

# Department for Employment and Learning: Jobskills

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL  
NIA 47/03, HC 762 Session 2003/04: 7 July 2004



**JOBSkills**  
YOUR FUTURE IN YOUR HANDS

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Northern Ireland Audit Office

Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General  
for Northern Ireland

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# Department for Employment and Learning: Jobskills

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Comptroller and Auditor General

Northern Ireland Audit Office  
7 July 2004

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# Abbreviations

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<b>A-Level</b>	General Certificate in Education Advanced Level
<b>DEL</b>	Department for Employment and Learning
<b>ETI</b>	Education and Training Inspectorate
<b>FAST</b>	Financial Audit and Support Team
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate in Secondary Education
<b>IQRS</b>	Improving Quality: Raising Standards
<b>JQMS</b>	Jobskills Quality Management System
<b>NIAO</b>	Northern Ireland Audit Office
<b>NVQ</b>	National Vocational Qualification
<b>QCA</b>	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
<b>SSA</b>	Social Security Agency
<b>TO</b>	Training Organisation

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## Executive Summary

### Background

1. The Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) is responsible for the delivery of Jobskills, a large-scale training programme aimed at raising the skills levels of participants and thereby their employability. The primary function of Jobskills, which was introduced in April 1995, is to ensure that those people seeking to enter employment, and for whom an academic education is inappropriate, have access to an alternative route to qualifications. The programme focuses on the attainment of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).
2. Originally, Jobskills catered for two main trainee groups - 16 to 24 year-olds who were first-time entrants to the labour market and 25 to 60 year-olds who were unemployed for more than three months. However, with the introduction of 'New Deal' in 1998, which caters for unemployed adults, Jobskills was changed to concentrate on meeting the needs of unemployed young persons. Currently, those eligible to commence Jobskills training range from 16 to 24 years of age. (To allow comparability over the full life of the Jobskills programme, we have restricted our analysis to the young persons grouping.)
3. Jobskills is currently structured into three levels of training:
  - **Access** - aimed at participants who, due to a disability or other disadvantage (such as literacy, numeracy and motivational problems) require training before progressing further within the programme. Access focuses on NVQ 'Level 1'
  - **Traineeship** - the main entry point for those who do not require preparatory training, focusing on NVQ 'Level 2'
  - **Modern Apprenticeship** - aimed at those able to gain high-level skills and qualifications. Apprenticeships follow frameworks developed in conjunction with industry representatives and focus on NVQ 'Level 3'. All trainees on Modern Apprenticeships must be in employment.



4. Jobskills training is delivered by recognised 'Training Organisations' (TOs) under contract with the Department. Training includes attendance at formal classes run by the TO and work placement with employers. At March 2003, there were 104 contracts, held by four different types of TO - private sector providers, community providers, further education colleges and sectoral training councils.
  
5. Jobskills remains the Department's largest employment and training scheme. Total expenditure over the eight-year period to March 2003 amounted to some £485 million and in the latest year (2002-03) was £45 million. At March 2003, there were 12,650 trainees, representing 57 per cent of total participants on Departmental employment and training schemes. Since its introduction, Jobskills has catered for some 76,400 young persons and 17,300 adults.

## **The Scope of NIAO's Examination**

6. The scope of our examination covered:
  - the quality of training delivered under Jobskills
  - the effectiveness of the programme
  - the extent to which Jobskills meets the skills needs of the economy
  - the Department's financial monitoring and control of Jobskills.

During the study, we commissioned a survey of 400 trainees who started on Jobskills in 1999-00. We also reviewed a range of inspection reports on TOs by the Education and Training Inspectorate and met with representatives from TOs, employers and sectoral training councils.

## **Main Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **General Conclusion**

7. Jobskills is an important programme for the Department and one which makes a significant contribution towards its strategic objectives. It has provided vocational

training to a large number of young people of varying abilities and, in recent years, has increased the numbers training in those occupational areas which are key to the growth potential of the Northern Ireland economy. It has also resulted in a substantial number of qualifications for trainees, with overall achievement comparing favourably with broadly similar training provision in Great Britain. There is also evidence that the Jobskills participation rate among young persons in Northern Ireland has been higher than in similar training schemes in Great Britain. Notwithstanding these achievements, our review of Jobskills has highlighted a number of areas where there is scope for further improvement in the programme.

### **On the Quality of Training (Part 2 of the Report)**

8. The Department has engaged the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI - part of the Department of Education), to provide assurance on training quality. In planning its yearly programme of inspections, ETI consults with the Department. However, there is no systematic or rolling plan of inspection and, at current levels, it would take around 10 years for ETI to inspect all training providers. In our opinion, this is too long a timescale. The Department has told us that it is currently in negotiation with ETI to ensure that each TO is inspected every four years. We welcome this move and recommend that the Department liaises with ETI to develop a more systematic approach to inspection, using criteria such as the size of providers, historical performance and results from previous inspection reports to ensure that all TOs are inspected on a periodic basis, within a reasonable timeframe. Since our review, ETI has told us that its 2003-04 inspection programme has been agreed with the Department, using these criteria (paragraphs 2.5 to 2.17).
  
9. We reviewed ETI reports on TOs inspected between June 1998 and February 2001. The results indicated that many of the issues identified in earlier inspections continued to be reported - for example, weaknesses in initial diagnostic assessments, variable quality in TO training provision and poor quality work placements. In our opinion, the Department could be more pro-active in using the results of ETI reports. We recommend that it undertakes periodic

reviews of all ETI reports, identifies common and recurrent weaknesses, formally disseminates this information both internally and externally (for the benefit of all TOs) and maintains a central database of all ETI reports to facilitate analysis of the most common problems and enable tracking of follow-up action. The Department has agreed to put procedures in place to identify common and recurrent weaknesses and ensure that the information is disseminated (paragraphs 2.18 to 2.25).

10. The Department relies primarily on the contracting process and the setting of TO performance targets, to drive up the general quality of training. In our view, the persistence of aspects of poor quality training, as identified in ETI reports, indicates that this has not been wholly successful in eradicating weaknesses. We recommend that the Department considers the development of a formal and systematic mechanism for the communication of best practice advice to TOs. This could include a manual of best practice case studies, establishing Centres of Excellence, hosting of best practice seminars by Departmental and ETI staff and development of a best practice web site. The Department said it will consider the feasibility of establishing Jobskills Centres of Excellence, taking account of the work already done in the further education sector, and will introduce a mechanism to communicate advice on best practice (paragraphs 2.26 to 2.30).
11. Since February 2000, ETI has graded the quality of occupational areas inspected using a four-point scale, where Grades 3 and 4 reflect below standard quality. In the nine inspections carried out between February 2000 and November 2001, some two-thirds of the 77 training areas inspected were found to be of standard quality or better. However, five per cent of the remainder were graded as having significant weaknesses and a further 27 per cent of training areas were graded as having more weaknesses than strengths. Based on these results, it is possible that 1 in 3 trainees currently on Jobskills (some 4,000 young people) are being trained in a TO or in an occupational area where the quality of training is below standard.
12. We consider that the Department could use ETI reports, and associated gradings, to set a minimum quality threshold for TOs. The threshold could be

incorporated within the Department's contracts with TOs. The Department should also consider establishing a system of sanctions, to be applied where a TO falls below a pre-determined quality threshold. Decisions as to whether to apply a sanction, and its severity, should reflect the seriousness of the weaknesses found and the circumstances. The Department said that under new self-assessment arrangements for TOs it would, after a period for the new arrangements to become embedded, give a TO assessed at Grade 4 ('significant weaknesses') an opportunity to improve but if, subsequently, no improvement is shown the contract may be withdrawn. In addition, the Department said that it will continue to review TOs' qualification achievement rates and will remove approval to deliver qualifications as appropriate (paragraphs 2.32 to 2.40).

### **On the Effectiveness of the Programme (Part 3 of the Report)**

13. We welcome the setting of targets, by the Department, on a range of measures including NVQ achievement, progression to the next strand of Jobskills and movement into employment. However, there is scope to enhance the performance measurement process in terms of timeliness of reporting, greater comparability of targets over time and consistency of targets between different strands of Jobskills. We recommend that a consistent set of targets is established and reported annually for each strand. The Department has indicated that it will now set uniform targets, across each strand of the programme, and will also consider extending its range of targets beyond those published in its operational plan (paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6).
  
14. We also recommend that the Department publicly reports, at least annually, Jobskills performance outcomes as a percentage of leavers. In our view, this would improve the quality and timeliness of reporting and provide comparative performance information between English, Scottish and Northern Ireland schemes. The Department has accepted the recommendation and said that, in future, outcome data calculated on the basis of leavers will be included in its annual report (paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8).

### ***Achievement of NVQs***

15. We examined the NVQ achievement rate for trainees starting in the 1995-96 to 2000-01 'cohort' years (the duration of Jobskills training can last for some three years). By March 2003, some 40,000 NVQs had been achieved, representing an overall achievement rate of approximately 66 per cent (paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10).
16. Achievement rates rose in the cohort years to 1997-98, but declined thereafter. We were told that one of the main factors for the drop in achievement rates is the impact of 'Key Skills'. Introduced in 1999 as a mandatory requirement alongside NVQs, it has had a negative impact because many Jobskills participants left full-time education to avoid this type of classroom-based training. However, the degree of impact is not known because the achievement of Key Skills is not separately monitored. In our view, it is essential that the Department takes steps to measure the achievement of individual Key Skills. It should also determine the degree to which classroom-based delivery is a factor in lower achievement levels and consider, with ETI, the appropriateness of alternative delivery mechanisms (paragraphs 3.11 to 3.13).
17. In England, NVQ achievement for young people who left Government supported work-based training during 2000-01 averaged 53 per cent. Although not directly comparable, this suggests that Jobskills continues to perform well relative to similar schemes in Great Britain. We recommend that the Department carries out research to identify broadly similar schemes in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and formally benchmarks Jobskills against them, at a national or regional level. The Department has commented that, while differences in the way performance outcomes are measured can make direct comparisons difficult, it will nevertheless seek to benchmark Jobskills against similar schemes (paragraphs 3.18 and 3.19).

### ***Progression Rates***

18. A key aim of the Access strand is to prepare trainees to progress within the programme. It is disappointing, therefore, that only 40 per cent of young people

who entered the Access strand from 1995-96 to 1999-00 progressed to Level 2 (although some others will have moved to employment or other education or training). In our view, the Department should consider carrying out systematic monitoring and research to identify the main drivers and barriers to progression throughout the programme. The Department told us that it intends to focus on driving up retention rates, which it considers will have a significant impact on progression, and that it will carry out the recommended research to examine the barriers to progression (paragraphs 3.22 to 3.24).

### *Labour Market Outcomes*

19. Data from the Department, for the 1995-96 to 1999-00 cohort years, indicate that on leaving the programme approximately 46 per cent of trainees moved directly into employment, 10 per cent into other education or training, and 24 per cent into unemployment. A further 20 per cent of Jobskills leavers were classified as 'destination not known' (paragraphs 3.25 to 3.30).
20. In our view, it is not satisfactory that such a large proportion of leavers' destinations is 'not known', as this distorts the actual outcomes from the programme. We estimate that the average employment rate for Jobskills leavers, over the five cohort years to March 2000, might be closer to 60 per cent, a level supported by the results of our survey. The Department should consider undertaking an annual survey of Jobskills leavers to improve the accuracy of its outcome data. In addition, it should require TOs, who are responsible for providing leavers data, to more rigorously follow-up and report on leavers' destinations. The Department has acknowledged that the large proportion of 'not known' destinations is unsatisfactory and said it will consider alternative methods of determining leavers' destinations, possibly adopting the method used in England of a leavers survey (paragraphs 3.30 and 3.31).
21. NIAO compared the labour market outcomes from Jobskills (based on the results from our survey) with those for a group of young people leaving work-based training in England. This shows that, in England, leavers are more likely to be in employment (72 per cent as against 66 per cent) or in further education or

training (14 per cent against 10 per cent) and are also less likely to be in unemployment (10 per cent compared with 23 per cent) (paragraph 3.32).

### ***Early Leaving***

22. A significant proportion of trainees who start Jobskills leave prematurely. The proportion who leave within 4 weeks has remained relatively constant over the life of the programme, at some 10 per cent of total starts. A further 40 per cent leave after completing more than 4 weeks but without achieving their targeted qualification. This issue has to be addressed by the Department. In addition to the costs of early leaving, those who leave Jobskills prematurely without obtaining a qualification are less likely to move into employment and more likely to move into unemployment (paragraphs 3.34 to 3.41).
23. We acknowledge the Department's recent efforts to improve retention rates within the Access strand. However, there is considerable scope to further reduce early leaving. We consider that the Department should carry out systematic monitoring of premature leaving to identify the extent of the problem, where it is most prevalent (which programme strand, occupational areas and individual TOs) and the characteristics most likely to be associated with it. We also recommend that the Department adopts a specific programme objective to reduce early leaving (paragraphs 3.45 and 3.46).

### ***Variance in TO Performance***

24. The Department is aware of the variability in performance across TOs and has taken steps to address the issue, such as increasing the amount of output-related funding. Even so, a considerable differential remains between individual TOs. Our detailed analysis of NVQ achievement and labour market outcomes for trainees who started in the 1999-00 year, highlights that the variability in TO performance is very wide - too many TOs have performances which are significantly below the average (paragraphs 3.50 to 3.53).
25. We recommend that the Department puts in place a specific action plan to address this issue. This could usefully include research to determine the extent

to which performance is linked to the characteristics of the trainee intake; comparing results of ETI inspections with TO performance to identify any correlation between poor quality training and poor outcomes; setting specific targets to raise the performance of the weakest performing TOs; and performance benchmarking TOs with those having broadly similar characteristics. The Department said that research on the effectiveness of Jobskills will be carried out in the next 12 months (paragraph 3.54).

### ***The Access Strand***

26. Relative to the other strands of the programme, there has been a significant and ongoing under-performance for those trainees within Access (NVQ Level 1). Compared with their counterparts on the Traineeship (NVQ Level 2) and Modern Apprenticeship (NVQ Level 3) strands, Access trainees are less likely to achieve their NVQ, enter further education and training, or complete their Jobskills training and they are more likely to move into unemployment (paragraph 3.55).
  
27. As the Access strand is targeted at disadvantaged young people, it is disappointing that substantial proportions of these trainees fail to complete their course, achieve NVQs, or move into employment. We recommend that the Department should separately consider the performance of the Access strand in any action plan (paragraph 25 above) aimed at addressing the variations in TO performance. The Department has said that it is currently reviewing the Access strand with a view to developing provision targeted at those young people with multiple barriers to employment (paragraphs 3.56 to 3.58).

### ***The Net Employment Impact of Jobskills***

28. On the basis of our survey, we estimate the level of 'deadweight' in Jobskills at 48 per cent. Adding 'displacement' and 'substitution' effects, this suggests a net additional employment for the programme of 14 per cent. This is similar to the 12 per cent estimated in Scotland for the Skillseekers programme. In our view, it is important that the Department puts systems in place to periodically estimate the net employment effect, identify the characteristics associated with high levels



of deadweight, displacement and substitution and seeks ways in which to minimize such effects. The Department has accepted our recommendation (paragraphs 3.59 to 3.66).

### **On Targeting Skills Needs (Part 4 of the Report)**

29. The 'Northern Ireland Skills Task Force' was established in February 1999, with a membership drawn from employers, trade unions and government departments and agencies. Although the Skills Task Force is not concerned specifically with Jobskills, it has highlighted a number of key messages which are relevant to the programme. These include an apparent lack of formal channels through which the needs of the labour market could be transmitted to the education and training sector and concerns that the level of training provision under the vocational system failed to meet the needs of employers (paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7).
30. In April 2000, a number of new objectives were introduced to Jobskills. These included contributing to the development of a highly-skilled, flexible and innovative workforce and addressing priority skills needs. We welcome the introduction of these new objectives, as they should help to align Jobskills more closely with the skills needs of the economy. However, we note that these objectives remain high level in nature. We recommend that the Department further develops the objectives, makes them operational, sets associated targets which are specific, measurable and time-bounded and reports achievements on an annual basis. The Department told us that it intends to address this recommendation alongside its review of other programme targets (paragraphs 4.10 and 4.11).
31. NIAO's survey of Jobskills trainees suggests that a substantial cadre of participants are leaving Jobskills without using the skills learnt on the programme. Approximately 10 per cent of trainees who have left the programme have never had a job and 29 per cent of those who gain employment after leaving the programme indicated that they did not use the skills learnt on the programme "at all". On the basis of these findings, it is possible that there is an occupational skills mismatch of some 36 per cent in the programme. The Department

commented that it had introduced priority skills areas to improve the match between training provision and occupational skills needs, and while this was not always possible to achieve, the generic skills and personal development gained from Jobskills participation will be relevant to whatever occupational area a young person eventually chooses. It also said that it was currently reforming the Careers Service to better focus on the needs of young people with multiple barriers to education and training. In our opinion, there is considerable scope to better target training provision. We recommend that the Department monitors leavers' outcomes more closely and uses the results to inform the occupational profile of training provision. In particular, we consider that the Department must do more to steer Access trainees into appropriate occupational areas (the advice offered to young persons by the Careers Service will be particularly important in this regard) and to equip them with the basic and key skills necessary to meet identified needs of employers and the wider economy (paragraphs 4.16 to 4.20).

32. Currently, much of the Skills Task Force's research is at a Northern Ireland-wide level. However, it is also important to assess *local* needs. Based on the occupational skills mismatch identified in our survey, there is scope to improve on current arrangements. We recommend that the Department considers how best to source data on local skills needs. In Scotland, the National Audit Office engaged the European Policy Research Centre to develop a checklist of the key features which might be expected in any research into the skills needs of a local area. In our view, the Department could usefully develop guidance based on the Centre's checklist, to supplement its existing arrangements (paragraphs 4.21 to 4.24).
33. There is no body in Northern Ireland which has specific responsibility to oversee and co-ordinate the implementation of recommendations of the Skills Task Force. In our view, the Department should consider a similar approach to that in the Republic of Ireland, where a 'Skills Implementation Group' has been set up. Such an approach should ensure that recommendations arising from the work of the Skills Task Force are implemented as soon as possible and in a consistent and co-ordinated fashion, both within the Department and in conjunction with other departments and agencies (paragraphs 4.27 to 4.29).

## On Financial Monitoring and Control (Part 5 of the Report)

34. The three main financial risks under Jobskills are that payments will be made for:
- trainees who are not in attendance
  - trainees who have not obtained their qualification or achieved their sustained employment outcome
  - unauthorised or unsubstantiated expenditure.

The Department's control framework includes a number of administrative requirements and checks prior to payment, and post-payment inspections by its 'Financial Audit and Support Team' (FAST) on supporting data held by TOs (paragraphs 5.1 to 5.8).

35. The Department carried out an exercise between October 1999 and March 2000 which identified the level of net adjustments to claims, arising out of its administrative checks in that period, at around 1.4 per cent of total spend. Although the percentage is small, it equates to some £900,000 net per year (based on a gross £1.1 million overclaim and £200,000 underclaim). As these errors related mainly to lack of adherence to Jobskills guidelines, the Department deemed them to be administrative errors by TOs (paragraph 5.9).
36. We welcome the use of a control framework designed to address the main financial risks of the programme. However, our review has indicated that some risks remain within the key areas of attendance verification, employment outcomes and qualification achievements. We note that the Department has agreed to keep these risks under review, within its formal risk assessment procedure (paragraphs 5.10 and 5.11).
37. No frauds have been identified as a result of FAST activities (or through any other checks). However, the Department has effected some large recoveries as a result of FAST inspections - over the eight years to March 2003, some £358,000 has been recovered, or recommended for recovery, from TOs for incorrect, ineligible or unsubstantiated claims. With FAST activities covering some 3 per

cent of total programme expenditure, NIAO estimates (on the basis of a simple extrapolation against total expenditure) a potential overall level of incorrect, ineligible or unsubstantiated claims in the region of £10 million over the life of the programme (or £1.2 million per year). Together with the errors identified through administrative checks (paragraph 35 above), this indicates that there are significant financial risks within Jobskills (paragraphs 5.19 to 5.21).

38. In our view, there would be merit in establishing an aggregate record of all errors and adjustments to claims, identified both from administrative checks and FAST inspections. This would facilitate identification and tracking of individual TOs characterised by persistent errors and claims adjustments. Overall monitoring of this nature should also help to identify any patterns of abuse within the system. While the Department considers that this would provide only minimal benefit over the current, separate monitoring arrangements, our view is that a more co-ordinated approach would assist in targeting control and inspection activities (paragraphs 5.22 to 5.24).
39. We also believe that the Department should consider the development of a suitable methodology, based on an extrapolation of the results of the FAST sample inspection, to estimate the potential level of inappropriate claims for the programme as a whole. Together with the levels of actual error and adjustment detected by administrative checks, this would provide senior management with a firm basis on which to consider the merits of allocating additional inspection resources. The Department told us that it does not see a need for an extrapolation methodology - the FAST inspection programme seeks to visit each Jobskills provider at least once every two years and such inspections cover sample transactions from the date of the previous inspection. It said that where a deficiency is identified, the FAST inspector will probe similar or related transactions to confirm the extent of required recovery. In the Department's view, these arrangements ensure the fullest identification of recovery needed. However, given that FAST inspections sample only some 3 per cent of the £45 million annual programme expenditure, NIAO remains of the opinion that extrapolation would be beneficial (paragraphs 5.25 and 5.26).



# Part: 1

## Introduction and Background

### Background

1.1 The Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) aims “to promote a culture of lifelong learning and to equip people for work in a modern economy”. The Department’s objectives include:

- to promote economic growth, improved living standards and an increased number of employment opportunities
- to achieve the highest quality of education and training provision.

These objectives are in keeping with the key priorities identified by the Northern Ireland Executive in its Programme for Government, including ‘Investing in Education and Skills’ and ‘Securing a Competitive Economy’.

1.2 In pursuit of these objectives, the Department’s activities concentrate on two main themes:

- promoting a commitment to lifelong learning, to create the skills and expertise the economy and employers need, to promote social inclusion and to encourage personal and cultural development
- helping people without a job into work.

1.3 The Department<sup>1</sup> is responsible, among other things, for the delivery of the Jobskills programme. This is a large-scale training programme aiming to raise the skills levels of participants and thereby increase their employability.

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<sup>1</sup> Since its inception in April 1995, responsibility for the Jobskills programme was as follows:

- 1995 to 1999 - Training & Employment Agency (T&EA), an executive agency of the former Department of Economic Development
- December 1999 to November 2000 - T&EA, as an executive agency of the then Department for Higher & Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE). In November 2000 - T&EA ceased to be an executive agency and became part of the Department
- In July 2001, DHFETE was renamed the Department for Employment and Learning.

## The Jobskills Programme

### Aims and Objectives

- 1.4 The Jobskills programme was introduced in April 1995 and replaced the former Youth and Job Training Programmes. Its primary function is to ensure that those people seeking to enter employment, and for whom an academic education is inappropriate, have access to an alternative route to qualifications. It aims to raise the quality of training available by focusing on the attainment of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) by participants.
- 1.5 NVQs are qualifications for work, which demonstrate occupational competence i.e. the ability to perform to the standards required in the work situation. The NVQ is achieved when the candidate is formally assessed as competent in the application of the required occupational skills and knowledge.
- 1.6 The programme has 11 key objectives (see **Appendix 1**). These include:
- to contribute to the development of a highly skilled, flexible and innovative workforce to assist the overall competitiveness of Northern Ireland
  - to provide quality training for young people entering the labour market
  - to address within a single framework the vocational needs of trainees of varying levels of ability
  - to increase the employability of young people by improving their levels of skills and competence through the attainment of NVQs
  - to address priority skills needs.

### Structure and Delivery

- 1.7 The Jobskills programme is currently structured into three levels of training - Access, Traineeship and Modern Apprenticeship.
- **Access** - is aimed at preparing young people who, due to a disability or other disadvantage (such as literacy, numeracy and motivational problems), are assessed as requiring preparatory training before progressing further within the programme, and is oriented towards the achievement of NVQ Level 1 (equivalent to GCSE Grade D-G)

- **Traineeship** - is the main entry point onto Jobskills for those who do not require preparatory training. It focuses on the delivery and attainment of NVQs at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE Grade A\* - C)
- **Modern Apprenticeship** - is the highest level of training provided under Jobskills and is aimed at those with the ability to gain high-level skills and qualifications. Apprenticeships follow training frameworks developed in conjunction with industry representatives. This strand of the programme is primarily focused on the achievement of NVQs at Level 3 (equivalent to two A-Levels). All trainees on Modern Apprenticeships must be in employment.

In addition to NVQs, Jobskills participants also undertake training towards the achievement of 'Key Skills'. Key Skills are separate qualifications which provide trainees with a range of transferable generic skills required in most occupations. There are currently six Key Skills - Communication, Improving Own Learning, Working with Others, Application of Numbers, Information Technology and Problem Solving.

- 1.8 Training on the Jobskills programme is delivered by recognised Training Organisations (TOs) under contract with the Department. At March 2003, there were 104 TOs (see **Appendix 2**), ranging in size from those with less than 10 Jobskills trainees to those with more than 500. Many TOs deliver a wide range of NVQs while others concentrate on specific occupational areas such as information technology or electrical installation. The Department classifies four types of TO - private sector providers (48 contracts), community providers (25 contracts), further education colleges (19 contracts), and sectoral training councils (12 contracts).

### Changes in the Programme

- 1.9 The Jobskills programme has evolved significantly since its inception. Originally, it catered for two main trainee age groups - 16 to 24 year-olds who were first-time entrants to the labour market and 25 to 60 year-olds who were unemployed for more than three months.
- 1.10 With the introduction of New Deal from 6 April 1998, the focus of Jobskills changed. New Deal provides a variety of training and employment options for



unemployed adults. Consequently, Jobskills was changed to concentrate on meeting the needs of unemployed 16 and 17 year olds for whom the Government guarantees a training place. Changes to the programme, since its inception in April 1995, are summarised in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

## **Main Changes to the Jobskills Programme since Inception**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Developments</b>
July 1996	Modern Apprenticeships introduced within Jobskills.
April 1998	Cessation of adult recruitment to the programme.
April 1999	Strategic changes to the programme including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of two funding categories within Traineeships and Modern Apprenticeship to reflect priority and non-priority occupational areas</li> <li>• Increase in the output-related element of funding</li> <li>• Introduction of Key Skills as a mandatory element of the programme.</li> </ul>
September 1999	Revision of the Access programme including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of an intensive initial assessment period, funded at a higher level</li> <li>• Introduction of trainee incentive bonuses</li> <li>• Introduction of output-related funding for outcomes other than qualifications.</li> </ul>

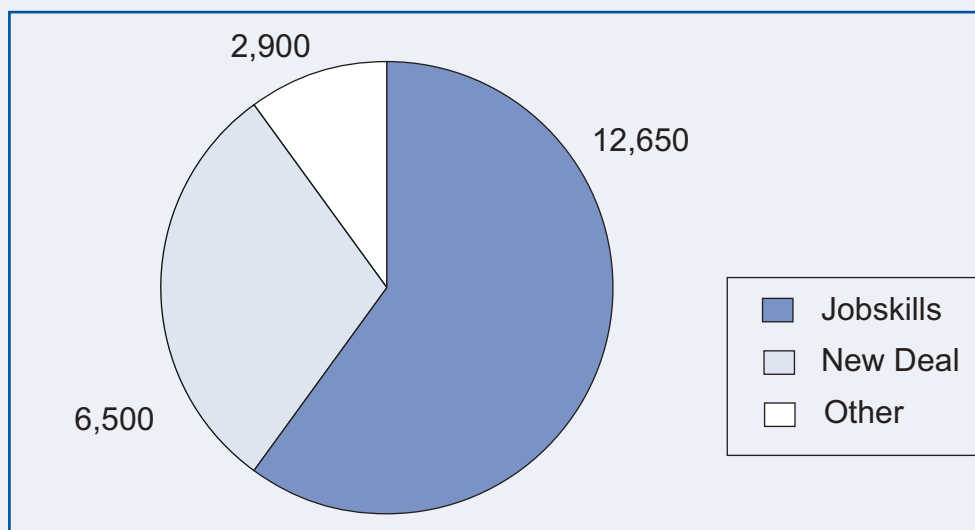
### **Programme Expenditure and Participation**

1.11 Total expenditure on Jobskills over the eight-year period to March 2003 amounted to approximately £485 million. Expenditure within the programme peaked in 1996-97, at £73 million. Although spending has reduced due to the fall in adult participation as a result of New Deal, total programme expenditure remains significant - in 2002-03 it was £45 million (£26 million paid to TOs, £18 million to trainees and £1 million on other support costs).

1.12 Jobskills remains the Department's largest employment and training scheme. At March 2003, there were 12,650 young people participating on the programme. This represents 57 per cent of total participants on Department employment and training schemes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

## Participation on Departmental Employment and Training Schemes at March 2003



Source: DEL

1.13 Since its introduction, the programme has catered for some 76,400 young persons and 17,300 adults. While the Department did not monitor the separate cost of the youth and adult trainees, on the basis of these activity levels, their respective costs can be estimated as £405 million and £80 million.

### The External Evaluation of the Programme

1.14 In April 1999, consultants were commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the Jobskills programme. The final report (the 'External Evaluation') was produced in May 2000 and noted that the NVQ attainment rate within the programme was relatively high, that the programme compared favourably with similar schemes in Great Britain and that the programme had helped many participants who would otherwise have been unemployed. However, the External Evaluation also identified a number of weakness, including:

- diversity of performance within the TO network in terms of attainment of NVQs
- a high incidence of early leaving from the programme and the importance of measures to reduce this outcome

- a need for the programme to become more 'market-facing' by including employers in Jobskills objectives and securing the involvement of a greater number of employers in target sectors.

## The Scope of NIAO's Study

1.15 In view of the scale of expenditure involved, the large numbers of trainees passing through the scheme and the issues identified in the External Evaluation, NIAO examined the Jobskills programme. The scope of the examination covered:

- the quality of training delivered (**Part 2** of our Report)
- the effectiveness of the young persons<sup>2</sup> element of the programme (**Part 3**)
- the extent to which Jobskills meets the skills needs of the economy (**Part 4**)
- the Department's financial monitoring and control (**Part 5**).

1.16 During this study, we also:

- commissioned a survey from external consultants of a representative sample of 400 trainees who had started on Jobskills in 1999-00 (the most recent substantially complete cohort<sup>3</sup> at the date of the survey)
- reviewed 26 inspection reports on TOs undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)
- interviewed representatives from 10 TOs and contacted a number of employers and sectoral training councils involved with Jobskills to gauge their views on the programme.

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<sup>2</sup>For comparability over the life of the programme, NIAO has restricted analysis of effectiveness to young persons because the programme has been targeted solely towards this group since April 1998. Currently, young people eligible to commence Jobskills training range from 16 to 24 years of age.

<sup>3</sup>The Department refers to trainees starting in a particular financial year as that year's cohort e.g. the 1999-00 cohort is all trainees who started Jobskills between April 1999 and March 2000.



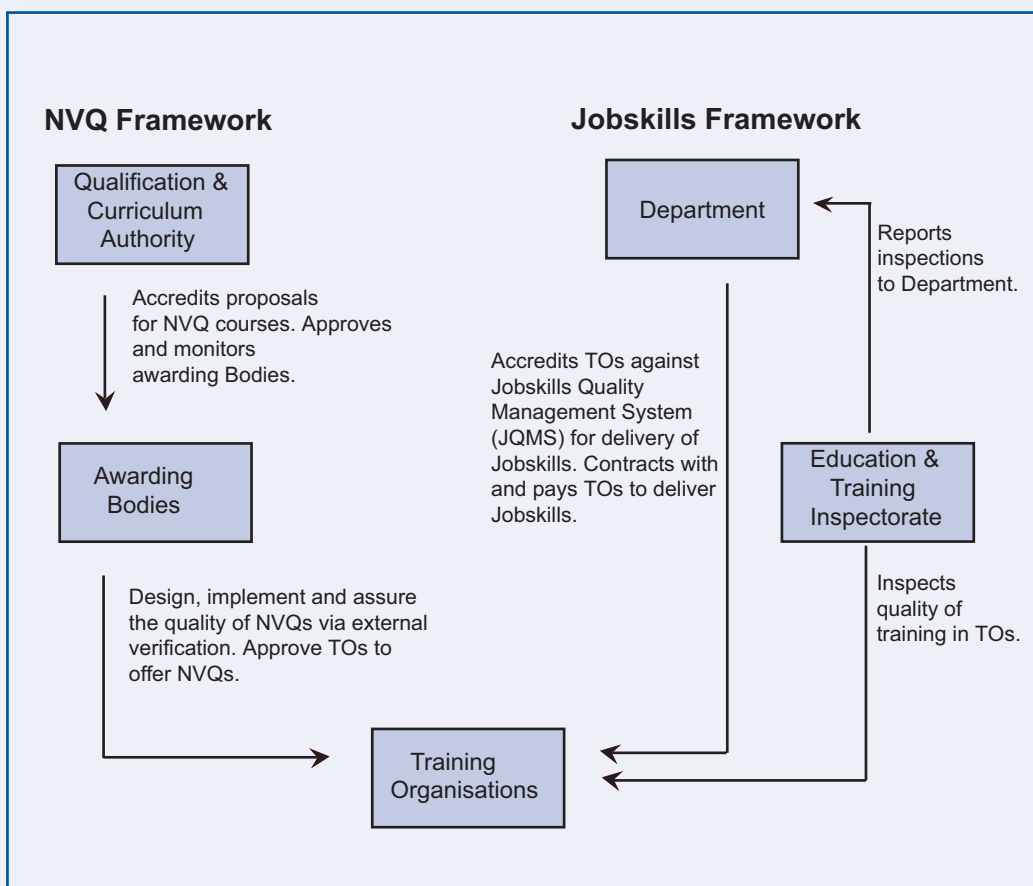


# Part: 2

## The Quality of Training Delivered Under the Jobskills Programme

2.1 Jobskills delivers qualifications (NVQs) which are nationally-recognised. There are a large number of organisations involved in the delivery of training. The relationship between these organisations and, in particular, their input to training quality under the programme is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3 NVQ and Jobskills Delivery and Quality Assurance Framework**



Source: NIAO

- 2.2 Within the overall Jobskills programme two quality frameworks operate in parallel. The first, the NVQ Framework, is external to the Department and represents the system by which NVQs are provided and quality assured. The second involves the Department, and provides the means by which it separately assures the quality of training delivered and funded through Jobskills. Because training under the Department's Jobskills programme focuses on NVQs, the two quality frameworks necessarily interact.

## NVQ Quality Framework

- 2.3 Overall responsibility for the maintenance of training standards within the NVQ framework in England, Wales and Northern Ireland lies with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). QCA 'accredits' (formally recognises) NVQs and the Awarding Bodies which offer them.
- 2.4 Awarding Bodies design NVQs and approve individual Training Organisations (TOs) to deliver them. QCA requires Awarding Bodies to have a system in place to ensure that training providers carry out assessments of trainee competence which meet the requirements of national standards. Awarding Bodies employ external verifiers to check the arrangements for delivering assessments and provide quality assurance of assessments at TOs, through observation of assessments and sampling of assessment decisions made. In turn, QCA monitors the application of quality control at Awarding Bodies through an on-going programme of audit.

## Jobskills Quality Framework

- 2.5 The Department contracts with TOs to deliver NVQ-accredited training under the Jobskills programme and sets annual targets for TO performance. Training includes both directed training (attendance at formal training/classes at the TO) and on-the-job training (work-placement) with employers.
- 2.6 TOs are responsible for organising and delivering training and assessing whether trainees have reached the required standard to be awarded NVQs. Because of this assessment role TOs must, therefore, hold approval from Awarding Bodies for the areas in which training is provided. As a result, TOs are the point at which the NVQ and Jobskills frameworks meet.

2.7 The Department assures the quality of training delivered under Jobskills by two principal mechanisms. Firstly, TOs are required, as a condition of contract, to comply with quality standards set by the Department - for the period covered by our review, this comprised the Jobskills Quality Management System (JQMS)<sup>4</sup>. Secondly, the quality of the training delivered is inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

### Jobskills Quality Management System (JQMS)

2.8 JQMS established 14 standards (outlined in **Appendix 3**) for the assessment of management systems and training-related processes within TOs, which reflected their readiness to provide training. The Department formally accredited TOs every three years, as having systems which comply with the requirements of JQMS. TOs which failed to maintain JQMS standards were not to be allowed to continue to deliver training under the programme.

2.9 The Department has worked with ETI to develop the new system of self-assessment for TOs that replaced JQMS. It said that it plans to develop a separate unit, responsible for contract management and quality assurance.

### The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

2.10 ETI is an integral part of the Department of Education. In January 1989, its statutory role in monitoring, inspecting and reporting on the standard of education



in schools and colleges was extended, under agreement between the then Departments of Education and Economic Development, to encompass the inspection of training funded by the (former) Training & Employment Agency.

2.11 ETI is the Department's only expert source of information about the quality of training provided under Jobskills. It assesses training in terms of the:

- quality of directed and workplace training
- standards being attained by trainees throughout the training organisation as a whole and on individual occupational programmes

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<sup>4</sup>In April 2003, JQMS was replaced by a new system, "Improving Quality: Raising Standards" (IQRS), - a self-assessment system - see paragraph 2.13.



- effectiveness of management structures (including quality assurance systems)
- support and advice available to trainees
- appropriateness of staffing structures (numbers, qualifications, deployment and development)
- appropriateness of physical resources provided (accommodation and equipment).

The ETI inspections do not cover the entire range of TO training activity under Jobskills, but focus on the main areas of provision.

2.12 On completion of each inspection, ETI produces a report identifying all significant issues raised during its inspection. A finalisation meeting is held to discuss inspection findings with TO management, who then prepare a response and action plan to address the issues raised. The Department is represented by a District Manager at this meeting. Copies of reports are also made available to the Department for distribution to headquarters and regional staff. ETI is responsible for follow-up inspection, to check TO progress against action plans.

2.13 Since our review, ETI told us that it has developed revised inspection arrangements for the TO network, which are being implemented during 2003-04. These are aimed at fostering a culture of continuous improvement, through a process of yearly self-assessment and development planning at TOs, backed up by ETI's formal evaluation and reporting on training quality through its inspection process. ETI said that, if these arrangements are to be successfully implemented, it will require significant responses from the Department. This will involve suitable support arrangements for TOs to promote continuous improvement and effective management information systems to provide accurate quantitative data.

## **ETI's Inspection Results**

2.14 ETI inspection reports formed the main source of evidence in our review of training quality within the programme. Between October 1995 and July 2001, ETI carried out 51 inspections of TOs (numbering 104 at March 2003) under the Jobskills training programme. Over the same period ETI also carried out 11

survey reports - these focused on particular occupational areas of training provision (such as Retail, Hospitality and Catering) or specific elements of the programme (such as work-placements) rather than individual TOs.

2.15 In planning its yearly programme of work ETI consults with the Department. However, there is no systematic or rolling plan of inspection covering all Jobskills training providers. At the current level of inspection (approximately 10 per year), it would take around 10 years for ETI to inspect all training providers.

2.16 In our opinion, this is too long a timescale to seek comprehensive assurance on the quality of training delivered by individual TOs. The Department has told us that it is currently in negotiation with ETI to ensure that each TO is inspected every four years. We welcome this move and recommend that the Department liaises with ETI to develop a more systematic approach to inspection coverage, ensuring that all TOs are inspected, on a periodic basis, within a reasonable timeframe. In our view, the inspection programme should be formally agreed, based on specified criteria such as size of TO, historical performance, geographical location and results from previous inspection reports.

2.17 In this context, we note that ETI continues to provide its inspection service to the Department under the 1989 agreement between the pre-devolution departments (see paragraph 2.10). We recommend that the Department (DEL) takes the opportunity to update this agreement and to formalise the arrangements by which ETI provides inspection services of training programmes.

Since our review, ETI has told us that its inspection programme for 2003-04 has been agreed with the Department and has been devised using the criteria outlined in paragraph 2.16.

### **ETI's 1998 Summary Report on Jobskills**

2.18 In November 1998, ETI published a summary report on the Jobskills inspections it had undertaken between April 1995 and March 1998. This summarised the findings of some 22 TO inspections, as well as a number of survey reports and follow-up inspections.

2.19 ETI's overall conclusion stated that *“since the introduction of the Jobskills Programme the quality of training has improved ... the main issues which need to be addressed relate to assessment at the recruitment stage, increased involvement of employers in the training process and the general quality of training at NVQ Level 3”*. ETI identified a number of significant weaknesses in the quality of training delivery which were common throughout the programme as a whole. These included:

- **poor initial diagnostic assessment** - in determining the suitability of the trainee for the vocational area and NVQ level, and identifying individual support needs for basic skills (literacy and numeracy) and Key Skills
- **lack of employer understanding** - of the NVQ programmes and processes, particularly assessment arrangements, and lack of employer involvement in the design of training plans and assessment of trainees
- **poor and variable quality of training provided by TOs** - across vocational areas, and particularly at NVQ Level 3, resulting in low standards among trainees
- **poor quality work-placements** - particularly at NVQ Level 3, which were incapable of providing the range of experiences to meet the requirements of the NVQ qualification
- **variability in performance across TOs** - as evidenced by different rates of retention of trainees on training programmes and rates of success in gaining awards
- **poor systems of management review and evaluation across TOs** - in terms of the quality of training provided, as illustrated by variable retention and success rates at each NVQ programme and level, and the differential progress of individual trainees towards achievement of awards
- **underdevelopment of all aspects of Key Skills within the programme** - as regards the assessment of trainee's strengths and weaknesses in Key Skills on entry; planning and provision of Key Skills training; and assessment and accreditation of trainees
- **inconsistency in NVQ assessment and internal verification procedures** - across TOs.

**ETI Inspection Findings Post-1998**

- 2.20 We reviewed ETI reports on the 26 individual TOs, inspected between June 1998 and February 2001, to assess whether the types of weaknesses identified by ETI in its 1998 summary report had been recurring. Our review indicates that many of the issues reported in ETI’s summary report continue to be reported - see Figure 4.
- 2.21 In addition to the issues noted at Figure 4, ETI reports highlight that the induction of trainees is a consistent problem at TOs and results in trainees having a poor understanding of the NVQ process, the content of training, and the evidence requirements for assessment purposes. This in turn affects their preparedness to undertake the course of training and impacts upon their achievement prospects and motivation.

**Figure 4 Weaknesses Reported in ETI Reports 1998 to 2000**

Recurrent Weakness	Frequency of Recurrence
Deficiencies in the quality of directed training within TOs	88% (23 of 26 inspections)
Poor development and ineffective incorporation of Key Skills within training	88% (23 of 26 inspections)
Assessment, quality assurance arrangement and internal verification processes	69% (18 of 26 inspections)
Variable retention and success rates	62% (16 of 26 inspections)
Weaknesses in initial assessment arrangements and their effectiveness	58% (15 of 26 inspections)
Poor quality of work-placements	58% (15 of 26 inspections)
Employer understanding and involvement	50% (13 of 26 inspections)
Systems of management review and evaluation of training quality	42% (11 of 26 inspections)

2.22 Examples of the weaknesses identified in ETI reports are provided in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

## **Examples of Recurrent Issues Identified in ETI Reports Since the 1998 Summary Report**

### **Poor Initial Diagnostic Assessment**

#### **Case A: Inspected September 1999**

A privately owned TO in Co. Londonderry, providing training for 22 Jobskills trainees at NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in Information Technology.

ETI reported that:

*“There are no formal procedures to assess the trainees’ literacy and numeracy skills at the commencement of training. The tutors, consequently, are not well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of individual trainees to enable them to plan programmes to address weaknesses.”*

### **Lack of Employer Understanding and Involvement**

#### **Case B: Inspected September 1999**

A private training company with several centres in the North-West, providing training across a wide range of vocational areas and at all strands of the Jobskills programme. ETI’s inspection focused on the organisation’s Co. Antrim centre at which 179 of the organisation’s total 339 trainees were registered.

ETI reported that:

*“Most of the trainers in the workplace have a poor understanding of NVQs and of the different standards required at Levels 2 and 3. They are not involved sufficiently in planning, monitoring and assessing the trainees.”*

### **Variability in Quality of TO Training Provision**

#### **Case C: Inspected October 2000**

A Belfast based community organisation, providing training across a range of vocational areas and at all NVQ levels to some 575 Jobskills trainees.

ETI reported that:

*“In about half of the programmes provided the range of approaches is narrow ... in these programmes, there is either insufficient practical work, too much emphasis on transcription of material into portfolios or insufficient feedback to trainees on their written work.”*

*“Quality assurance procedures are not implemented with sufficient rigour to ensure that the monitoring in the workplace is undertaken thoroughly, and that the work undertaken by trainees in directed training is relevant to the demands of the workplace, challenging, and moving at a pace which is appropriate for the level of the training programme.”*

*“In three of the areas inspected, at least one post for tutors in each area remains unfilled. This ... contributes to the reduced pace of work undertaken by the trainees, and to the quality of their training.”*

### Poor Quality Work-placements

#### Case D: Inspected February 2000

A local community organisation, established in Co. Tyrone, providing training, mainly at NVQ Level 2, to 91 trainees across a range of vocational areas.

ETI reported that:

*“There is considerable variation in the quality of work-placements provided for trainees. ... in administration, retail operations and wood occupations they vary from excellent to poor. ...Where placements are poor, the main deficiency is the restricted range of the duties which do not enable trainees to develop the broad range of skills needed to achieve the full NVQ.”*

### Variability in TO Performance

#### Case E: Inspected June 1998

A private limited company located in Co. Down, providing training in administration, customer service, distribution and warehousing, information technology and retailing to some 52 Jobskills trainees (mainly at NVQ Level 1 and 2).

ETI reported that:

*“The overall retention rates over the past three years are poor: 63% of Level 2 trainees left their training programmes prematurely. ... the level of achievement of trainees on NVQ Level 3 programmes in administration is poor at less than 20%. The level of success in distributive and warehousing operations and in retail is poor; only 30% of the trainees who completed four or more weeks of training achieved the full NVQ.”*

### Poor Systems of Management Review and Evaluation

#### Case F: Inspected December 1999

A private UK-wide training organisation, operating from two centres in NI, providing training in a range of IT programmes at NVQ Level 2 and 3. ETI’s inspection focused on its Co. Londonderry centre, which had 10 Jobskills trainees at the date of inspection.

ETI reported that:

*“The review and evaluation of programmes are ineffective. Weaknesses in training are not identified adequately and action plans are not devised to remedy them. ... the organisation was unable to produce accurate statistical information about the success and retention rates or on the progression of trainees.”*

### Key Skills Underdeveloped

#### Case G: Inspected March 2000

A privately owned training organisation with numerous offices in Northern Ireland. Training, at the time of inspection, was provided at NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in a wide range of vocational areas. Some 187 of the organisation’s 650 trainees were registered at the Londonderry Centre, which formed the focus of the inspection.

ETI reported that:

*“There are weaknesses in the provision and assessment of key skills. ... the planning for the development and assessment of the key skills is at an early stage. ...a minority of trainees with weaknesses in the key skills of communication or working as a member of a team, do not receive the specialist support necessary to develop the skills required ...and meet the demands of the NVQ. ...The assessment of the key skill of improving own learning across vocational areas is not well-implemented. There is insufficient use of evidence from the work-placements where the majority of trainees have good opportunities to set targets and complete tasks within time constraints.”*

### **Inconsistency in Assessment and Internal Verification Procedures**

#### **Case H: Inspected February 2001**

A College of Further Education in Co. Down. During the week of inspection, 295 Jobskills trainees were registered across all vocational areas and NVQ levels.

ETI reported that:

*“There are deficiencies ... in the assessment arrangements in a significant minority of vocational areas. Assessment is not planned sufficiently in early years care and education to enable trainees to gain accreditation when they achieve competence and this delays progress in achievement of the NVQ. In food preparation and cooking, there is insufficient assessment in the workplace. In addition, the recording of trainees’ achievements in the NVQs in IT is poor, and the majority are not provided with clear information about their progress in the vocational award.”*

**Source:** Education and Training Inspectorate Reports

2.23 Of the 26 TOs inspected between June 1998 and February 2001, ETI identified 4 as having significant weaknesses in their overall quality of training. Of these:

- one TO left the programme shortly after the ETI inspection. However, its decision to leave was unrelated to the results of inspection
- the remaining 3 TOs submitted action plans to address weaknesses identified at inspection and ETI follow-up inspections confirmed satisfactory progress in addressing weaknesses identified.

2.24 NIAO notes that ETI reports are available through the Department of Education website. However these are not formally disseminated by the Department across the TO network. Although ETI inspections are specific to the circumstances at individual TOs, in our view, they nevertheless provide important information for the programme as a whole, especially given the identification of recurrent or common problem areas.

2.25 In NIAO's opinion, the Department should be more pro-active in using the results of ETI reports, identifying common weaknesses and drawing lessons for the future. We recommend that, centrally, it:

- undertakes periodic reviews of all ETI reports
- identifies common and recurrent weaknesses
- formally disseminates this information both internally, to inform programme management decisions, and externally, for the benefit of all TOs involved in Jobskills training
- maintains a central database of all ETI reports to facilitate analysis of the most common problems identified and enable tracking of follow-up action.

The Department has agreed to put procedures in place to identify common and recurrent weaknesses and ensure that the information is disseminated.

### Dissemination of Best Practice

2.26 There is also limited evidence of formal or systematic dissemination of best practice in training provision under Jobskills. The Department relies primarily upon the contracting process, and the achievement of TOs against their performance targets, to drive up the general quality of training provision. In NIAO's view, however, the persistence of aspects of poor quality training, as identified in ETI reports, indicates that this approach has not been wholly successful in eradicating weaknesses in training provision or in generating best practice.

2.27 ETI's 1998 summary report recommended that TOs which are consistently poor performers and those which can be classed as Centres of Excellence should be identified. To date the Department has not carried out a formal exercise of this nature nor has it identified the particular characteristics which are likely to lead to excellence in training quality. We understand that the Department has established Centres of Excellence in the further education sector but has no current plans for their introduction within Jobskills.



2.28 NIAO recommends that the Department considers establishing Centres of Excellence within Jobskills. It could carry out a formal exercise to identify those TOs producing high quality training to determine characteristics of excellence in vocational training and within its Jobskills network.

2.29 This exercise could then be used as a means to facilitate best practice development. It might also be used as a means to identify Centres of Excellence against which other TOs could measure their performance or as a means of support to TOs providing training of a lower standard. Where Centres of Excellence are identified, the Department may need to consider incentives for TOs whose methodologies and systems are shared throughout the Jobskills network as examples of good practice.

2.30 We also recommend that, more generally, the Department should consider the development of a formal and systematic mechanism for the communication of best practice advice to TOs, as a means to improve the overall quality of training. This could include activities such as:

- a manual of best practice case studies
- hosting of regular best practice seminars by Departmental and ETI staff
- the development of a best practice web site by the Department
- short-term exchanges/placements of staff in TO Centres of Excellence.

2.31 ETI told us that it endorses the recommendations made at paragraphs 2.25 and 2.28 - 2.30, and has suggested that its revised inspection arrangements (paragraph 2.13) will provide the Department with a framework within which these recommendations can be addressed. The Department said that it will consider the feasibility of establishing Jobskills Centres of Excellence, taking account of the work already carried out in the further education sector, and will introduce a mechanism to communicate advice on best practice.

### **ETI's Overall Grading of Training Quality**

2.32 Prior to February 2000, ETI reports on individual TOs highlighted weaknesses associated with each occupational area inspected and provided an overall

conclusion on the quality of training. Since February 2000, ETI inspections have also graded the quality of the occupational area inspected, on the basis of a four-point scale:

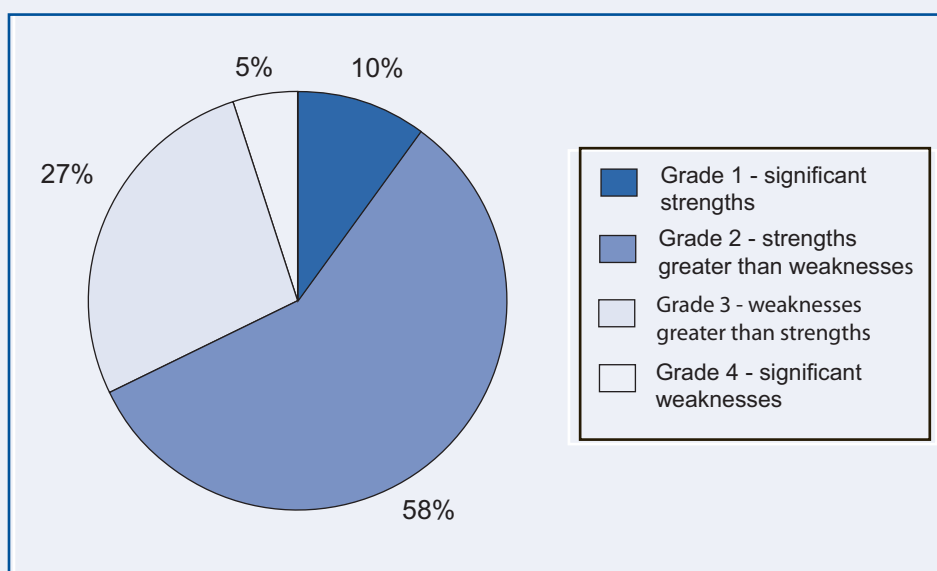
- Grade 1 (significant strengths)
- Grade 2 (strengths are greater than weaknesses)
- Grade 3 (weaknesses are greater than strengths)
- Grade 4 (significant weaknesses).

Under this system, Grades 3 and 4 reflect below standard quality provision.

2.33 In nine inspections carried out between February 2000 and November 2001, which included a number of the larger Jobskills providers, two-thirds of the 77 training areas inspected were found to be of standard quality or better. However, approximately one-third of the training areas inspected were found to be of below standard quality (Figure 6) - five per cent of TO training areas were graded as having significant weaknesses (Grade 4) and a further 27 per cent of areas were graded as having more weaknesses than strengths (Grade 3).

Figure 6

**ETI Gradings of Training Areas Within Jobskills - 2000 to 2001**



Source: Education and Training Inspectorate

- 2.34 In three of the nine TOs inspected, ETI identified more training areas that were sub-standard (Grades 3 and 4) than were above standard. Only one organisation was identified as having significant strengths (Grade 1) in all areas of provision inspected.
- 2.35 The Department told us that it would not permit a TO to persistently deliver a below standard quality of training. It would either remove the TO from Jobskills or would not permit it to continue to deliver training in the specific occupational area where low quality training provision was identified.
- 2.36 We note, however, that seven years after its inception, the Jobskills programme continued to deliver a sizeable minority of training which has significant weaknesses or where the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. Based on ETI's latest inspection results, it is possible that 1 in 3 trainees currently on Jobskills (some 4,000 young people) are being trained in a TO or in an occupational area where the quality of training is below standard.
- 2.37 The provision of training assessed as having significant weaknesses (Grade 4) is unacceptable and clearly detrimental to the prospects of trainees. In our view, the Department should consider establishing a system of sanctions, to be applied where a TO falls below a pre-determined quality threshold. These sanctions might include, for example, a restriction on the number of contracted places, financial penalties or, where necessary, termination of the contract. Such a system would act both as a deterrent against poor quality training provision and also as a penalty in those situations where it did occur. The decisions as to whether to apply a sanction, and its severity, should reflect the seriousness of the weaknesses found and also the circumstances - for example, whether there was a history of poor quality training in the organisation involved.
- 2.38 We consider that the Department could use the ETI reports, and associated gradings, to set a minimum quality threshold for TOs. The thresholds could be incorporated within the Department's contracts with TOs, together with a schedule of the sanctions to be applied where training was assessed as falling below the required standard.

2.39 Set alongside the contractual requirement to maintain IQRS standards (paragraph 2.7) and the best practice recommendations noted above (paragraph 2.30), this should provide the Department with a means of better safeguarding the quality of Jobskills training and raising standards.

2.40 The Department said that under the IQRS self-assessment arrangements, ETI's grading system will now become the accepted method of assessing performance. It intends, in liaison with ETI, to allow a period for the new arrangements to become embedded. Thereafter, an organisation assessed at Grade 4 will be given an opportunity to improve but if, subsequently, no improvement is shown the organisation may have its contract withdrawn. In addition, the Department said that it will continue to review performance on the basis of an organisation's qualification achievement rate and will remove approval to deliver individual qualifications, as appropriate.



# Part: 3

## The Effectiveness of the Jobskills Programme

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- 3.1 The effectiveness of a programme can be judged by the extent to which it has met its key objectives and by comparing its actual impacts with those intended.

### Objectives and Targets

#### Objectives

- 3.2 The Jobskills programme has a number of stated objectives (see paragraph 1.6 and Appendix 1) which have evolved over time in response to changes in the Department's strategic aims and developments within the programme. For trainees, the ultimate objective is to increase their employability on entering the labour market by providing them with skills relevant to the needs of employers, through the achievement of NVQs.
- 3.3 In order to assess the extent to which Jobskills has met its key objectives, NIAO examined a core set of measures as follows:
- NVQ achievement
  - progression between NVQ levels
  - labour market outcomes.

We extracted performance data from the Department's management information system, focusing primarily on the cohort years 1995-96 to 1999-00<sup>5</sup>. Where necessary we supplemented this with data from our survey of 400 trainees (paragraph 1.16) to validate Departmental data or to obtain specific analyses of particular aspects of the programme. Our analysis concentrates on the youth element of the programme because, since April 1998, the programme has been restricted to young persons. The results, therefore, are not directly comparable

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<sup>5</sup>A large proportion of trainees commencing in later cohort years had not yet completed their training. Data sets are to March 2002 and, where available, March 2003.

with the performance data reported by the Department and the former Training and Employment Agency in their Annual Reports<sup>6</sup>.

### Target-setting

- 3.4 Programme targets express, in quantitative terms, the expected levels of outputs and outcomes resulting from programme activities and provide a means to determine programme effectiveness. Performance targets are set in a three-year corporate plan and an annual operational plan. Targets for the years 1995-96 to 2002-03 were as follows:

Figure 7

## Jobskills Corporate and Operational Plan Targets

Jobskills Corporate Targets <sup>7</sup>	
1995-98	1998-2001
<p>In the first year of operation, 1995-96, 25 per cent of mainstream participants in Jobskills will achieve NVQ Level 2 or above, increasing to at least 35 per cent in 1996-97 and 45 per cent in 1997-98.</p> <p>By 1998 to agree and implement at least 40 Modern Apprenticeship frameworks with the appropriate Sector Representative Bodies, 20 in 1995-96, 15 in 1996-97 and 5 in 1997-98</p>	<p>65 per cent of those leaving the Jobskills programme will transfer to employment or to other education or training opportunities; and 65 per cent of entrants to the programme will achieve a qualification at NVQ Level 2 or equivalent.</p> <p>25 per cent of 16-24 year olds involved in an Agency training programme will initially enter a Modern Apprenticeship or transfer to a Modern Apprenticeship on completion of Level 2 training.</p>
Jobskills Operational Targets (2001-02 and 2002-03)	
<p><b>2001-02</b></p> <p>(i) To ensure that those who began training in 1998-99 will achieve a 70% success rate at NVQ Level 2 or above and that the 1999-00 cohort will achieve a 55% success rate.</p> <p>(ii) To have at least 5,000 young people following training towards a Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship.</p> <p><b>2002-03</b></p> <p>(i) By March 2003, to ensure that 70% of those who began Jobskills training in 1999-2000 will achieve a NVQ level 2 or above.</p> <p>(ii) By March 2003, to ensure that those who began Jobskills training in 2000-01 will achieve a 55% success rate in NVQ Level 2 or above.</p> <p>(iii) By March 2003, to have at least 5,500 young people following training leading to a Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship.</p>	

Source: DEL

<sup>6</sup>The Training and Employment Agency Annual Reports 1995-96 to 1998-99 and the Department for Employment & Learning 2000-01 and 2001-02.

<sup>7</sup>Corporate Plans for the years 2001-04 and 2003-06 did not set targets covering the three-year period.

3.5 We welcome the setting of targets for a range of measures such as NVQ achievement, progression from one strand of Jobskills to the next and movement into employment. However, in our view, there is scope to enhance the target-setting process. This includes the following:

- **timeliness** - Jobskills targets are set for each group (cohort) of trainees who commenced training in a given financial year. However, the duration of training under Jobskills will cover more than a single year - indeed it can last for three to four years. As a result, the performance outcome for any given cohort will not be fully known and reported until some three years after its commencement. This is illustrated in Figure 7 - the operational target for the financial year 2002-03 relates to the 1999-00 cohort, with performance being measured at 31 March 2003 and reported thereafter
- **comparability** - Jobskills operational targets have changed over the life of the programme. To some degree, this mirrors the development of the programme (for example, the establishment of targets relating to Modern Apprenticeships on their introduction within the programme). However, other changes to the focus of targets mean that there is no comparable time series of performance data available over the life of the programme. Such changes have included:
  - for 2000-01 the target relating to the Access programme changed from achievement at Level 1 and progression to the next NVQ strand, to achievement of 'positive outcomes' (employment, higher level Jobskills training or higher/further level education). Since 2000-01 no Access target has been set
  - the target for progression to employment upon leaving the programme changed from *all* leavers in 1995-96 and 1996-97, to mainstream/traineeship participants only from 1998-99. No target for progression into employment was set for 1997-98 or since 2000-01
  - discontinuance of the target in relation to cost per qualification after 1998-99.
- **consistency** - targets for each strand of the programme are not consistent. Access targets relate to positive outcomes (employment or further training); Traineeship targets reflect NVQ achievement and



employment outcomes; and Modern Apprenticeship targets reflect numbers of trainees entering into Modern Apprenticeships.

3.6 In NIAO's opinion, performance targets for the overall programme and each strand should be set on a more uniform basis. We recommend that a consistent set of targets is established and reported annually for each strand. These targets should include achievement of NVQs, progressions from one strand of Jobskills to the next, labour market outcomes (i.e. movement into employment, further education and training or unemployment) and cost per NVQ. The Department has indicated that it will now set uniform targets, across each strand of the programme, and will also consider extending its range of targets beyond those published in its operational plan.

3.7 NIAO notes that for a similar scheme<sup>8</sup> in England, the Department for Education and Skills reports performance on NVQ attainment and labour market outcomes on the basis of leavers, irrespective of start date (rather than on the basis of the cohort which has completed training). Skillseekers<sup>9</sup>, a youth training scheme in Scotland, has moved to report along similar lines. We also note that the Department for Education and Skills publishes performance data through a formal quarterly statistical bulletin.

3.8 We recommend that the Department also publicly reports, at least annually, Jobskills performance outcomes as a percentage of leavers. In our view, this would improve the quality and timeliness of reporting, and provide comparative performance information between the English, Scottish and Northern Ireland schemes (this would be consistent with the Assembly Public Accounts Committee's support for the public reporting of a range of performance information, in a format similar to other parts of the United Kingdom<sup>10</sup>). This would not preclude the Department from continuing to monitor cohort-based performance data for its own management information purposes. The Department accepts the recommendation and has said that, in future, outcome data calculated on the basis of leavers will be included in its annual report.

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<sup>8</sup>Training Enterprise Council/Learning and Skills Council Delivered Government Supported Work-based Learning for Young People - England.

<sup>9</sup>Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department: Skillseekers Training for Young People.

<sup>10</sup>Northern Ireland Assembly, PAC 10th Report of Session 2001-02 'Indicators of Educational Performance and Provision', 3 July 2002.

## Overall Programme Performance

### Achievement of NVQs

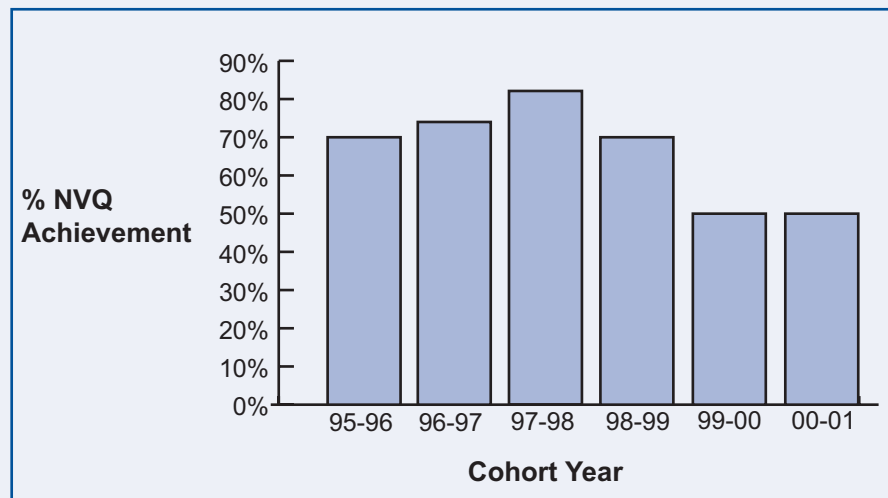
- 3.9 The achievement of NVQs by Jobskills participants is an indicator of their attainment of occupational skills, which in turn reflects the programme's contribution towards increasing the employability of participants. By March 2003, approximately 40,000 NVQs had been achieved by Jobskills trainees (5,200 at NVQ Level 1, 28,300 at NVQ Level 2 and 6,500 at NVQ Level 3).
- 3.10 Achievement rates, generated from Departmental data, for the cohort years 1995-96 to 2000-01 are illustrated at Figure 8 (later cohort years (2001-02 onwards) were still materially incomplete at the date of our review). Departmental data suggests an overall success rate (calculated as a proportion of net<sup>11</sup> trainee starts) of approximately 66 per cent, with the trend in achievement rates rising between 1995-96 and 1997-98, but declining thereafter. However, the overall achievement rate, and those for the individual cohorts 1995-96 to 1998-99, are inflated as a consequence of a degree of double counting of achievements as a result of the methodology applied by the Department in recording net trainee starts (see paragraphs 3.14-3.16). The level of double counting is, however, unknown.
- 3.11 The Department told NIAO that the drop-off in achievement rates after 1997-98 results from a combination of three factors:
- the proportion of trainees from the 1999-00 and 2000-01 cohorts who remain in training, and have yet to complete
  - the negative impact of the introduction of Key Skills in 1999 as a mandatory requirement of the programme (paragraph 3.12)
  - different recording methodologies between the two Jobskills information systems operated between 1995-1999 and 1999-2002 (paragraphs 3.14-3.16).

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<sup>11</sup>Trainee numbers reflect 'net' trainee starts. These figures ignore those trainees who leave within the first four weeks and any changes between occupational areas or transfers between training organisations.

Figure 8

## NVQ Achievement Rates, by Cohort Year, as at March 2003



Source: DEL

**Note:** 1. At March 2003, there were 638 (7%) trainees from the 1999-00 cohort and 1,068 (10%) trainees from the 2000-01 cohort still in training. If all of these trainees were to achieve their targeted NVQ, the individual rates for 1999-00 and 2000-01 would increase to 58 and 60 per cent respectively.

2. Analysis between NVQ levels, for each cohort year, was not available.

3.12 From April 1999, when Key Skills (paragraph 1.7) became a mandatory element within Jobskills, TOs can only claim output-related funding for NVQ achievement where trainees have also achieved the related Key Skills. The Department told NIAO that this has had a negative effect on achievement rates because many Jobskills participants left full-time education to avoid this type of classroom-based training. However, the degree to which this affects achievement rates cannot be determined, as the Department does not separately monitor achievement of Key Skills, other than to record, for payment purposes, where a trainee achieved all the required Key Skills.

3.13 In NIAO's view, it is essential that the Department separately monitors the achievement of individual Key Skills. It should also determine the degree to which classroom-based delivery is a factor in lower achievement levels and consider, with ETI, the appropriateness of alternative delivery mechanisms.

## Measurement of NVQ Attainment

- 3.14 Two Jobskills information systems have operated during our review period, the first from 1995 to 1999 and the second from 1999 to 2002. Each applied a different methodology in recording net trainee starts. The earlier system recorded starts on a client or individual basis i.e. one start per trainee, irrespective of whether the trainee progressed to another NVQ within the programme. The later system recorded on a participation basis i.e. one trainee start per NVQ level commenced.
- 3.15 In calculating an achievement rate based upon the recorded number of net starts for the cohort years to 1999, a greater than 100 per cent achievement rate may be recorded against a single trainee start, where that trainee has achieved at more than one NVQ level within the programme. As a result, the achievement rates shown in Figure 8 inflate achievement performance. This does not occur under the later system where each NVQ achievement is associated with a separately recorded start.
- 3.16 The Department told us that, in its view, the degree of inflation is minimal. However, it cannot provide any evidence in support of this assertion because its earlier information system cannot identify the degree of multiple achievement by trainees.
- 3.17 NIAO notes that the recording methodology applied within the 1995 system led to the inflation of reported achievement rates. However, we welcome the introduction by the Department of a more robust Jobskills management information system from April 1999.
- 3.18 The Consultants' External Evaluation in May 2000 (see paragraph 1.14) noted that Jobskills NVQ achievement rates were higher than for *similar* programmes in Great Britain. The Department does not formally benchmark Jobskills performance against schemes elsewhere. We note that in England, NVQ achievement for Government supported work-based learning for young people who left training during 2000-01 averaged 53 per cent<sup>12</sup>. Although not directly comparable, this suggests Jobskills continues to perform well relative to similar types of training scheme.

<sup>12</sup>Department for Education and Skills, SFR 02/2000 'Training Enterprise Council/Learning and Skills Council Delivered Government Supported Work-based Learning - England: Volumes and Outcomes', March 2002.

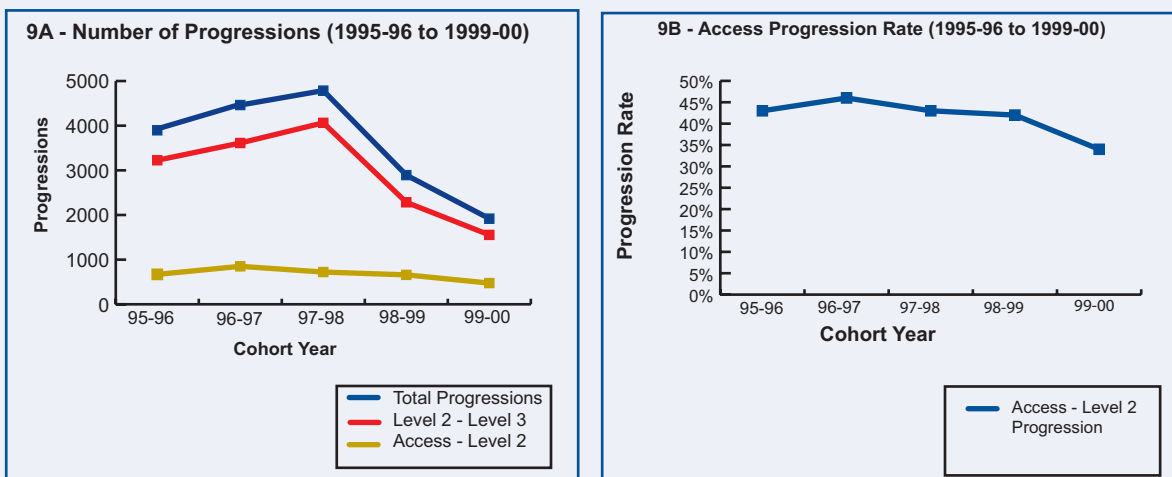
- 3.19 We recommend that the Department carries out research to identify broadly similar schemes in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and formally benchmark Jobskills against them, at a national or regional level. The publication of data (see paragraph 3.8) through, for example, a statistical press release, will facilitate benchmarking of the Department's Jobskills programme performance against schemes elsewhere. The Department has commented that, while differences in the way performance outcomes are measured can make direct comparison difficult, it will nevertheless seek to benchmark Jobskills against similar schemes.

### **Progression Rates**

- 3.20 Progression from one level of Jobskills to a higher level is a useful intermediate performance measure. It is generally recognised that higher qualifications enhance employability within the labour market.
- 3.21 For the cohort years 1995-96 to 1999-00, approximately 18,000 youth trainees had, by March 2002, progressed from one NVQ level to the next - 3,300 from NVQ Level 1 (Access) to NVQ Level 2 (Traineeship) and 14,600 from NVQ Level 2 to Level 3 (see Figure 9A).
- 3.22 Given that a key aim of the Access strand is to prepare trainees to progress within the programme, it is disappointing that only 40 per cent of young people who entered Access over this five-year period have progressed to Level 2 training (see Figure 9B) (Some Level 1 trainees leaving Access without progressing to Level 2 training will have moved to employment or other education and training. The destinations of trainees who leave the programme and do not progress to NVQ Level 2 are dealt with in paragraphs 3.25 to 3.32). While Access progression rates appear to have fallen in the 1999-00 cohort, adjusting for trainees still in training produces a progression rate between 34 and 41 per cent, and indicates that the rate of progression has remained relatively constant over the life of the programme.
- 3.23 The Department does not specify progression from Level 2 to Level 3 training as a separate aim of the programme. However, we note that the number of trainees progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 reduced significantly after 1997-98. The

Department has indicated to us that progression from Level 2 to Level 3 has been adversely affected by the introduction, in June 1998, of the requirement for all Modern Apprenticeship trainees to be in employment.

**Figure 9** Progression Between NVQ Levels, as at March 2002



Source: DEL

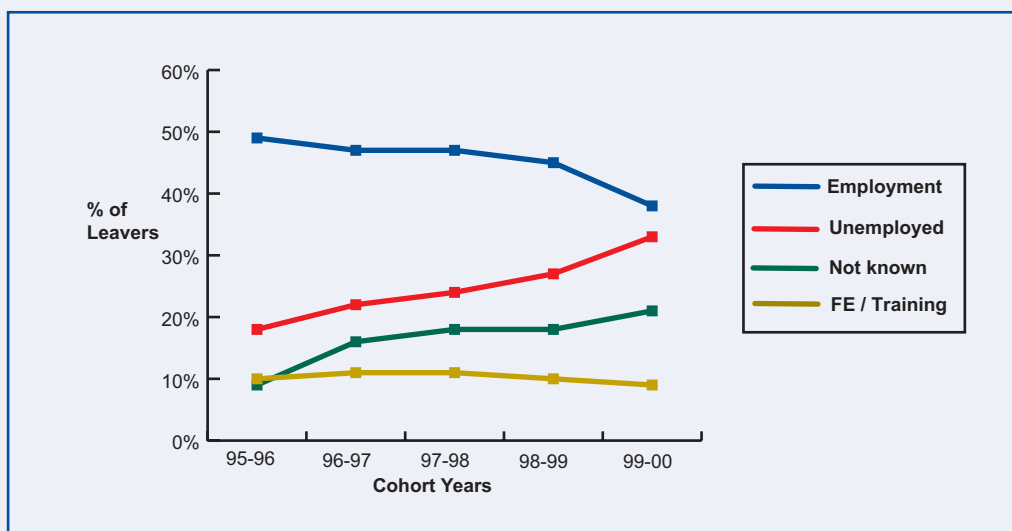
3.24 There appears to be considerable scope for the Department to improve progression between strands in the programme, and particularly between Access (NVQ Level 1) and Traineeship (NVQ Level 2). In our view, the Department should consider carrying out systematic monitoring and research to identify the main drivers and barriers to progression and whether these differ for Level 1 to Level 2 and Level 2 to Level 3 progression. Also, the Department could usefully expand its targets to cover progression between each element of the programme (paragraph 3.6). The Department told us that it intends to focus on driving up retention rates, which it considers will have a significant impact on progression. It also said that it will carry out the recommended research to examine barriers to progression.

## Labour Market Outcomes - Leavers' Destinations

- 3.25 Jobskills aims to increase the employability of young people by developing their vocational skills. The final labour market destination (employment, unemployment or other education/training) of Jobskills leavers is therefore a key measure of the effectiveness of the programme.
- 3.26 Data from the Department indicate that, for those who started between 1995-96 and 1999-00, approximately 43,000 young people had left the programme by March 2002. Of these, 46 per cent (19,700 participants) moved directly into employment and 10 per cent (some 4,300 participants) moved into other education or training. The Department classifies both of these destinations as 'positive outcomes'. In total, therefore, the Department recorded just over 24,000 Jobskills trainees, representing 56 per cent of the total leavers over this period, as achieving a positive outcome.
- 3.27 The evidence suggests (even though the 1999-00 cohort was not yet fully complete) that the propensity to move into employment or into other education and training has not increased over the lifetime of the Jobskills programme - see Figure 10. Indeed, the proportion of leavers moving into unemployment has steadily increased over time - Departmental figures indicate that, on average, around one-quarter (24 per cent) of leavers move into unemployment. Our survey broadly confirms this position - we found that 23 per cent of the 1999-2000 cohort who had left the programme had moved into unemployment.

Figure 10

## Labour Market Outcomes - Leavers' Destinations, as at March 2002



Source: DEL

**Note:** The proportion of 1999-00 trainees achieving positive outcomes is likely to be understated because it omits 1,900 trainees who have progressed within the programme and whose outcomes will be recorded against a future cohort.

3.28 In absolute terms, both the Departmental data and the NIAO survey evidence imply that some 2,000 Jobskills trainees each year move off the programme and into unemployment. For the five cohort years examined, this equates to approximately 10,300 young people not achieving a positive labour market outcome upon leaving the scheme.

3.29 Our survey also suggests that this experience of unemployment is not necessarily a short-term outcome. For example, at the time of our survey, 17 per cent of leavers were still in unemployment and 10 per cent had had no jobs at all since their participation on Jobskills.

### Leavers' Destinations Not Known

3.30 Departmental figures may understate the number of participants who leave Jobskills and move into employment (paragraph 3.26). The Department's data classifies some 20 per cent of Jobskills leavers as 'destination not known'. It is reasonable to assume that a proportion of these in fact move into employment. If so, a more accurate average employment rate for Jobskills leavers, over the



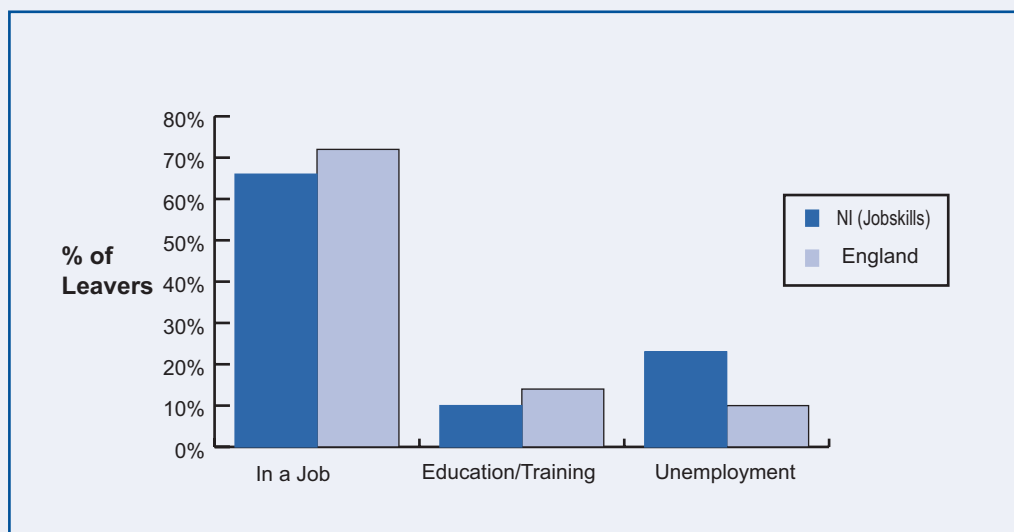
five years to March 2000, might be a figure approaching 60 per cent (this assumes that the number of leavers whose destinations are 'unknown' enter employment in the same proportion as those leavers whose destinations are known). Our survey of the 1999-00 cohort year indicated that 66 per cent of leavers moved into employment.

- 3.31 In our view, it is not satisfactory that such a large proportion of leavers' destinations is classified as 'not known' as this distorts the actual outcomes from the programme. The Department, therefore, should consider supplementing its management information systems by undertaking an annual survey of Jobskills leavers to improve the accuracy of its outcome data. In addition, the Department should require TOs, who provide leavers data, to more rigorously follow-up and report on leavers' destinations. The Department has acknowledged that the large proportion of 'not known' destinations is unsatisfactory. It said that it will consider alternative methods of determining leavers' destinations, possibly adopting the method used in England of a leavers survey.

- 3.32 It is difficult, in isolation, to determine whether the labour market outcomes from Jobskills are relatively favourable or not. It is for this reason that we recommend (paragraph 3.19) that the Department benchmarks performance against comparable schemes in England (and Scotland and the Republic of Ireland if feasible). Illustratively, we compared the labour market outcomes from Jobskills (based on the results from our survey) with those for a group of young people in England, who left the work-based learning scheme in the year to March 2001 (see Figure 11). This shows that, in England, leavers are more likely to be in employment (72 per cent compared with 66 per cent under Jobskills) or in further education or training (14 per cent compared with 10 per cent). As a corollary, leavers from the English scheme are also less likely to be in unemployment (10 per cent compared with 23 per cent).

Figure 11

## Labour Market Outcomes - Jobskills Compared with Work-Based Learning for Young People in England



**Source:** Jobskills data - NIAO Survey  
England data - Department for Education and Skills

## Scope to Enhance Programme Effectiveness

3.33 Performance in relation to key targeted outcomes provides an overview of the programme's effectiveness. NIAO's analysis suggests, however, that there are specific elements of the Jobskills programme which offer scope to enhance the overall performance outcomes. In particular, we consider that there is a need for the Department to address:

- early leaving from the programme
- widespread variance in the performance of individual TOs
- the relatively poor performance of the Access strand of the programme.

### Early Leaving

3.34 A significant proportion of trainees who start Jobskills leave prematurely. The Department distinguishes between those who leave the programme within 4 weeks of joining and those who undertake more than 4 weeks of training but who leave before full completion.

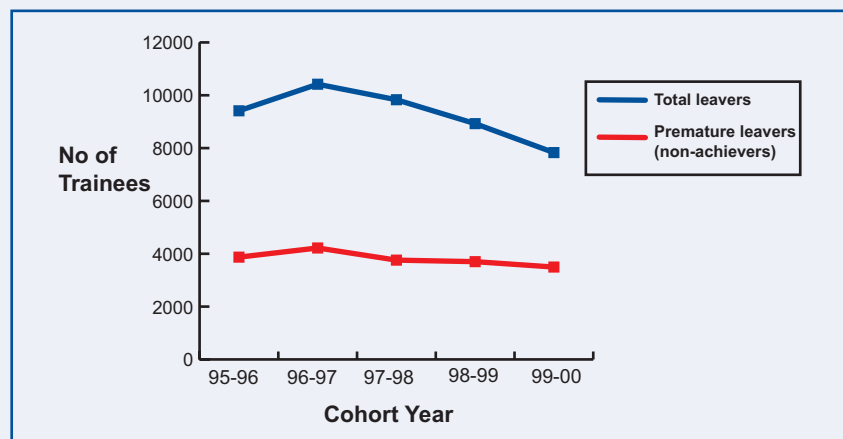
3.35 The proportion of young people who leave the programme within 4 weeks has remained relatively constant over the life of the programme, and in the four cohort years (1999-00 to 2002-03) was running at approximately 10 per cent of total trainee starts<sup>13</sup>. Overall, some 7,200 of the 83,600 young people who commenced training between 1995-96 and 2002-03 left the programme within the first 4 weeks.

3.36 The Department does not pay fees or training allowance for those who leave within the first 4 weeks. In this regard, there is no direct cost to the programme as a result of such early leaving although there will be administrative costs for TOs and the Department's careers advisors. The Department does not track the destination of those who leave training within the first 4 weeks.

3.37 For the cohort years 1995-96 to 1999-00, the percentage of youth trainees leaving the programme prematurely, having completed more than 4 weeks but without achieving their targeted qualification, averaged around 40 per cent of total leavers (Figure 12).

**Figure 12**

### Early Leavers (Non-Completers Who Leave After First 4 Weeks of Commencing Jobskills) Who Do Not Achieve a NVQ, as at March 2002



**Source:** DEL

**Note:** This excludes those trainees who leave within the first 4 weeks.

<sup>13</sup>Total trainee starts (83,600) = Net trainee starts (76,400, paragraph 1.13) plus leavers within first four weeks (7,200)

- 3.38 NIAO's survey of trainees indicates that many people leave Jobskills prematurely for reasons outside the Department's control (for example for personal, social and/or domestic reasons such as ill health) or to take up a job opportunity. However, there is also evidence that a proportion of trainees leave early, because of factors that lie within the control of the Jobskills programme. Responses to NIAO's survey included reasons such as the allowance was not enough; trainees didn't like the occupational area being studied; the pace of the course was inappropriate; and work-placement was of poor quality.
- 3.39 NIAO appreciates that, because of the guarantee of training places to all 16-17 year olds who wish to enter the programme, the Department cannot restrict entry of those it may consider likely to drop out. Nevertheless, premature leaving is an issue that has to be addressed by the Department, as there are a number of negative impacts associated with it.
- 3.40 Firstly, as those trainees who remain in training for more than 4 weeks will receive training allowances and the TOs providing training will receive training fees for that period, there is a cost to the programme of premature leaving. Departmental data indicate that, each year, some 3,600 trainees leave the programme early (after completing the initial 4 weeks) but without achieving their NVQ. We asked the Department to provide an estimate of the cost of early leaving. The Department told us that, while it did monitor the levels of early leavers, it did not separately monitor the cost of early leaving. It also stated that, because the length of stay on the programme and level of allowances vary for individual trainees, it is not possible for it to provide an estimate for the cost of early leaving.
- 3.41 In addition to the costs of early leaving, those who leave Jobskills prematurely without obtaining an NVQ tend to achieve poorer outcomes than those who complete the programme. Relative to those who complete the programme, Departmental data indicate that early leavers are:
- less likely to move into employment (27 per cent compared with 60 per cent)
  - more likely to move into unemployment (29 per cent compared with 20 per cent).
- 3.42 The Consultants' External Evaluation of the programme in 2000 identified a number of best practice issues to tackle early leaving, which concentrate on appropriate careers advice; initial induction and assessment of specific needs;

and continuous support by TO and employer/placement provider. These aim to ensure that trainees obtain a full understanding of their particular occupational area and the NVQ process, and provide an improved opportunity to succeed.

3.43 The Department, in its response to the evaluation, recognised the continuing problem of early leaving, particularly at the Access strand of the programme. It indicated that a number of changes introduced to Access, in 1999, to encourage trainees to complete training would, if successful, be rolled out to the remainder of the programme. These included an intensive 13 week assessment period and incentive bonuses for completion of 13 and 52 weeks training.

3.44 A review of the revised Access strand, by ETI in October 2000, found that, while retention rates improved during the first 13 weeks, this was not sustained. ETI noted that one of the main reasons for poor retention was trainees' inability to hold down work-placements and concluded that insufficient emphasis was being given to the pre-vocational needs of trainees. As a result of these findings, the changes made to the Access strand have not been extended to the other strands of the strand. However, the Department told us that a further, revised Access strand has been piloted and that an evaluation, by ETI, has reported improved retention rates within the pilot.

3.45 We acknowledge the Department's recent efforts to improve retention rates within the Access strand. It is clear, however, that there is considerable scope to further reduce early leaving across the programme. We consider that the Department should consider systematic monitoring of premature leaving (for both the first four weeks and thereafter) to identify, among other things:

- the extent of the problem
- the areas in which it is most prevalent (programme strand, occupational areas and individual TOs)
- the reasons for it, and whether these differ between programme strands
- the characteristics most likely to be associated with it.

This should help the Department develop specific mechanisms to better prepare and support participants for Jobskills training.

- 3.46 It is clear that early leaving has a detrimental impact upon leavers' destinations. For this reason, we recommend that the Department adopts a specific programme objective to reduce premature leaving and to increase retention of trainees. If the Department could reduce the incidence of early leaving by half i.e. 1,800 trainees per year, we estimate that this could result in Jobskills delivering an additional 1,600 NVQs, 600 additional leavers moving into employment and 160 less leavers moving into unemployment.

### Variance in TO Performance

3.47 The Department incorporates performance targets within its contracts with TOs, which correspond to those set at an overall programme level (see Figure 7) - that is, NVQ achievement and employment outcomes. The Department told us that it would not permit TOs to persistently under-perform against their contractual targets. It would either remove the TO from Jobskills or would remove those occupational areas where poor performance was experienced from the TO's contract.

3.48 Our review of a sample of the Department's contract papers provided evidence of contract schedules having been restricted or withdrawn where the Department had assessed that the performance of individual TOs had fallen below acceptable standards. However, in most cases we were unable to fully substantiate the appropriateness and timeliness of the Department's decision because case file documentation was not always complete - for example, performance data for some TOs was missing, or the detailed case consideration and justification for the decision made was not recorded. We also noted that no review of performance was undertaken in 2002, with all existing contracts automatically extended to March 2003.

- 3.49 Contract management, linked to performance review, is an important mechanism in addressing poor training performance. In our view, it is important that the Department ensures that its file records cover all contracting activities and fully substantiate decisions made. The Department accepts the importance of contract management and said that it has recently carried out a review of the contract management process, to ensure that proper resources are in place. In addition, a series of training courses is being provided, for all staff involved in managing contracts.

3.50 The Department is aware of the variability in performance across TOs and has undertaken steps to address the issue. For example, it has increased the amount of funding which is output-related in nature (that is, dependent on trainees achieving NVQs and/or progressing to employment). Even so, there remains a considerable differential in the performance of individual TOs.

3.51 We examined TO performance data on NVQ achievement and labour market outcomes for the 1999-2000 cohort of trainees (the most recent available data at that stage). Our analysis is illustrated at Figure 13.

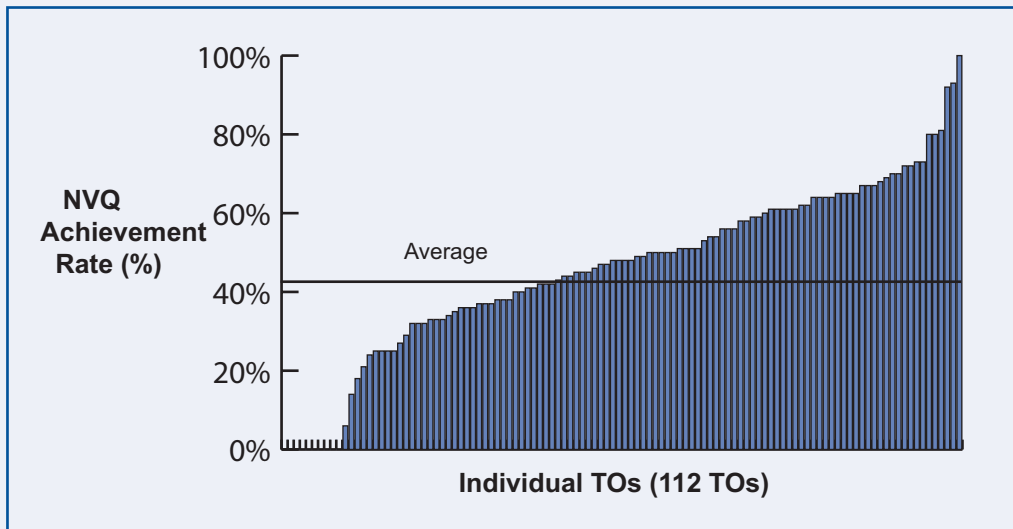
3.52 We recognize that there are factors which affect individual TO performance, such as the characteristics of the individual trainees and local economic circumstances. We also note that there are occasions (for example, where the TO is the only body delivering training in an important occupational category within a particular geographic area) where it might be preferable for contract managers to provide support aimed at improvement rather than remove approval to deliver. However, we believe that the Department must take more active steps with consistently poor performers to raise their levels of performance. The variability in performance is very wide and needs to be reduced - too many TOs have performances significantly below the average:

- 21 of the 112 TOs providing NVQ Level 1 and 2 training recorded achievement rates below 30 per cent, 13 of which recording achievement rates below 20 per cent (at March 2002)
- 27 of the 121 TOs covered in the employment/unemployment analysis had unemployment rates of greater than 50 per cent and, for 22 of the TOs, less than a third of trainees moved into employment on leaving the programme (at March 2002).

Figure 13

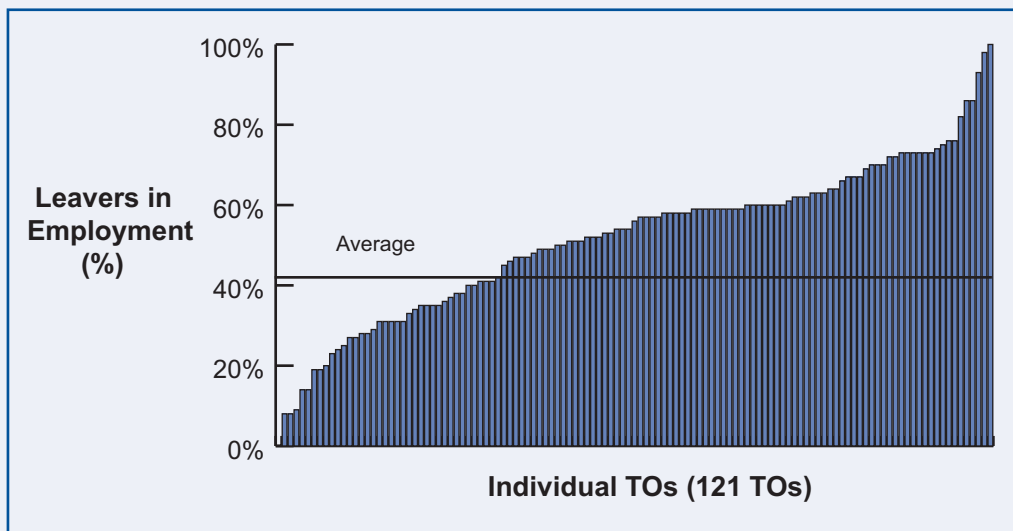
**Performance Outcomes for Individual TOs (1999-2000 Cohort), as at March 2002**

(a) NVQ Achievement



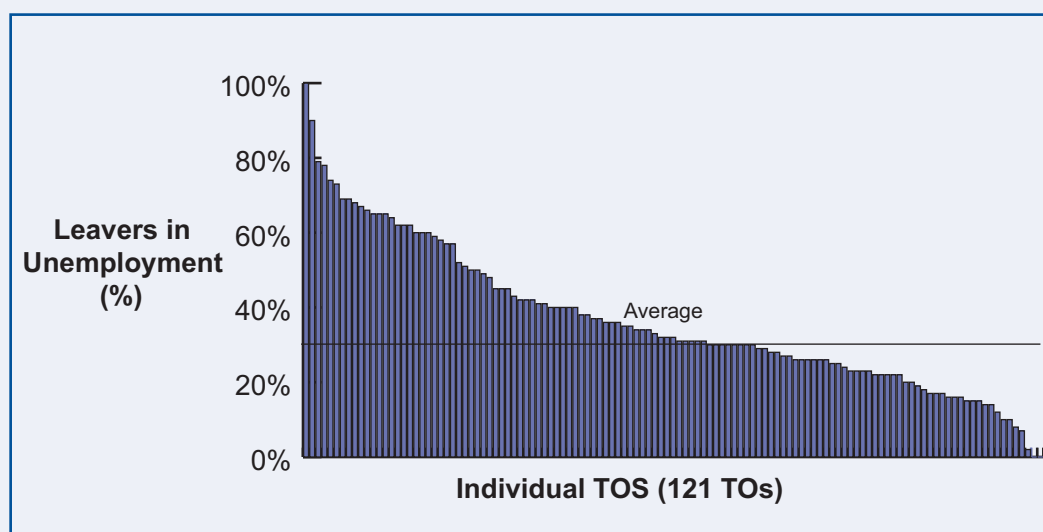
**Note:** Figure (a) illustrates Access and Traineeship strands only because some 562 (50%) of Modern Apprenticeship Trainees from the 1999-2000 cohort remained in training at March 2002

(b) Employment





### (c) Unemployment



Source: DEL

3.53 In our view, there is considerable scope to enhance the effectiveness of the overall Jobskills programme and reduce the current variability in outcomes. For example, as illustrated above in relation to the 1999-00 cohort, if the Department could have raised the performance of the less effective TOs towards the average, there would have been significant positive effects in terms of increased NVQ achievement and movement into employment.

3.54 NIAO recommends that the Department puts in place a specific action plan to address this issue. This could usefully include:

- undertaking statistical research to determine the extent to which good or poor performance is linked to the characteristics of the trainee intake
- comparing the results of ETI inspections with the recorded performance for TOs to identify if there is a correlation between poor quality training delivery and poor quality NVQ and labour market outcomes
- setting specific contract targets to raise the performance of the poorest performing TOs
- considering the merits of publishing TO performance data to improve information on the programme's outturns

- using the performance data for individual TOs as a means of benchmarking those TOs with broadly similar characteristics
- developing further incentives to improve performance, or sanctions to penalize consistently poor performance.

The Department has commented that research on the effectiveness of Jobskills will be carried out in the next 12 months, and will include consideration of the use of a ‘Balanced Scorecard’<sup>14</sup> approach to assess TOs.

### The Access Strand

3.55 Relative to the other strands of the programme, there has been a significant and ongoing under-performance for those trainees within Access (NVQ Level 1). Compared with their counterparts on the Traineeship (NVQ Level 2) and Modern Apprenticeship (NVQ Level 3) strands, Access trainees are *less likely* to achieve their NVQ, enter further education and training, or complete their Jobskills training; and they are *more likely* to move into unemployment. These differences can be clearly illustrated by comparing Access performance with that for the programme as a whole (see Figure 14).

Figure 14

### Performance Outcomes for the Access Strand of Jobskills

Performance Measure	Access Strand Only	Whole Jobskills Programme
Achievement of NVQ <sup>(1)</sup>	45 per cent	66 per cent
Non-completion of training <sup>(2)</sup>	39 per cent	27 per cent
Labour Market Situation on Leaving Jobskills:		
• Employment <sup>(2)</sup>	56 per cent	66 per cent
• Unemployment <sup>(2)</sup>	40 per cent	23 per cent
• Education and training <sup>(2)</sup>	4 per cent	10 per cent

Source: (1) DEL

(2) NIAO Survey

<sup>14</sup>By assessing an organisation across a broad range of key measures, the ‘Balanced Scorecard’ approach aims to provide a holistic view of its performance.

3.56 We recognize that Access is targeted at young people who, due to disability or other disadvantage (such as literacy, numeracy, motivational or other problems) require preparatory training before progressing further within the programme. Our survey confirmed this position - 29 per cent of Access trainees stating they had no formal qualifications on joining the programme.

3.57 However, it is precisely because the Access strand deals with such disadvantaged young people that its performance merits particular scrutiny. Access forms a central plank of the Department's policy to address New Targeting Social Need. It is therefore disappointing that such a large proportion of these trainees fail to complete their course or to achieve NVQs and move into unemployment.

3.58 We recommend that the Department should separately consider the performance of the Access strand within its analysis and action plan to address the variation in TO performance (paragraph 3.54). The Department has said that it is currently reviewing the Access strand with a view to developing provision targeted at those young people with multiple barriers to employment.

### The Net Employment Impact of Jobskills

3.59 The Department monitors Jobskills in terms of its gross impacts on measures such as employment, NVQ outcomes and progression rates. The overall impact of Jobskills depends on the 'Net Additionality' of the scheme. That is, the gross effects have to be adjusted for deadweight, substitution and displacement. These effects are generally more pertinent to employment outcomes and are defined as:

**Deadweight** - the proportion of programme participants who would have entered employment without the help of the programme

**Substitution** - the proportion of participants who enter employment due to the programme but at the expense of other groups who would otherwise have taken up the same employment i.e there is no net increase in employment

**Displacement** - the extent to which the programme, through subsidising one group of people, leads to a loss of employment elsewhere in the economy.

3.60 The Consultants' External Evaluation of Jobskills, in May 2000 (paragraph 1.14), considered that the programme had satisfactory performance in relation to these measures and that, overall, there was 'low to medium' deadweight, displacement and substitution. Specifically, the evaluation noted:

- deadweight - to be 'low to medium' - more than two-fifths of trainees who were employed after Jobskills considered that they would have got the job anyway if they had not participated
- substitution - to be 'medium' - two-thirds of companies used Jobskills on a regular basis and, of these, three-quarters used it for the same purposes every time
- displacement - to be 'low' - less than one-fifth of employers indicated that they had made employees redundant or had unfilled vacancies since starting the Jobskills programme.

3.61 The external evaluators considered that the above figures represented 'challenges' to the delivery of Jobskills. However, they judged the levels of net additionality to be 'satisfactory' based on the results of a literature review of similar schemes in other industrialised countries. This literature review indicated that similar schemes often found no significant evidence that participation on programmes increased participants' chances of subsequently finding a job.

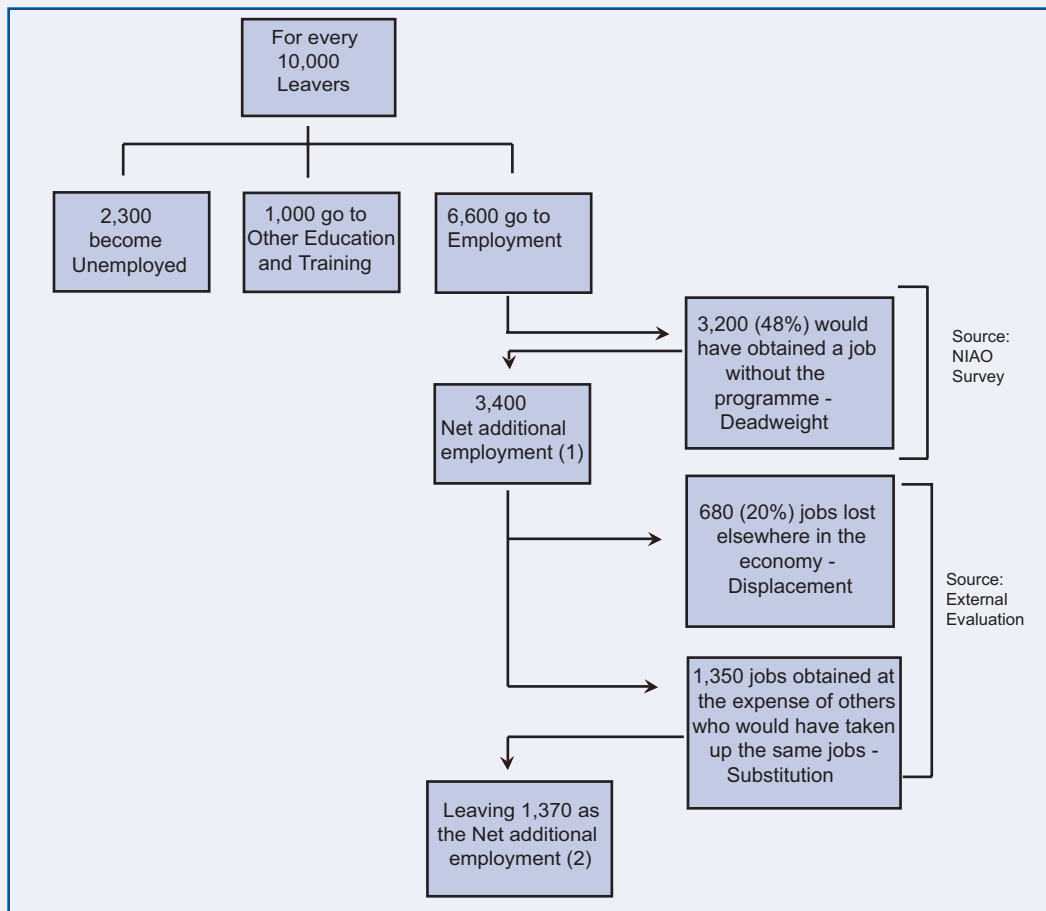
3.62 NIAO's survey of the 1999-2000 cohort of starters confirms that deadweight has not changed significantly since the External Evaluation - 48 per cent of trainees who had moved into employment responded that they thought it 'very likely' or 'quite likely' that they would have obtained their current job anyway, even if they had not taken part in Jobskills.

3.63 The net additional employment resulting from the Jobskills programme is therefore much lower than the gross impacts reported. NIAO's survey indicates that for every 10,000 Jobskills leavers 6,600 obtain employment. Given that 48 per cent of these indicate that they would have obtained their job anyway, this implies (allowing for deadweight only) that net additional employment is 3,400 (52 per cent) of those moving into employment. However, if we also allow for the displacement and substitution effects, based on the External Evaluation findings (see paragraph 3.60) this may be as low as 1,370 (approximately 21 per cent of those moving into employment). This is illustrated in Figure 15 below.

3.64 NIAO recognises that large scale additionality problems tend to be associated with training schemes similar to Jobskills. Indeed, the net additional employment calculated above at approximately 14 per cent (1,370 out of every 10,000 trainees) is similar to the 12 per cent additionality identified by the National Audit Office in its evaluation of the Skillseekers programme in Scotland<sup>15</sup>.

**Figure 15**

### The Net Employment Impact of Jobskills



- Notes:**
1. Net additional employment if only deadweight is netted off the gross impacts
  2. Net additional employment if deadweight, displacement and substitution are all netted off the gross impacts.

3.65 Currently, the Department has no means of estimating the extent of deadweight, displacement and substitution associated with Jobskills. Clearly, however, such effects can significantly reduce the net employment impact of the programme.

<sup>15</sup>NAO Report on 'Scottish Enterprise: Skillseekers Training for Young People', SE/2000/19, March 2000

- 3.66 In our view, it is therefore important that the Department puts in place systems to periodically estimate the net employment effects, identifies the characteristics associated with high levels of deadweight, displacement and substitution and seeks ways in which to minimize such effects. The Department has accepted our recommendation.



# Part: 4

## Targeting Skills Needs

### Background

- 4.1 The original objectives of Jobskills were set primarily in terms of meeting the needs of trainees and the programme focused on ensuring that participants achieved NVQs. The attainment of jobs was not a formally-stated objective; nor was there an objective to match training provision with the skills needs of the Northern Ireland economy.
- 4.2 The Department told us that, during the 1990s, no robust, comprehensive data on the current and future skills needs of the Northern Ireland economy were readily available and it had no clear system for analysing and forecasting skill needs. Training provided through programmes, including Jobskills, was therefore not targeted at any particular occupational or skills areas.
- 4.3 Between 1999 and 2000, two developments provided an opportunity for the Department to make the Jobskills programme more compatible with the wider economic development needs of the Northern Ireland economy. In May 2000, it received the External Evaluation of the programme (see paragraph 1.14). This followed the establishment, in February 1999, of the Northern Ireland Skills Task Force (see paragraphs 4.6 to 4.7 below).

### The Need to Match Training Provision with Skills Needs

#### The Findings of the External Evaluation

- 4.4 The External Evaluation indicated that:
  - there was occupational mismatch between Jobskills provision and the needs of the economy



- the demand side of the Northern Ireland economy was changing rapidly and the rapid growth in some sectors (such as electronics, telecommunications, software and tourism) needed to be reflected more clearly in the content of Jobskills
  - employers in Northern Ireland continued to report skills shortages and it was important to ensure that the design of training programmes better reflected employers' requirements
  - around one-quarter of employers seemed to be using Jobskills on a 'rolling' basis as a source of low cost labour for unskilled positions and this was not something which the programme should seek to endorse or sustain.
- 4.5 The External Evaluation therefore recommended that the programme be more focused on the needs of employers and the Northern Ireland economy, but noted that this would require improved information relating to the needs of employers and the economy.

### **The NI Skills Task Force**

- 4.6 The NI Skills Task Force was established in February 1999, with membership including representatives from employers, trade unions and government departments and agencies. Its terms of reference require it:

*“to advise the Department for Employment and Learning on strategy to meet the skills needs of the Northern Ireland economy, ... and its labour market research programme, in order to assist in targeting the allocation of education and training resources.”*

- 4.7 Although the Skills Task Force is not concerned specifically with Jobskills, its reports have highlighted key messages and conclusions, many of which are relevant to programmes such as Jobskills. Among other things, the Skills Task Force has:
- identified five key sectors as having the potential for growth and for strengthening the Northern Ireland economy - Information & Communications Technology; Tourism & Hospitality; Electronics; Engineering and Construction
  - highlighted a need to establish the extent to which course provision at all levels is driven by labour market requirements. In its view, there

appeared to be a lack of formal channels through which the needs of the labour market could be transmitted to the education and training sector

- noted its concern that the level of training provision supplied under the vocational system failed to meet the needs of employers.

### Meeting the Skills Needs of the Economy - Changes to the Jobskills Programme

4.8 In NIAO's opinion, the External Evaluation findings, together with the ongoing work of the NI Skills Task Force, provide important information to help steer the appropriate direction and content of the Jobskills programme.

4.9 Jobskills has developed and evolved over time (see paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10, and Figure 1). None of the changes made to the programme have been in direct response to the External Evaluation and emerging NI Skills Task Force findings, but some have effectively pre-empted those issues. We welcome the fact that a number of changes have been made to Jobskills which, we believe, should help the programme more directly meet the skills needs of the Northern Ireland economy. We note in particular the following changes.

#### New Objectives

4.10 In April 2000 a number of new objectives were introduced to Jobskills. Specifically, these included:

- to contribute to the development of a highly skilled, flexible and innovative workforce to assist the overall competitiveness of 'Northern Ireland plc'
- to address priority skills needs.

4.11 NIAO welcomes the introduction of these new objectives as they should help to align the programme more closely with the skills needs of the economy. We note, however, that the objectives remain high level in nature. We recommend that the Department further develops these objectives, makes them operational and sets associated targets which are specific, measurable and time-bounded. It should report on achievement against these objectives on an annual basis. The Department told us that it intends to address this recommendation alongside its review of other programme targets (paragraph 3.6).

## New Funding Arrangements

- 4.12 In April 1999, new funding arrangements were introduced for Jobskills, which provided additional funding for training in a number of key occupational sectors at Traineeship and at Modern Apprenticeship levels (the Access strand does not focus on the provision of priority skills and is therefore excluded from this arrangement). These key occupational sectors (categorised as Occupational Group B), receive a higher level of output-related funding and, for Traineeships, are also supported for a longer duration than the other occupational areas (Occupational Group A).
- 4.13 Although the Department consulted Sector Training Councils and its internal Research and Evaluation Unit on which sectors would be selected, it told NIAO that the areas identified for inclusion in Occupational Group B were not determined on the basis of any rigorous or objective quantitative assessment. Nevertheless, there appears to be a degree of overlap between the sectors identified for Jobskills and the priority skills areas identified by the NI Skills Task Force (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

### Jobskills Key Occupational Sectors and the Skills Task Force's Priority Skills Areas

Jobskills - Key Occupational Sectors (Occupational Group B)	NI Skills Task Force - Priority Skills Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information &amp; Communications Technology</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction and Civil Engineering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel and Catering, Food Preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism &amp; Hospitality</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motor Vehicle Repair and Maintenance</li> <li>• Printing</li> <li>• Agriculture and related</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronics</li> </ul>

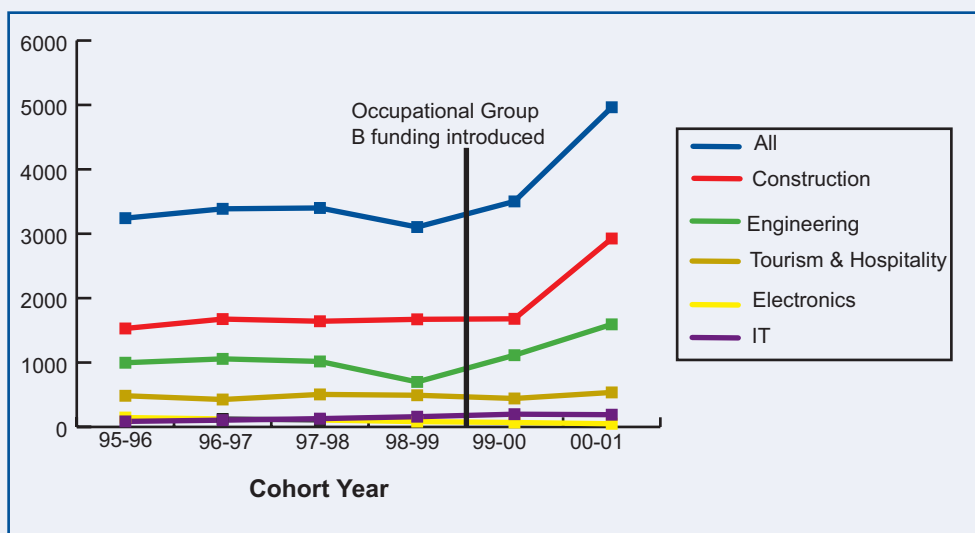
### More Trainees in Priority Skills Areas

- 4.14 The Department provided data on the level of starts in Modern Apprenticeships and Traineeships for occupational categories within the Priority Skills Areas identified by the NI Skills Task Force. While the occupational categories applied

under Jobskills are not direct equivalents for the Priority Skills Areas, broad trends can be identified. The data show that the Jobskills programme has increased the overall number of young persons training in these priority skills areas, although, the bulk of these increases have been concentrated in construction and engineering (see Figure 17).

Figure 17

### Jobskills Trainees in Priority Skills Areas



Source: DEL

### More Modern Apprenticeships

4.15 The vast majority of the increases in the construction and engineering occupational areas, after April 1999, are accounted for by increased starts under the Modern Apprenticeships strand of the programme. Indeed, overall statistics indicate that the number of youth participants in the Modern Apprenticeship strand averaged 4,350 during 2001-02, much greater than in the initial years of Jobskills. This increase fits well with the findings of the Skills Task Force<sup>16</sup> which endorsed the need to place greater emphasis on Modern Apprenticeships.

<sup>16</sup>Northern Ireland Skills Task Force Report 'A Study of Labour Market Conditions in the Northern Ireland Electronics Industry', October 2001

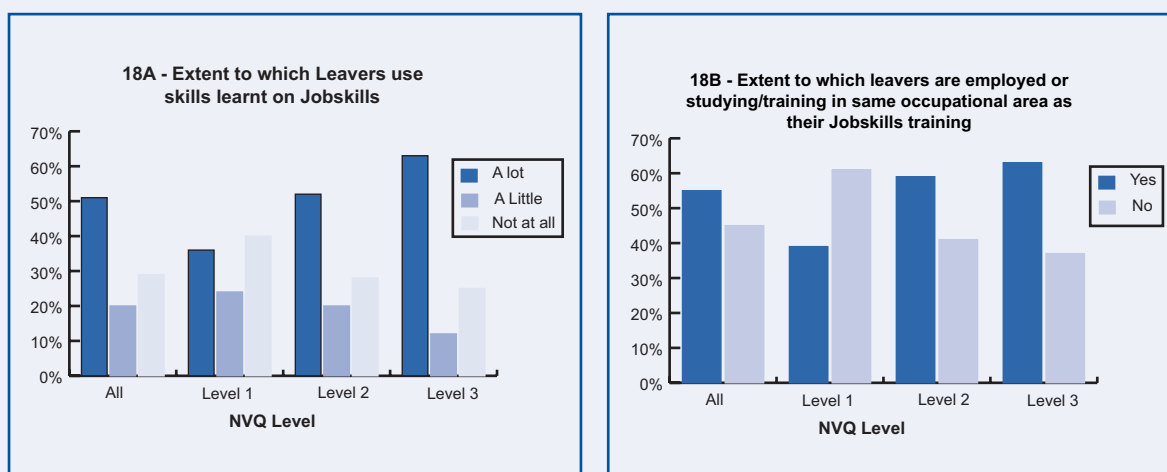
## The Use of Skills by Jobskills Trainees

4.16 The effectiveness of the Jobskills programme - in relation to its objective to address skills needs - can be gauged by the extent to which, after leaving the programme, trainees use the skills learnt in subsequent employment. Another useful indicator is whether trainees continue to work and/or train in the same occupational area in which they participated on Jobskills.

4.17 NIAO's survey of trainees suggests that there may be a substantial cadre of participants who are leaving Jobskills without using the skills learnt on the programme. Approximately 10 per cent of trainees who have left the programme have never had a job. In addition, even for those who obtain employment, our survey indicates that Jobskills may not be delivering skills which are used in the workplace. Around a half (51 per cent) of trainees who gain employment after Jobskills indicated that they used the skills learnt "a lot". However, 29 per cent indicated they did not use the skills learnt "at all" and a further 20 per cent indicated they only used the skills "a little" (see Figure 18A). Our survey also indicates that almost half (45 per cent) of trainees are not employed, studying or training in the occupational area in which they were trained on Jobskills (see Figure 18B). This percentage is highest for Access trainees (61 per cent of whom are no longer in the same occupational area).

Figure 18

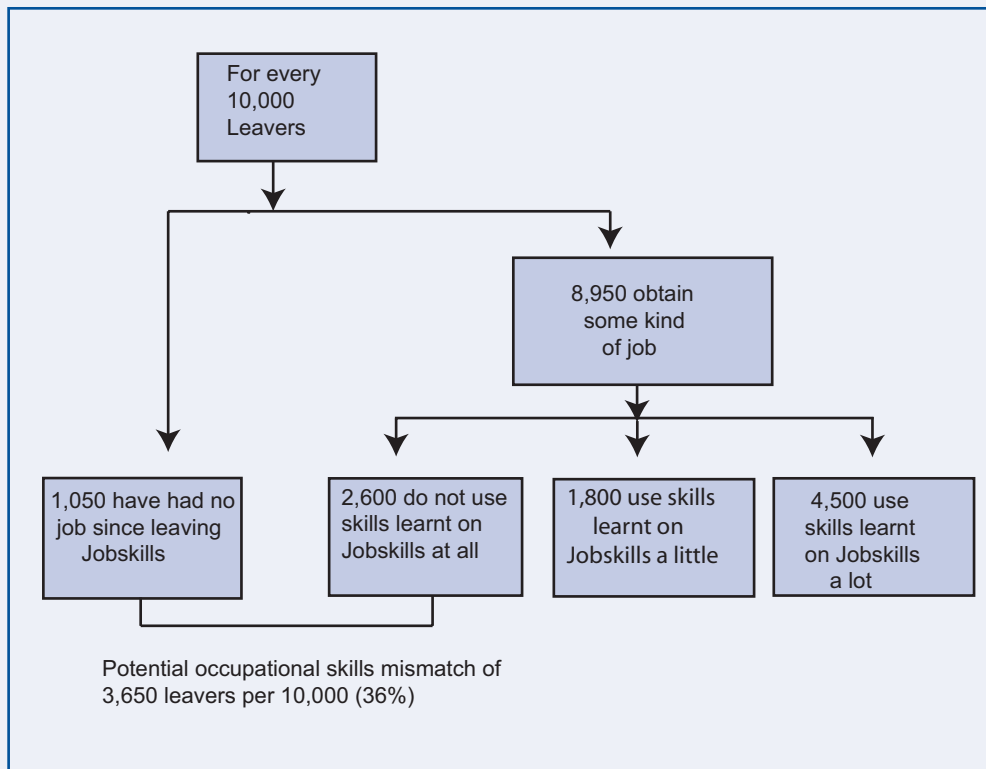
### Extent of Skills Usage and Continuation in Same Occupational Area



Source: NIAO Survey

4.18 On the basis of our survey, it is possible that there is an occupational skills mismatch of some 36 per cent in the Jobskills programme (see Figure 19) - the skills attained by this proportion of trainees have not been in demand by employers.

**Figure 19** The Potential Occupational Skills Mismatch in Jobskills



Source : NIAO Survey

4.19 In our opinion, these results imply that there is considerable scope to better target training provision under Jobskills so that trainees subsequently use their skills in employment and continue to work and/or study in the same occupational area. The Department commented that its introduction of priority skills areas (paragraph 4.12) had been aimed at improving the match between training provision and occupational skills needs. It also pointed out that, while it is not always possible to match individual training to eventual occupational outcomes, the generic skills and personal development gained from Jobskills participation will be relevant to whatever occupational area a young person eventually chooses. The Department also said that it is currently reforming the Careers Service to better focus on the needs of young people with multiple barriers to education and training.

- 4.20 We recommend that the Department monitors more closely Jobskills leavers to record outcomes, and uses the results of this monitoring to inform the occupational profile of training provision. In particular, we consider that the Department must do more to steer Access trainees into appropriate occupational areas (the advice offered to young persons by the Careers Service will be particularly important in this regard) and to equip them with the basic and key skills necessary to meet identified needs of employers and the wider economy.

### Assessing Local Skills Needs

- 4.21 If trainees are not using the skills learnt on the Jobskills programme, or are not employed in the occupational areas in which they trained, there is a risk that the training courses being offered are still not sufficiently geared towards the skills needs of employers and of the wider economy, despite the changes which have been made to the programme.
- 4.22 Currently, much of the Skills Task Force's research is at a Northern Ireland-wide level. However, it is also important to assess *local* needs. The Department told us that it relies on a close working relationship between the Careers Service and contract managers, using their local knowledge, to ensure that the occupational areas delivered under the Jobskills programme are relevant to the aspirations and employment prospects of young people and the skills needs of local employers. However, based on the occupational skills mismatch identified in our survey (see paragraphs 4.16 - 4.19), there is scope to improve upon current arrangements.
- 4.23 In Scotland, the European Policy Research Centre was engaged by the National Audit Office to provide advice on the key features which might be expected in any research to identify the skills needs of a local area<sup>17</sup>. The Centre developed a checklist which was applied by NAO in their assessment of the work of Local Enterprise Companies.

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<sup>17</sup>NAO Report on 'Scottish Enterprise: Skillseekers Training for Young People', SE/2000/19, March 2000

- 4.24 NIAO recommends that the Department considers how best to source data on local skill needs. In our view, it could usefully develop guidance based on the European Policy Research Centre's checklist, to supplement its existing arrangements.
- 4.25 The Consultants' External Evaluation of Jobskills recommended that the market focus of the programme could be enhanced if the Department secured the involvement of a greater number of employers, particularly in certain key target sectors such as electronics, tradeable services and tourism. The Department told us, however, that it has no evidence to suggest that there is a need for a greater number of employers on the programme and that additional employers can be brought in, when required, to respond to individual trainee's needs.
- 4.26 We recognise that there may be conflict between the need to have a more market focused scheme while also aiming to provide training places for young people who have a degree of choice in the training they undertake. However, in view of the importance of providing training to meet the needs of employers and the Northern Ireland economy, the Department must ensure that Jobskills, at all strands, acts as a major channel through which to deliver essential training to meet the skills needs of the wider economy. This will also enhance the prospect of Jobskills trainees securing employment.

### Skills Implementation Framework

- 4.27 In the Republic of Ireland, Government established the 'Business Education and Training Partnership' in 1997, to develop national strategies to tackle the issues of skill needs, manpower forecasting and education and training for business. The structural framework consisted of:
- an Expert Group on Future Skills, to carry out analysis of the future skill needs of the economy and to develop proposals to meet these skill needs
  - a Business, Education and Training Forum, to provide an environment in which educationalists, trainers and business could meet and reflect on and discuss the views of the expert group
  - a Skills Implementation Group, to discuss and agree on the best means by which the recommendations of the expert group could be implemented.



4.28 While there is some similarity between structures in Northern Ireland and those in the Republic of Ireland, there is no body which has specific responsibility to ensure and oversee the co-ordinated and effective implementation of recommendations.

4.29 In NIAO's view, the Department should consider a similar approach to that in the Republic of Ireland, where a group has specific responsibility for implementing recommendations and for reporting on progress. Such an approach should ensure that recommendations arising from the work of the Skills Task Force are implemented as soon as possible, and in a consistent and co-ordinated fashion, both within the Department and also in conjunction other relevant departments and agencies. Reporting on progress would also enhance accountability on these issues.





# Part: 5

## Financial Monitoring and Control of Jobskills

### Funding

5.1 There are four main types of funding under the Jobskills programme. These are:

- Training Allowances
- Training Fees
- Output-related Funding
- Other Allowances

**Appendix 4** provides a summary of the current levels of assistance under each type of funding and the number of training weeks supported under the programme.

### Monitoring and Control

#### Main Risks

5.2 Financial control over public money seeks to minimise the risk of irregular or incorrect payments. This risk can be minimised where an effective system of control is in place to prevent and detect irregular and incorrect payments. There are three main financial risks associated with the Jobskills programme:

- **attendance** - that payments will be made for trainees who are not in attendance on the programme
- **achievement** - that payments will be made for trainees who have not obtained their qualification or achieved their sustained employment outcome

- **expenditure incurred** - that payments will be made for other allowances (such as childcare, travel and lodgings) where the expenditure has either been unauthorised or unsubstantiated.

### Control Framework

5.3 The control framework operating under Jobskills has been designed to address the main financial risks associated with the programme. It comprises three main types of control:

- **administrative** - the Department has in place a number of administrative requirements and claims checking procedures
- **inspection** - the Department's Financial Audit and Support Team (FAST) undertakes sample inspections of the data and documentation held by TOs
- **review** - the Department's Internal Audit section reviews the adequacy and effectiveness of the control procedures in place.

## NIAO Findings

### Administrative Checks

5.4 The Department has produced Operational Guidelines for Jobskills. These require TOs to maintain ongoing records of each trainee and their progress towards targeted qualifications, to maintain attendance records for all trainees and to have attendance records signed by the trainee's employer/job placement provider. A standard attendance form was introduced in March 2003.

5.5 TOs' claims are generated automatically through the Department's Jobskills computerised information system. This contains a number of inbuilt controls. For example, if TOs do not input attendance records within the allowable period (currently 4 weeks), all Training Allowances, Training Fees and Other Allowances paid for these trainees will be automatically reclaimed. These controls also ensure that Training Allowances and Training Fees are restricted to the eligible number of supported training weeks.

- 5.6 The Department's Supplier Services Branch undertakes a number of administrative and claims checks. It undertakes general checks to confirm the accuracy of the data recorded on the Jobskills information system, that it is consistent with the claim made and complies with any eligibility and other requirements set out in the Jobskills Operating Guidelines. Supplier Services Branch also confirms the accuracy and authorisation of any Other Allowances claimed. We were told that these general and other allowance checks are carried out on a sample basis, the level of checking ranging from 20 per cent to 100 per cent depending on the level of historical error experienced in claims made by TOs.
- 5.7 In addition, with regard to trainees paid through the Social Security Agency (SSA), a reconciliation of a sample of trainee data is carried out between the Jobskills information system and SSA records. The most recent exercise, carried out in January 2002, satisfactorily reconciled all trainee records tested.
- 5.8 Claims for Output-related funding are 100 per cent checked against copy NVQ certificates and/or letters from employers confirming employment, provided by the TOs in support of their claims. These are accepted as evidence of achievement. The Department does not carry out further checks to validate the authenticity of this supporting documentation - for example, with Awarding Bodies or employers.
- 5.9 The Department carried out an exercise between October 1999 and March 2000, which identified the level of net adjustments to claims, as a result of errors etc., at around 1.4 per cent of total programme spend. Although the percentage rate of adjustment is small, it equates to some £900,000 (net) per year (based on a gross £1.1m overclaim and £200,000 underclaim). As these claims errors relate mainly to lack of adherence to Jobskills Guidelines (for example, claims made outside the required dates or output-related claims unsupported by certificates), the Department has deemed them to be administrative errors by TOs.

5.10

NIAO welcomes the use of a control framework designed to address the main financial risks of the programme. However, our review has indicated that some risks remain within the key areas of verifying attendance, employment outcomes and qualification achievements on the programme:

- **Attendance**

The only check on attendance records, currently in place, is a post-payment examination by FAST, on a sample of claims, of the consistency of signatures on attendance forms. We put it to the Department that assurance could be increased if a system of authorised signatories was used, with checks of signatures on attendance forms against specimen authorised signatures. The Department accepted this would enhance the validation process but considered that the practicalities of such a system would prove difficult - a number of signatures would be required for each trainee, as they have different people supervising them during training, as well as several different job placements during their period of training.

- **Employment Outcomes**

Claims from TOs for output-related funding on employment outcomes are supported by letters from employers confirming employment status. However, these letters, which are submitted to the Department by TOs, are not checked back to the originator to ensure validity. The Department told us that, in the past year, the funding expended on employment outcomes represented only 0.3 per cent (£150,000) of the Jobskills budget. In its view, undertaking a validation check of the employment outcomes with employers would not represent an efficient use of resources. However, it said that it would amend its claim forms to include a statement, signed by the employer, giving the Department right of access to their financial records to verify the person was in their employment. It considered that this will go some way to reducing the potential risk.

- **Qualification Achievements**

Copy qualification certificates submitted by TOs for claims on qualification outputs are not checked back to Awarding Bodies, by the Department, to ensure they are valid. In our view, the Department should undertake sample checks with Awarding Bodies to confirm validity. In response to our review, the Department has indicated that it will arrange to carry out a sample of checks on each TO, structured so as to ensure that all TOs are covered within a 12-month period.

- 5.11 We note that the Department has agreed to keep these risks under review, within its formal risk assessment procedure.

## **Inspections - the Financial Audit and Support Team (FAST)**

### ***Trainee Verification Visits***

- 5.12 For Jobskills, FAST has undertaken trainee verification visits on samples of trainees, since 1998, to test for the existence of trainees and to check the accuracy of trainee data recorded on the Jobskills information system. Samples are not risk based - they are selected judgementally and aim to provide approximately 10 per cent coverage of the total trainee population. They also endeavour to cover a range of TOs, occupational areas and geographic locations.
- 5.13 FAST estimate that, in the five financial years to March 2003, its trainee verification activity covered 12 per cent, 7 per cent, 10 per cent, 9 per cent and 8 per cent of the Jobskills trainee population respectively. The validity of all trainees sampled was verified - tests have not identified any fictitious trainees on the programme.
- 5.14 In NIAO's view, trainee verification activity would be enhanced where the samples were selected on a risk basis. The Department has accepted our recommendation that FAST develop an appropriate risk-focused sampling methodology. We suggest that the criteria used in identifying risk should seek to reflect the risks associated with particular occupational areas, especially those where trainees' location changes frequently. More generally, the risk criteria could also, for example, reflect the levels of errors identified in claims checking procedures and the results of FAST inspections of individual TOs (particularly the history of recoveries effected as a result of inappropriate or ineligible claims and experience of poor attendance records keeping).

### ***Financial Inspections***

- 5.15 FAST also undertakes financial inspections of TOs, to check compliance with the Jobskills Operating Guidelines and to review their financial viability and record-keeping. These inspections verify the accuracy and eligibility of amounts



claimed. FAST inspections focus on attendance records - a typical inspection comprises a 10 per cent sample of attendance records for two months within the period since the previous inspection and substantiates the trainee's presence on work-placement or at directed training.

- 5.16 FAST's programme of financial inspections is risk-based (risk is determined by factors such as the number of trainees, the control environment within the TO, the complexity of the organisation and results from the previous inspection experience). High risk organisations (approximately 15 per cent of TOs) are inspected twice a year, medium risk (60 per cent of TOs) once a year and low risk organisations (25 per cent of TOs) approximately once every 18 months.
- 5.17 Where FAST reports identify material issues, these are reported to the relevant Departmental Regional Operations Manager and the need for further work to assess the extent and value of the issue identified is agreed. The results of all FAST inspections are reported to the TO involved. However, a formal report/management letter is issued only where material issues arise or recovery of funds is to be effected. Formal reports are copied to the relevant Departmental Regional Manager. Where minor issues arise, these are not formally reported but are dealt with between FAST and the relevant TO.
- 5.18 FAST also provides an annual assurance on the Jobskills programme which feeds into the Accounting Officer's Statement on Internal Control. For the 2002-03 financial year FAST was able to provide only limited assurance on Jobskills expenditure. This was due to a number of weaknesses in systems, resulting in errors in claims received from providers. This fact was disclosed in the 2002-03 Statement on Internal Control. The Department has developed an action plan to address the weaknesses identified.
- 5.19 No frauds have been identified as a result of FAST activities (or through any other Departmental or external checks). However, the Department has effected some large recoveries as a result of FAST inspections. For the period April 1995 to March 2003, some £358,000 has been recovered, or is recommended for recovery, from TOs for incorrect, ineligible or unsubstantiated claims.
- 5.20 FAST recoveries are made on the basis of the actual samples vouched at individual inspections. Data supplied by FAST indicate that its activities provide sample coverage of approximately 3 per cent of total programme expenditure,

and that amounts recovered represent some 2 per cent of expenditure sampled. On the basis of a simple extrapolation against total programme expenditure, taking no account of the effect of the impact of FAST's risk-focused approach, this suggests a potential level of incorrect, ineligible or unsubstantiated claims in the region of £10 million over the life of the programme (or £1.2 million per year).

- 5.21 The levels of FAST recoveries together with the degree of error identified through administrative checking (paragraph 5.9) indicate that there are significant financial risks within Jobskills. Given the scale of expenditure and the numbers of trainees and TOs involved in Jobskills, the inherent risk of irregular and improper payments within the programme is high. It is difficult, however, for FAST to distinguish genuine errors and poor administration from deliberate misrepresentation and fraud. For example:

In November 1998, in the course of a routine TO inspection, it was found that information provided by a number of trainees regarding attendance conflicted with records held at the organisation, suggesting that payments had been claimed in respect of trainees for periods when they were not engaged in training.

Clarification was sought from the TO in relation to a sample of the trainees identified. However, as its initial response did not explain the circumstances to FAST's satisfaction, the investigation was widened. The outcome of that extended investigation suggested prima facie evidence of falsification of attendance records and overclaim of funding of some £13,000. Accordingly, the matter was referred to the police in March 1999.

Renewal of the TO's contract was withheld pending the outcome of the police investigation. However, it was allowed to continue operating under the programme and in September 2000 was re-accredited under the JQMS.

The police Fraud Unit reported its findings to the Department in November 2000. This indicated that the evidence provided was not sufficient to substantiate a prosecution. However, it did confirm that there were failures in the company's system of management and procedures for trainee records which resulted in improper claims of £15,035.

The TO was informed of the outcome of the investigation in January 2001 and, as a result, agreed to take the necessary remedial action to improve its administration procedures and to repay all amounts relating to improper claims.

£15,035 was recouped in two tranches against subsequent claims in 2000-01. FAST have also confirmed, through subsequent inspection visits, that the TO has improved its administration arrangements.

5.22 Given the apparent difficulties in delineating between deliberate misrepresentation and poor administration, it is important that appropriate monitoring systems are in place to help identify potential risk areas. At present the Department separately records and monitors administrative problems identified in TO claims, overpayments of benefits claimed from SSA, and recoveries as a result of TO inspections by FAST. While there is informal communication between FAST and Supplier Services Branch, particularly with regard to inspection programme planning, these risk information sources are not brought together to summarise overall levels of risk or to analyse common or inter-related trends.

5.23 In our view, there would be merit in establishing an aggregate record of all errors and adjustments to claims, identified both from administrative checks (in the Department and the Social Security Agency) and FAST inspections. This would facilitate the identification and tracking of individual TOs characterised by persistent errors and claims adjustments, whatever the source. Overall monitoring of this nature should also help to identify any patterns of abuse within the system.

5.24 The Department has commented that the creation of an aggregate record of errors and adjustments would provide only minimal additional benefit over the current, separate monitoring arrangements. However, in our view, a more co-ordinated approach to overall risk management would assist in targeting financial control and inspection activities.

5.25 In addition, we believe the Department should consider the development of a suitable methodology - based on an extrapolation of the results of the FAST sample inspections - to estimate the potential levels of inappropriate claims for the programme as a whole. We also consider that it would be useful to report (at least annually), to senior management, the levels of actual error and adjustment detected by checks, together with the estimate of overall programme error from the extrapolation. This would provide a comprehensive indication of the total financial risks to the programme and provide a firm basis on which to consider the merits of allocating additional inspection resources.

5.26 The Department told us that it does not see a need for an extrapolation methodology - the FAST inspection programme seeks to visit each Jobskills provider at least once every two years and such inspections cover sample transactions from the date of the previous inspection. It said that where a deficiency is identified, the FAST inspector will probe similar or related transactions to confirm the extent of required recovery. In the Department's view, these arrangements ensure the fullest identification of recovery needed. However, given that FAST inspections sample only some 3 per cent of the £45 million annual programme expenditure on Jobskills, NIAO remains of the opinion that extrapolation would be beneficial.



# Appendices

## Jobskills Programme Objectives

- To contribute to the development of a highly skilled, flexible and innovative workforce to assist the overall competitiveness of Northern Ireland plc
- To provide quality training for young people entering the labour market
- To address within a single framework the vocational needs of trainees of varying levels of ability
- To increase the employability of young people by improving their levels of skill and competence through the attainment of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Basic and/or Key Skills
- To make available pre-entry guidance counselling and assessment services
- To promote an enhanced perception of 'ownership' on the part of the trainee by means of a Training Credit specifying a training target; and by giving the trainee freedom to choose the most suitable Training Organisation (TO) to deliver the required training
- To tailor training to the needs of trainees through individual training/personal development plans leading to trainees' targeted qualifications including Basic and/or Key skills
- To provide incentives for TOs through Output-related Funding on completion by a trainee of the targeted qualification
- To operate a framework in which funding levels and duration are linked to the occupational area and level of the training involved
- To promote the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships in employment
- To address priority skills needs

## Jobskills Training Organisations at 31 March 2003

The Department treats each contract under Jobskills as a separate Training Organisation. A number of training providers, however, hold more than one contract, each covering a separate location.

### Private Sector Providers

1. Abbey Training Services
2. Belfast Centre of Learning
3. Belfast College of Training and Education Ltd
4. Bombardier - Shorts
5. BTNI
6. CTRS Computer Training
7. Dairy Farm Jobskills
8. Federation of the Retail Licensed Trade NI
9. Fermanagh Training Ltd
10. Glenmount Training Services Ltd
11. Graham Training
12. Graham Training (Belfast)
13. Hugh J O Boyle - Downpatrick - Training Ltd
14. Joblink
15. Joblink - Belfast
16. Joblink - Limavady
17. Joblink - North East
18. Joblink - Strabane
19. Joblink - Waterloo House
20. Joblink Braid Ltd
21. JTM Youth and Adult Employment Agency
22. JTM Youth and Adult Employment Agency (Antrim)
23. JTM Youth and Adult Employment Agency (Ballymena)
24. JTM Youth and Adult Employment Agency (Coleraine)
25. JTM Youth and Adult Employment Agency (Londonderry)
26. JTM Youth and Adult Employment Agency (other areas)
27. Larne Skills Development Ltd
28. LETS Training and Employment Ltd
29. Network Personnel Ltd
30. North City Training Ltd
31. North Lancs Training Group Ltd
32. Peter Mark School of Hairdressing
33. Post Office Ltd
34. Protocol Skills (Belfast)
35. Protocol Skills (Londonderry)
36. Protocol Skills (Newry)
37. Royal Mail Training Section
38. Seven Towers Training Ltd
39. Sperrin Lakeland H&SC Trust
40. SX3 Training Solutions Centre



41. The Link Works
42. TTC Training
43. Tyrone Training Services
44. Wade Training Armagh
45. Wade Training Portadown
45. Worknet Jobskills
47. Workscene Training Organisation
48. WRTC

### **Community Providers**

49. A&D Training Services
50. Advance Training and Development
51. BCW Training Ltd
52. Belfast Central Training Ltd
53. Brookfield Business School
54. Clanrye Employment and Training Services
55. Coalisland Training Services Ltd
56. Cookstown Training
57. DDA Training Services Ltd
58. Derry Youth and Community Workshop
59. Impact Training (NI) Ltd
60. Jennymount Training Services/Hair Academy
61. Loughview Training College
62. Mari Group Ltd
63. Maydown Youth Training Project
64. North Down Training Ltd
65. Orchard Training Services Ltd
66. Oriel Training Services
67. Shantallow Training Services Ltd
68. Southern Group Enterprises
69. Southern ITEC Ltd
70. Springvale Training Ltd
71. Strabane Training Services Ltd
72. Ulidia Training Services Ltd
73. Workforce Training Services Ltd

### **Further Education Colleges**

74. Armagh College of Further Education
75. Belfast Institute Training & Employment Services
76. Castlereagh College of FE
77. Causeway Institute of FHE '99
78. College Training and Employment Centre
79. Customised Training Services Ltd
80. Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
81. Department of Agriculture Greenmount DARD
82. East Antrim Institute
83. East Down Institute T.E.S.
84. East Tyrone College of FE
85. Fermanagh College

86. Lisburn Institute
87. Newry and Kilkeel Institute
88. North Down and Ards Institute (ITEC)
89. North East Institute of Further and Higher Education
90. Omagh College
91. Training Direct NWIFHE
92. Upper Bann Institute of Further and Higher Education

### **Sectoral Training Councils**

93. Blackwater House
94. Construction Industry Training Board
95. Electrical Training (NI) Ltd
96. Engineering Training Council (Glass Processing)
97. Engineering Training Council (Telecommunication)
98. Engineering Training Council (Engineering)
99. Food and Drink Training Council (NI)
100. Hastings Hotels
101. Momentum
102. Printing and Packaging Training Council
103. Tourism Training Trust (NI) Ltd
104. Transport Training Services Ltd

## Jobskills Quality Management System (JQMS) Standards

JQMS Standards	Description
<b>Strategic Management</b>	the organisation has a clear purpose and direction
<b>Quality Management</b>	a quality system ensures that clients', trainees' and staff needs are met
<b>Marketing</b>	the needs of the organisation's clients and trainees are identified, and training services are effectively promoted
<b>Staffing</b>	the structure, level, and type of staffing is appropriate for the training services provided
<b>Staff Development</b>	staff development provision meets organisational and individual development needs
<b>Equal Opportunities</b>	equal opportunities are ensured for all clients, trainees and staff
<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	there is a safe and healthy environment for all clients, trainees, staff and visitors
<b>Premises &amp; Equipment</b>	premises, facilities, equipment, and materials are appropriate to the training services provided
<b>Communication and Administration</b>	communication and administration arrangements meet the needs of external bodies, clients, trainees and staff
<b>Financial Management</b>	the organisation is financially sound and can make a reliable provision
<b>Guidance</b>	the initial needs of individual trainees are identified, individual training plans are formulated, progress is reviewed, and support is provided where needed
<b>Programme Design</b>	outcomes and content of programmes are relevant; form and structure encourage access and are responsive to needs; training and assessment methods are appropriate to the aims and purposes of the programmes
<b>Programme Delivery</b>	training is purposeful and there is attention to the needs of individuals; the methods used are appropriate, emphasise activity and responsibility, and are varied
<b>Assessment for Certification</b>	assessment instruments allow evidence of all candidates' sustained competence to be gathered; the evidence conforms with the standards required by the awarding body for the award; assessment is internally verified; awarding body requirements for external verification are met; there is an appeals system

## Jobskills Funding Levels (Revised May 2001)

There are four main types of funding under the Jobskills programme. These are Training Allowances, Training Fees, Output-related Funding and Other Allowances. The levels of funding available, as outlined in Jobskills Operational Guidelines, are detailed below.

### 1. Training Allowances

Training Allowances are paid to non-employed trainees in relation to their participation on the Access and Traineeship strands of the Jobskills programme. Training Allowances are not paid to employed trainees (inc all Modern Apprenticeships), who receive a wage from their employer which is at least equivalent to the Training Allowance or in line with Minimum Wage requirements. The amounts payable are:

#### Access and Traineeship

All non-employed 16 and 17 year old trainees must be paid a fixed weekly training allowance of £40. A non-employed trainee aged 18 or over will receive a benefit-based training allowance which is paid directly to the trainee by the Social Security Agency.

### 2. Training Fees & Output-related Funding

Training Fees are payable to Training Organisations in relation to each week of trainee participation on the Access and Traineeship strands of the Jobskills programme. The level of fee and the number of weeks for which it is paid varies in relation to the specific needs of the trainee group involved and the occupational area in which training is undertaken.

No Training Fees are paid in relation to Modern Apprenticeship trainees, all funding under this strand of the programme is Output-related.

Output-related funds are paid to Training Organisations on the achievement, by trainees, of NVQ and Key Skills qualifications and/or subsequent sustained employment (for a continuous period of 13 weeks) after leaving the programme. The level of output-related funding differs across the various strands of the programme. While all Modern Apprenticeship funding is output-related, the level of funding on the Access and Traineeship strands represents 30 and 40 per cent respectively of the total funding available to TOs.

Amounts payable are as follows:

Access							
Client Group	Net Weekly Training Fee (£)		Output-related Funding (£)		Trainee Bonus (£)		Training weeks Supported
	Initial Assessment Period (13 Weeks)	After Initial Period	Qualification	Employment /progression /FE	After 13 weeks	After 52 weeks	
Special Needs	80	55	1,000 max	300	50	100	52 min
Disabled	80	65	1,000 max	300	50	100	156 max

Traineeship				
Occupational Grouping	Net Weekly Training Fee (£)	Output-related Funding (£)		Training weeks Supported
		NVQ & Key Skill	Employment	
A	25	600	300	60
B	35	1,010	500	72

A supplement of £30 per week may be paid in respect of a trainee with a disability, where this is identified by a Special Needs Careers Officer/Disablement Employment Adviser, or a Training Organisation can demonstrate that additional funding is necessary to provide training. The supported weeks for a trainee with a disability may also be extended by up to 26 weeks on the recommendation of the Special Needs Careers Officer/Disablement Employment Adviser.

On the Modern Apprenticeship strand, where all trainees are employed, payments are made on a starts and output basis. Output payments reflect the continuance of trainees in training (paid after 26 and 52 weeks) and the achievement of qualifications. Two funding structures are operated, dependent upon whether the trainee has entered directly into a Modern Apprenticeship or progressed from the Traineeship strand of the programme.

Modern Apprenticeships (direct entry)		
Stage Payments (Output-related funding)	Occupational Group	
	A (£)	B (£)
Start Payment	400	500
On completion of 26 weeks	600	1,000
On completion of 52 weeks	600	1,000
Key Skills	500	800
NVQ Level 2	600	1,000
NVQ Level 3	1,700	4,000

A supplement may be paid in respect of an apprentice with a disability of £390 for trainees in Occupational Group A and £490 in Occupational Group B.

Modern Apprenticeships (progressing from Traineeship)		
Stage Payments (Output-related funding)	Occupational Group	
	A (£)	B (£)
Start Payment	250	400
On completion of 26 weeks	250	400
On completion of 52 weeks	350	600
NVQ Level 3 and Key Skills	1,350	2,400

A supplement may be paid in respect of an apprentice with a disability of £390 for trainees in Occupational Group A and £490 in Occupational Group B.

### 3. Other Allowances

Under the Jobskills programme non-employed trainees are reimbursed by their Training Organisations for training related expenses. Training Organisations are, in turn, recouped these expenses by the Department.

Eligible expenses include travel, lodging and childcare costs. The levels of Other Allowances available are:

### 4. Travel Costs

Travel costs are refunded to trainees who incur weekly travel costs over £3, the refund being the excess over £3 to a maximum of £47 per week. Exceptional travel costs in excess of £50 per week can only be refunded where written approval is obtained from the local Job Centre Manager.

The amount to be refunded is based upon the cost of return travel between home or lodgings and the training location by the most economic and convenient means. Where public travel is available, costs reimbursed are limited to the cheapest cost of using public transport.

### 5. Childcare Payments

The maximum amount of financial assistance per trainee per week is:

No of Children	Registered Childminder		Relative	
	Full-time (£)	Out of School (£)	Full-Time (£)	Out of School (£)
First Child	60	35	35	20
Two or more Children	100	60	60	35

## 6. Lodging Allowance

A trainee is eligible for lodging allowance in respect of accommodation which is not of a furnished/unfurnished letting if:

- the cost of daily travel is less economic than lodging allowance; and
- the trainee has had to move away from home for reasons directly connected with training.

Applications for lodging allowance up to £50 may be authorised by the Training Organisation. Those in excess of £50 must be referred to the local Job Centre manager for approval.

## List of NIAO Reports

Title	NIA/HC No.	Date Published
<b>2003</b>		
The Sheep Annual Premium Scheme	NIA 75/02	6 February 2003
The PFI Contract for the Education and Library Board's New Computerised Accounting System	NIA 99/02	20 March 2003
Areas of Special Scientific Interest	NIA103/02	27 March 2003
Financial Auditing and Reporting: 2001/02	NIA 107/02	2 April 2003
The Use of Operating Theatres in the Northern Health and Personal Social Services	NIA111/02	10 April 2003
Investigation of Suspected Fraud in the Water Service	HC 735	26 June 2003
Management of Industrial Sickness Absence	HC 736	1 July 2003
Encouraging Take-Up of Benefits by Pensioners	HC 737	3 July 2003
<b>2004</b>		
Navan Centre	HC 204	29 January 2004
The Private Finance Initiative: A Review of the Funding and Management of Three Projects in the Health Sector	HC 205	5 February 2004
De Lorean: The Recovery of Public Funds	HC 287	12 February 2004
Local Management of Schools	HC 297	19 February 2004
The Management of Surplus Land and Property in the Health Estate	HC 298	26 February 2004
Recoupment of Drainage Infrastructure Costs	HC 614	8 June 2004
Use of Consultants	HC 641	10 June 2004
Introducing Gas Central Heating in Housing Executive Homes	HC 725	1 July 2004





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