client care and communication skills. Practical skills are developed to a very high standard, in busy

commercial salons, with learners demonstrating they can use and work with a wide range of products with different clients.

25. The number of learners in this area is low, therefore historical data on success rates, particularly for the advanced apprenticeship programme, must be treated with caution. There are currently 12 advanced apprentices and all are making good progress towards both the NVQ and key skills and are on course to complete their framework on time. Success rates for apprentices are good and improving. The overall and timely success rates for leavers in 2005-06 were good at 58 per cent. Already, seventy one per cent of learners who started their programme in 2006-07 have completed their apprenticeship framework. Learners are now progressing well within the agreed timescales. Learners make good use of tasks undertaken in the workplace to demonstrate their competence in key skills.

26. Portfolios are completed to a good standard. The evidence in them is current and appropriate. Learners enjoy their training and appreciate being able to complete all their training and assessment in busy working salons. Tasks and exercises set for key skills are valued by learners and employers, who find them meaningful and appropriate to their salon work. Daily work tasks are used as good evidence for key skills portfolios. Learners highly value and fully appreciate the opportunities to showcase their work in competitions and in the press. They demonstrate high levels of confidence in their work and themselves. Learners' communication and interpersonal skills are very good and enable them to converse with a wide range of people. Relationships with employers and assessors are good.

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	5	40	43	40	32
		timely	7	0	27	0	20
	2004-05	overall	4	50	41	50	29
		timely	2	0	28	0	20
	2005-06	overall	4	25	45	25	36
		timely	4	25	26	25	19
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	3	67	62	67	49
		timely	4	0	27	0	31
	2004-05	overall	7	29	49	29	41
		timely	6	17	32	17	28
	2005-06	overall	12	58	55	58	52
		timely	12	58	38	58	35

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

27. Assessment practice is good, with all assessments well planned to meet individual learners' requirements. Feedback on assessors' practice from the awarding body is very

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positive. All learners are assessed, during induction, to determine their literacy and numeracy skills. Those identified with low levels of literacy or numeracy are provided with appropriate additional support in their workplace, by their assessors. Learners recognise the importance of developing their skills, and really value and appreciate the additional support they receive. However, the skills training sessions are not formally planned, they often only occur when a need is identified, and their effectiveness is not monitored sufficiently. Overall support for learning is good. There are many examples of learners receiving additional support from their assessors to enable them to progress through assessments.

28. Resources to support learning are good. Most learners' workplaces are large, busy high street salons, which are well equipped with industry standard equipment. Employers provide good additional training opportunities for apprentices. Many employers now have entire staff teams who have been trained by TTP, including some work-based assessors. Through support and close working with TTP, one employer now runs a pre-apprenticeship level 1 NVQ programme on Saturdays and during school holidays for 14 to 16 year olds. Most employers provide between two hours and a full day of training each week, often delivered by nationally recognised experts and manufacturers. This training provides additional learning opportunities over and above the requirements of the NVQ and technical certificates, for example product knowledge and hair extension training. Employers comment positively on the frequent and useful contact with TTP. Communication with employers is very effective and takes place through regular newsletters, assessor meetings and meetings with senior staff. Employers consider TTP their preferred training provider.

29. Sessions run by employers are not planned and are often run to meet the training needs of the team in the salon. They are not regularly observed by TTP staff and the quality of the training provision is not monitored. Where NVQ training requirements fall outside the employers' training programmes, assessors provide that training in the workplace. Only one training session was observed during the inspection, and it was good. Learners do not have a long-term plan that clearly identifies who will provide each aspect of training. Training plans do not identify the aspects of training the employers are responsible for and those that are covered by TTP.

30. Internal verification of assessment is planned well and includes observing assessors in practice. Assessors receive appropriate feedback from internal verifiers and discuss improvements with them. There is effective standardisation of assessors' feedback at regular assessor meetings. This ensures consistency of assessment practice across all programmes. Learners rely on assessors' observations to provide evidence for portfolios. Employers' and clients' witness statements are not used to demonstrate learners' skills.

31. Learners' progress review documents lack detail and do not provide sufficient guidance or targets for learners or their employers between assessment visits. Targets identified during reviews are not recorded in enough detail. Learners often overrun the targets for NVQ units and key skills set in their learning plans. Actions set are too general and do not specify sufficient information to meet the achievements required in learning plans. Progress is not always discussed or recorded. Assessors have not always been challenged when learners make slow progress. Few reviews involve employers and when employers' comments are recorded they have usually been obtained after the review. Reviews do not test learners' understanding of the equality and diversity issues that may

affect them in the workplace or link learners' training needs to employer-led training. Some sections of the review documents are poorly completed. For example, the section that asks about any amendments to training plans often just refers back to the learning plan. Training plans are only held by the assessor. Most reviews are completed to the planned schedule, but they are led by assessors with little input from learners.

32. Records indicate that some learners have not completed basic units, such as shampooing and conditioning, within nine months of starting training, although they will have demonstrated competence on a number of occasions. These learners are sometimes very experienced, having worked in a salon before starting the apprenticeship. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity and health and safety issues is well covered, during a comprehensive six-week induction. It is not further developed during their training or reinforced during progress reviews.

### **Leadership and management**

33. Communication among TTP staff through weekly staff meetings is good and communication with employers and learners is effective. There are clear roles and responsibilities within the assessment team, and a range of procedures to assist assessors. Regular auditing of assessors ensures any poor performance is dealt with. Quarterly progress reviews are managed by assessors and involve employers and learners. All receive copies of any paperwork. Further reviews are carried out each time the assessor visits the workplace. Learners also receive fortnightly individual visits at which assessors cover background knowledge, practical training and assessment. Visits last for up to a full day. Informal communication about these sessions with the employer and the assessor is good.

34. The standardised six-week induction process is good. It enables learners to settle in, and become familiar with the workplace, the qualification requirements and their rights and responsibilities at work. TTP staff have appropriate qualifications and are current practitioners in the industry but none has teaching or key skills qualifications. Internal verification of portfolios meets awarding body requirements.

35. Learners' and employers' views are regularly surveyed, but the results are not fed back to them, although a detailed analysis is made by TTP's managers. TTP's self-assessment process involves feedback from staff, learners and employers. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but considered others to be no more than normal practice. The report did not identify all the weaknesses found during the inspection, and was insufficiently self-critical of some key weaknesses.

**Business administration and law****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Customer service</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	15	3

36. TTP currently has 15 learners working towards qualifications in customer service. Of these, four are advanced apprentices and 11 are apprentices. All the learners are employed and most are supported in the workplace by experienced colleagues or supervisors who provide mentoring and training. Before starting their programme, all learners are interviewed to establish their existing qualifications, interests and previous work experience. Induction to the learning programme is given by an assessor in the workplace over a series of six visits. During this induction period, all learners complete an assessment, to identify their literacy and numeracy levels, and two skill scans, to establish their NVQ and key skills training needs. Learners working towards a level 2 award are also introduced to a series of workbooks that cover aspects of background knowledge linked to their NVQ and technical certificates. A training and assessment plan is used to record the results of the initial assessment, identify any prior achievements, and detail learning objectives and planned completion dates for all parts of the apprenticeship framework. Two assessors provide all the support for learners, visiting them in their workplaces every two to four weeks. Visits provide opportunities for informal coaching and assessment. Learners' progress is formally reviewed every 12 weeks.

**Customer service***Strengths*

- thorough and highly effective learner induction
- good development of learners' skills

*Weaknesses*

- weak progress reviews for learners
- insufficient co-ordination and planning of learning

**Achievement and standards**

37. Learners develop effective work-related skills that are valued and recognised by their employers. Learners and their employers state that learners benefit significantly from the opportunity to reflect on their work roles and study aspects of good customer service practice in greater detail. Learners also improve their personal skills, and most comment that their self-confidence increases during their time on programme. Most learners make good progress at work. Some have been promoted or given the opportunity to work towards higher-level qualifications on completion of their programme. One advanced apprentice has been made a mentor to an apprentice in her workplace in recognition of her increased capabilities. Learners improve their key skills through work-related assignments. Some learners who have evidence of appropriate prior achievement, or perform well in their initial assessments, are offered the opportunity to work towards key skills at a level beyond the framework requirements. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory,

and in some instances good.

38. There have been few apprentices or advanced apprentices in this sector over the past three years and this affects the way in which learners' performance is reflected in statistical tables. For example, one learner successfully achieved an apprenticeship in 2004-05, giving a 100 per cent success rate. In the same year, no one achieved an advanced apprenticeship although one learner finished. This gave a 100 per cent non-completion rate. In 2005-06, 50 per cent of learners completed their awards successfully. This has increased to 67 per cent in the current year with two of the three learners who left completing their full frameworks. On advanced apprentice programmes, all the learners are making satisfactory progress across all aspects of their frameworks.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2004-05	overall	1	0	41	0	26
		timely	1	0	30	0	19
	2005-06	overall	1	0	55	0	45
		timely	1	0	40	0	32
Apprenticeships	2004-05	overall	1	100	56	100	43
		timely	1	0	37	0	30
	2005-06	overall	10	50	64	50	58
		timely	10	10	48	10	44

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

39. Induction is thorough and well planned. It runs across six assessor visits to learners in their workplace, and follows a set schedule that offers assessors the opportunity to get to know the learners and their work roles before starting assessment. The content of the induction is comprehensive. Learners receive appropriate information about their roles and responsibilities, and detailed information covering health and safety, equality and diversity, the appeals process and their programme. They are given an initial skills assessment and their training and assessment plans are completed. Learners also start useful workbooks that cover the background knowledge aspects of customer service. Assessors monitor completion of this work to establish the learners' interest and motivation.

40. TTP employs a satisfactory range of initial assessments to determine the learners' skills. Interviews and skill scans are used to ensure learners are working towards appropriate qualifications, and to identify their learning objectives. Initial assessments of literacy, numeracy, language and key skills are used to identify additional support needs. However, the support needs are not adequately recorded on training and assessment plans and there is little indication of how the needs will be met. The practical support offered to learners during their apprenticeships is satisfactory. Learners enjoy good rapport with their assessors and are comfortable approaching them for help and guidance.

## THE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

41. Assessors employ an appropriate range of assessment methods to meet learners' needs across all aspects of the framework. Productive rapport, both with learners and employers, contributes towards the ready identification of assessment opportunities. Assessors work unobtrusively to conduct observed assessments. Questions are used well to test learners' knowledge and understanding. Projects set to demonstrate learners' understanding of key skills are appropriate and contextualised to their workplace. Learners are encouraged from an early stage to take responsibility for completing the evidence matrix in their portfolios. They have a good understanding of their progress. Assessors' frequent visits to the workplace help to ensure learners maintain their focus on the work set for them. Visits are planned to meet learners' needs and to accommodate shift patterns. Some visit records, completed by assessors, lack focus. They do not provide sufficient detail for the learner to complete agreed actions by the next visit. This has been identified as a problem through TTP's internal verification system. Some assessment records and assessor visit records are difficult to read. The resources used to support programme delivery are satisfactory. Good clear workbooks have been developed for apprentices, and similar books are being prepared for use with advanced apprentices. The workbooks are well set out and illustrated, but comments made by some learners indicate that they are not challenging enough.

42. Learning is insufficiently planned and co-ordinated. The learning objectives identified in training and assessment plans are vague and do not detail how and when training needs will be met. Too few actions have deadlines. There is inadequate recognition of the need to develop learners' knowledge through planned training. Assessors do not routinely identify activity-focused learning needs or plan how they will be met. Informal coaching provides learners with support when they encounter problems. Workbooks are used as references and to provide exercises to test learners. Assessors do not always extend learners' knowledge, focusing instead on preparing them for assessment. Inadequate links are made between employers' training programmes and the requirements of the technical certificate, key skills or the NVQ. The assessors have no formal teaching or training qualifications and have received no development to support them in the delivery of skills for life. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language.

43. Review records are not detailed enough and do not provide sufficient guidance or targets for learners or their employers to follow between assessment visits. Targets identified during reviews are vague, and few have deadlines by which work should be completed. Progress is not always discussed or recorded. Few reviews involve employers, and where employers' comments are recorded most have been obtained after the review, when the learner is not present. Reviews do not test learner' understanding of equality and diversity issues or focus on ensuring that learners are being treated fairly at work. Reviews do not link learners' training needs to employer-led training. Some written sections of the reviews are poorly completed. For example, the section that asks for detail about any amendments to training plans often just refers back to the learning plan. Training plans are only held by the assessor. Most reviews are completed to the planned schedule.

### **Leadership and management**

44. Internal verification arrangements fully meet the requirements of the awarding body. There are some instances where staff have been slow to deal with issues raised through the internal verification process. Assessors and managers communicate effectively.

Arrangements are in place for staff appraisal and development. There are regular standardisation meetings that focus on programme development and delivery. Learners' progress is monitored carefully by assessors and managers, and slow progress is increasingly challenged. Links with employers are managed well. The self-assessment report presented several strengths and one weakness for this area of learning. Inspectors found a number of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment failed to identify the weaknesses identified by the inspectors.

