



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

ETEC (Sunderland) Limited



SUMMARY

ETEC (Sunderland) Limited exists to serve the training needs of the local community in a deprived area. Inclusive learning and equality of opportunity are at the centre of all of the company's activities. There are strong links with support agencies and the company is active in developing imaginative projects to meet the training and employment needs of all participants. The company's staff provide good support to trainees throughout their training programmes and often maintain close links with them after completion of their training. Induction courses are offered most weeks of the year, enabling trainees to start their training promptly. Enthusiastic staff are well deployed but links between on- and off-the-job training are poor and subcontracted training is not monitored and evaluated systematically. Management of the programmes in agriculture and care is not effective and problems which existed under the previous management in information technology have not yet been resolved. Assessment of basic and key skills is inadequate and trainees' progress reviews lack consistency and appropriate target-setting.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4
Construction	3
Business administration	4
Retailing & customer service	3
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Health, care & public services	5
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured weekly induction programme
- ◆ good job-search facilities
- ◆ effective community links
- ◆ committed and supportive staff
- ◆ open management style
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ strong commitment to equal opportunities

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ underdeveloped assessment and training in basic and key skills
- ◆ poor monitoring of subcontracted training provision
- ◆ lack of formal quality assurance procedures
- ◆ lack of detail and rigour in trainees' progress reviews
- ◆ poor management of programmes in agriculture and care
- ◆ inadequate training in information technology



INTRODUCTION

1. ETEC (Sunderland) Limited (ETEC) is a registered company based in the Hendon area of Sunderland. It provides youth and adult training programmes funded by Sunderland City Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the New Deal full-time education and training, voluntary sector and environment task force options funded by the Employment Service. The company has its roots in the East Community Association established in 1947 to address unemployment in the area arising from the decline of the main local industries of shipbuilding and mining. Subsequently, East Community Association Enterprises Ltd was formed which offered programmes in social and youth work and construction trades. Its successor was established in 1991 as East Training Education and Community Ltd and is currently trading as ETEC (Sunderland) Limited. Many local projects are undertaken, including some with funding from the European Social Fund and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). The company recruits most of its trainees from the local area of Hendon and the East End of the city, although some work placements are outside these areas. The company's mission statement commits it to providing good training and personal development and ensuring equal opportunities for all. There are close working relationships with community and voluntary organisations which operate in the city. The company helped establish a partnership involving voluntary and community groups in Sunderland and has been involved in a range of pilot schemes with local agencies. Managers of the company secured contracts with the TEC and developed the regional quality assurance system required by training and enterprise councils in the Northeast.

2. The company offers training programmes in seven occupational areas and attempts to meet all demands for training despite small numbers of participants in several cases. The company refers to all those in training as participants to avoid distinguishing between the various funding sources which support them. Its training centre in Hudson House contains facilities for training in business administration, information technology and community work. A refreshment area has recently been created on the ground floor of the building. The Lombard Street site is five minutes walk away and contains construction workshops and training facilities for sport and recreation, care, and basic and key skills. A dedicated induction room and offices for support and training staff are located within these units. The company holds contracts with the TEC to provide work-based learning for adults, basic employability, foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, other training for young people, life skills training and training for those with learning support needs. The Employment Service contracts directly with the company. There are 279 participants on programmes, of whom 23 are modern apprentices, 63 are adults and 114 are following New Deal options. The remainder are on other work-based training programmes. The company operates in partnership with a community work assessment consortium in the Northeast of England to provide SRB-funded assessment for 31 trainees in community work NVQs at levels 2 to 4. Link officers are employed by the company to monitor subcontracted training in horticulture, retailing and warehousing. Through



subcontractual arrangements the company provides non-government-funded training courses for other agencies in general construction operations, care and call centre techniques.

3. The company's premises are on the south side of the River Wear and most participants are attracted from areas nearby. Sunderland is a city with high unemployment, averaging 9 per cent, compared with the national average of 4.2 per cent. In Hendon and the East End area of the city, the current rate is considerably higher, with 22.6 per cent unemployment among men and 7.4 per cent among women and compared with an average of 9.6 per cent among men and 3.1 per cent among women across the city. Fewer than 10 per cent of school leavers go directly into employment and 52 per cent remain in full-time education, compared with 68 per cent nationally. Twelve per cent of school leavers are involved in work-based training, compared with a national average of 7 per cent. Although the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above has improved steadily in the Sunderland area over the past four years, it has reached only 38.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. In two schools local to the company's catchment area, only 13 per cent of leavers are achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, although 90 per cent do achieve five GCSEs at grade G or above.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The company's senior management developed the self-assessment report in consultation with all of the staff. The report followed the quality statements in *Raising the Standard* and included an action plan, which was cross-referenced to sources of evidence. Updated statistical data and the most recent action plan were provided during the inspection. Some important issues were not referred to in the report and the grading was not accurate. Inspectors awarded a higher grade for equal opportunities but awarded lower grades for agriculture, business administration, leisure, sport and travel, health, care and public services, and quality assurance. Owing to the very small numbers of participants in engineering and hospitality, the inspection did not review the provision which is funded under the New Deal voluntary sector option.

5. A team of nine inspectors spent a total of 36 days at ETEC during November 2000. Inspectors observed and met 27 participants at the company's training centres and interviewed 41 trainees at their work placements. Training advisors and link officers accompanied inspectors to 25 work placements and one subcontracted college of further education. Inspectors interviewed a total of 26 employers' representatives and staff at the colleges. They interviewed three board directors plus senior managers and other company staff. They examined management and individual trainees' files, portfolios, data on progression, external and internal verifiers' reports, records of audits and minutes of meetings.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		2				2
Construction			5	1		6
Business administration			5			5
Leisure, sport & travel		2	2			4
Health, care & public services			2	1		3
Foundation for work		1	1			2
Total	0	5	15	2	0	22

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

Grade 4

6. Of the 31 New Deal clients following the environment task force option, 22 are working towards two units of an NVQ at level 2 in amenity horticulture, eight are



working towards two units of an NVQ at level 2 in environmental conservation and one is working towards a national skills profile in horticulture. The choice of units depends on the work placements available and the time of year when clients start training. All participants attend a one-week induction programme with ETEC at the start of their programme and this is followed by an induction to the workplace. Most participants undertake a 26-week training programme. The four subcontracted work-placement providers, who undertake off-the-job training through day release, employ vocationally experienced and qualified trainers, assessors and internal verifiers. Work experience includes the development and management of a variety of conservation sites, maintenance of parkland and open spaces and the restoration of churchyards. Additional training in theory is provided at times when weather conditions are unfavourable for outside work. ETEC's staff, who monitor the work placements for the quality of work experience offered and the effectiveness of the off-the-job training, undertake progress reviews with trainees fortnightly in the workplace. The self-assessment report correctly identified on-the-job training resources as a strength but inspectors considered clients' achievement rates to be a weakness. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good facilities for on-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ competent and experienced training staff
- ◆ additional qualifications achieved by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace
- ◆ poorly planned off-the-job training
- ◆ narrow range of evidence in trainees' portfolios
- ◆ low achievement rates

7. Well-resourced work placements at a good variety of sites offer a wide range of horticultural and conservation activities. These include a large city-centre park which has areas of formal planting, amenity grassland, play equipment and spaces managed for wildlife interest. Work activities vary according to the season and allow a comprehensive range of activities to take place. Some work-placement providers enable clients to work on sites away from their main base to extend their experience. Work-placement providers make appropriate transport arrangements for clients to ensure that they arrive safely and on time. Ready access to high-quality and well-maintained equipment is appreciated by clients, who have adequate opportunities to become proficient in its use. Trainers are competent and appropriately qualified. They use their experience effectively to link training in theory to everyday working practice, which helps to increase motivation. Many



clients undertake additional training which allows them to gain more qualifications than those specified in their individual training plans. These include certification for first aid and the use of specialist horticultural equipment such as shredders and chippers. Some clients on conservation programmes participate in a one-week residential training programme in conservation skills in the Lake District and those on horticultural activities are given a one-week residential training programme in personal effectiveness, which includes problem-solving, communication and self-management.

8. Some opportunities for assessment are missed. This results in some clients who are capable of achieving more than two NVQ units as specified on their individual training plan not reaching their full potential. Client's existing skills and qualifications are not taken into account in their individual training plans. For example, a client who had achieved an NVQ at level 1 in amenity horticulture on a previous training programme was given exactly the same individual training plan as a client with no horticultural experience or qualifications. At one work placement, there was little use of work-based evidence to enable clients to achieve their qualifications and most assessment was conducted during off-the-job training sessions. Day-release off-the-job training is poorly planned and lacks a structured schedule. Clients are not aware of their progress and some have not gained sufficient background knowledge for them to complete outstanding assessments or to complete their programmes on time. Some clients tried to undertake assessments before they had gained the necessary theoretical knowledge. Portfolios lack a good range of evidence and rely heavily on job sheets and written answers to questions designed to test theoretical knowledge. They contain very little additional evidence such as photographs and original work. Many clients showed little understanding of assessment procedures and played little part in the identification and gathering of evidence. Only 20 per cent of clients who started horticulture and conservation training in 1998 achieved their target qualification. Although this figure rose slightly, to 28 per cent of clients starting in the last contractual year, the achievement rate is low.

Construction

Grade 3

9. A total of 97 participants are following training leading to NVQs at levels 1 to 3 in construction trades, with 57 in painting and decorating, 20 in bricklaying, 13 in general construction occupations and seven in wood occupations. Fifty-seven of the total participants are trainees on programmes for young people, comprising 40 on other work-based youth training programmes and 17 advanced modern apprentices. Twenty-two are trainees on work-based learning for adults and 18 are New Deal clients, of whom 16 are on the environment task force option and two are on the full-time education and training option. A total of 55 trainees are placed full time with an employer or are engaged on external project work and attend the company training centre for off-the-job training one day each week. Those without work attend the centre full time. All wood occupation, painting and decorating and brickwork trainees working towards the NVQ at level 3 receive this training from two subcontracted local colleges of further education. Most assessments take place

off the job, with additional evidence increasingly being taken from the workplace. The company's work-placement officers and vocational tutors monitor trainees' progress. All seven tutors in construction trades are vocationally qualified and hold assessors' awards. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report and identified others. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good opportunities for work placements and projects
- ◆ opportunities for progression to employment with the company for former trainees
- ◆ development of leadership skills in trainees
- ◆ well-resourced subcontracted training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low retention and achievement rates on youth programmes
- ◆ poor training and assessment in key skills
- ◆ inadequate resources at the training centre
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment

GOOD PRACTICE

A trainee was placed on remand in a local young offenders' institution towards the end of his NVQ programme. He had completed all the practical elements of his programme but needed to finish some aspects of knowledge of the job. His trainer contacted the institution and arranged with the staff to provide the final elements of the trainee's training by post. The trainee was eventually released without charge, training was completed and all the targets in the individual training plan were achieved.

10. A good variety of work placements and community projects are used to help trainees gain appropriate on-the-job experience. Many participants are on work placements with organisations which have previously converted trainees on youth training programmes to employed modern apprentices. Local community programmes give trainees good opportunities to gain useful work experience, which is also of benefit to local residents. Trainees are encouraged to participate in work placements or community projects but only half do so, since no additional financial incentives are offered to them. In an area of high unemployment and severe social deprivation, ETEC's staff work hard to convince trainees of the long-term benefits of unpaid work experience. All work placements are carefully assessed so that they are able to offer experience consistent with the trainees' programmes of study. Several long-term unemployed trainees have successfully gained posts within the construction department of the company and those who have not completed all their training are encouraged to finish it and to undertake further study to qualify as trainers and assessors. More experienced trainees are encouraged to plan and manage community projects as part of their training. Trainers support trainees well and help them to identify when the work they are doing meets elements of their study programme. Experience in dealing with others is appropriately used towards portfolio-building. An employed New Deal client was supervising the work of an unemployed client and two youth trainees during redecoration of a local community centre. This experience not only provided valuable evidence towards his portfolio but also raised the self-esteem of all participants. For trainees working towards an NVQ at level 3, the subcontracted



training at the colleges is well resourced, with spacious workshops and assessment areas providing ready access to good quality materials, tools and machinery. Trainees are able to check their own progress through clear monitoring sheets displayed in workshops. All trainees have access to dedicated and well-resourced areas and the college's staff encourage them to extend their understanding of the topics being considered.

11. Retention and achievement rates are typical of the occupational area. Of the 17 clients following the environment task force option, 15 achieved all the targets in their individual training plans. Fifty-five per cent of those on adult work-based training have achieved all the targets in their individual training plans. Over the past three years, the 244 adults who have started training have between them achieved 140 NVQs. However, retention and achievement rates on youth programmes are lower, with only 23 per cent of trainees achieving all the targets in their individual training plans and nearly 66 per cent leaving without a full NVQ award. Training in key skills is undertaken by occupational trainers, but it is inadequate and not assessed against published standards. For advanced modern apprentices, development of key skills is undertaken by ETEC only towards the end of the training programmes. ETEC's staff have little understanding of what is required in key skills, or how to assess them. They have identified in their action plan the need to accelerate developments in this aspect of training so that participants are not disadvantaged. Training resources in company workshops are not always adequate to meet trainees' needs. Trainees on work placements are not routinely provided with sufficient tools and rely on being able to borrow from tradespeople they are placed with to enable them to complete tasks. In the brickwork shop, bricks are overused, with new ones being available only for assessed work. Used bricks with damaged edges and coated in mortar make good facework difficult to achieve. The quality of mortar is poor and trainees have to demolish and clean their own work. This is time consuming and often demotivating. Activities undertaken during work experience are seldom linked to off-the-job training. Most employers only have a superficial understanding of NVQs and there has been no attempt to link unit content into something that can be readily understood by employers and workplace supervisors. Progress reviews in the workplace fail to relate the trainees' current experience to their off-the-job training. Few attempts are made to encourage employers to allow trainees to experience work which will supplement the requirements of their NVQ or training plan. Increasingly, workplace evidence is being collected to aid portfolio-building, but it consists mainly of photographs. Some work-based assessment has been undertaken but the practice is not common.

Business administration

Grade 4

12. A total of 32 participants are registered with ETEC, of whom 12 are working towards NVQ at levels 1 and 2 in information technology and the remainder are working towards NVQs at levels 1 to 3 in business administration. The company provides most of the training but for nine young people it is subcontracted to three other training providers. One trainee on other work-based training for adults is



working towards an NVQ at level 2 in business administration and three are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in information technology. There are 10 New Deal clients on the voluntary sector option, of whom four are working towards NVQ units in business administration and six are working towards units in information technology. All business administration trainees are in work placements, mainly in health, public service or voluntary sector organisations. Participants are visited in the workplace at least monthly and most attend the Hudson House training centre fortnightly for off-the-job training and portfolio-building. All information technology trainees are based in Hudson House. Two of ETEC's full-time assessors, assisted by four other members of staff, provide the training and assessment. Trainees are reviewed every eight weeks and New Deal clients every four weeks. The self-assessment report provided a helpful basis for inspection and had identified problems with training and assessment in information technology. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ supportive and enthusiastic employers of administration trainees
- ◆ good teamworking between trainees, trainers and employers
- ◆ high retention and achievement rate of business administration New Deal clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ fragmented training and assessment for key skills
- ◆ lack of formal systems to monitor the progress of trainees
- ◆ slow progress of trainees in information technology
- ◆ lack of work placements in information technology
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates in information technology programmes

13. Off-the-job training takes place in a recently refurbished and well-resourced training centre. Teaching accommodation is spacious and well furnished with good social spaces next to it. Trainees have ready access to up-to-date, networked computers. The information technology co-ordinator was not appointed until early November 2000, but nevertheless is making progress in addressing issues relating to training and assessment. The staff, who are well qualified and experienced, take a very positive attitude towards their trainees. This contributes to the general enthusiasm and motivation of all participants. Staff work hard to find full-time employment for the trainees despite difficult local labour market conditions. Business administration trainees benefit from well-resourced and good work placements and are well supported by their sponsoring employers. Their work placements provide extensive sources of naturally occurring evidence, which are well used. Workplace supervisors encourage trainees to take on increased



responsibility in their jobs and are particularly influential in developing trainees' confidence and interpersonal skills. Good teamwork and effective communication between all parties involved with the business administration trainees has helped them become accustomed to, and established in, their workplace. Trainees are clear how their job role relates to their intended qualification. Trainees receive frequent visits in the workplace from their ETEC trainer and good links are maintained with workplace supervisors. Achievement and retention rates of New Deal business administration clients are good, with all nine who left last year after completing 20 weeks or more on the programme achieving all the targets in their individual training plans. Since 1998, 10 youth trainees have started work-based training programmes in business administration and, of these, six gained sustainable employment. In the same period, nine adults started work-based training in business administration and four secured employment.

14. Despite the good quality of the work experience undertaken by trainees, opportunities for work-based training and assessment are missed. Training in the workplace is often unstructured, and although qualified assessors supervise trainees at work they have no involvement in assessment. There is no overall plan for training, assessment and internal verification to take account of the good learning opportunities provided by employers. On-the-job training is not planned systematically and individual training plans are not modified regularly to record experience gained. Trainees are not routinely set challenging targets. Training in key skills is the responsibility of a separate department within ETEC but there is little systematic planning or target-setting for the development of key skills. Workplace supervisors have little awareness of key skills requirements and are concerned that the lack of progress with key skills is hampering the trainees' completion of modern apprenticeships. There is no systematic approach to the evaluation of the training programmes and the setting of short-term goals is not consistent. Although there is good contact between trainees and workplace supervisors, copies of off-the-job training plans and details of training carried out are not routinely shared with employers.

15. From late 1999 to October 2000, training and assessment in information technology was poor. Training was ineffective and reviews did not give a full account of trainees' progress. Few trainees completed any units of the NVQ they were working towards and very few placements were found. None of the current trainees have been on work placement outside the company. Retention and achievement rates of participants on information technology programmes are poor. Between April 1999 and March 2000, of the 17 New Deal information technology clients who left after completing 20 weeks or more on the programme, only two achieved all the targets on their individual training plans. Since 1998, 38 trainees have started on work-based training programmes for adults in information technology, of whom five are still in training. Of the 33 leavers, seven went into employment and the remainder left without achieving a qualification. The company has taken measures to address the problems associated with these programmes and recently appointed a new co-ordinator. A good, new networked computer system has been installed. Trainees are undertaking real work within most of ETEC's departments under appropriate supervision. Databases are being

built, spreadsheets developed and various word processing and desktop publishing tasks undertaken. The company is aware that this does not give the breadth of experience of a work placement but recognises that this is a first step in preparing trainees for work experience. Applications for extensions to training programmes are being made by the company to allow trainees the opportunity to complete their qualification.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

16. All participants are New Deal clients following the voluntary sector option. Fifteen retail clients are working towards two level 2 NVQ units, as are eight warehousing clients. A one-week induction at the company's training centre is undertaken by all new starters and includes sessions on health and safety and equal opportunities. Most work placements are charity shops which offer placements when required. Clients are reviewed monthly and ETEC's link officers make further pastoral visits every two or three weeks. Those with additional support needs have individual mentoring to help them achieve their full potential. Assessment is subcontracted to a local organisation and there is regular communication between assessors and ETEC's link staff. Clients undertake job search at the training centre and have access to the Internet to look at job vacancies as they are posted. The self-assessment report was evaluative and inspectors found it realistic. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

A New deal client with no retail experience successfully completed her training programme gaining two units of the retail NVQ level 2. She applied for a job at a new prestigious department store and after four days of rigorous interviews was appointed as a full-time sales assistant. She believes her confidence had been boosted as a result of her experience on the training programme. Employment Service staff arranged an awards ceremony at the Sunderland Stadium of Light to celebrate her success and that of other clients, which was widely reported in the local press.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ supportive and involved employers
- ◆ frequent and effective visits by training staff
- ◆ additional qualifications offered and gained
- ◆ good achievement of targets on individual training plans

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient opportunities for up-to-date training in some work placements
- ◆ no external learning resources available for clients
- ◆ poor internal verification practices

17. Employers are enthusiastic and offer extensive opportunities, especially to clients with additional learning and support needs. On- and off-the-job training is co-ordinated carefully and communication between all parties is good. Employers are fully involved with ETEC's link staff in the progress-review process. Many clients gain sustainable employment and others return to work as volunteers because they enjoyed their training so much. Assessors review clients' portfolios monthly and help them to identify other potential sources of evidence. Experienced

and well-qualified link staff provide effective pastoral support and many clients benefit from additional visits aimed at increasing their confidence and self-esteem. Staff are available by telephone and respond quickly to requests for visits. Individual training plans are used effectively as working documents and are routinely updated. The company provides a minibus to encourage attendance and to collect those with travel difficulties. Many clients achieve additional qualifications, for example in the use of fork-lift trucks, which enhance job prospects in the warehousing industry. Other certificated courses, in first aid, stock control, cash handling and security, broaden trainees' learning experience and give enhanced opportunities for full-time employment. Achievement rates of clients who gain qualifications and experience are satisfactory, with a fifth gaining employment and one third achieving all the targets on their individual training plan. Nearly a half of all clients left early before achieving all the targets on their individual training plan.

GOOD PRACTICE

A New Deal client with no retail experience and who had been unemployed for a year successfully completed her training gaining two units of the NVQ in retailing at level 2. The client applied for a job at a new prestigious department store and after four days of rigorous interviews, was appointed as a full-time sales assistant. The Employment Service arranged an awards ceremony to celebrate her success and that of other clients, which was widely reported in the local press.

18. Monitoring of subcontractors is ineffective and the company's action plans have recognised this as an issue. Meetings have already taken place to introduce more monitoring and evaluation of subcontractors but these are not yet established. There is good communication between ETEC and subcontractors' staff but it is informal and no records are maintained to indicate what was discussed and what actions were agreed. There is no routine observation of training and assessment. Internal verification lacks rigour, with no observation of the training process undertaken and a lack of formal feedback to the assessors. Some work-placement providers are unable to provide sufficient opportunities for clients to gather assessment evidence. Some retail systems used by work-placement providers are dated and although staff have raised their concerns about this and have identified the issues in action plans, the situation remains unresolved. As a result, some clients will not achieve their planned units and will need to consider other options. Opportunities for clients to experience cash handling and dealing with returned or exchange goods are restricted in some work placements. Clients are not systematically provided with learning materials at their work placement and opportunities to extend their understanding are missed. Learning packs to support clients to achieve their learning goals are underdeveloped.

Leisure, sport & travel

Grade 3

19. NVQs in sport and recreation and in playwork have been offered by ETEC for six years but the number of trainees is low and has decreased over the past two years. There are six participants currently in training, of whom two are New Deal clients and one is a youth trainee working towards level 2 NVQ units in sport and recreation, operational services. A modern apprentice is working towards an NVQ at level 3 in supervision. A New Deal client and an adult on other work-based training are working towards level 3 NVQ units in playwork. Participants undertake training in fitness centres, healthy-living resource centres, ski-centres and local youth and community centres. They all take part weekly in progress-review and portfolio-building sessions, with work-based assessors being responsible for the assessment. A qualified full-time member of ETEC's staff acts



as programme co-ordinator and internal verifier. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and identified others. They awarded a lower grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of well-equipped work placements
- ◆ frequent in-depth portfolio-building and progress reviews involving workplace supervisors
- ◆ good portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of medium-term planning to improve achievement rates
- ◆ schemes of work not systematically recorded
- ◆ poor achievement rates on some programmes

20. Work placements are of a good standard and provide extensive opportunities for trainees to work with a variety of clients. Work-based assessors are experienced in the industry and hold a wide range of additional qualifications, providing appropriate role models for trainees. Additional short-term work placements are used effectively to broaden trainees' experience of working in different types of sport facilities. To broaden their experience, some trainees take on additional project-management responsibilities, such as accounting for income-generation activities and organising football tournaments. One trainee has drawn up short lists of job applicants in preparation for interview by the centre manager. Relationships between participants, work-based assessors and staff are open and productive. All work together closely to support trainees' achievement of NVQs. The internal verifier makes frequent visits and participants are enthusiastic and confident about the content of their portfolios and training experiences. Regular progress reviews contribute to participants' awareness of their progress and the action needed to achieve all the targets on their individual training plans. Each work placement has a nominated work-based assessor and all assessment is undertaken in the workplace. Weekly portfolio-building and progress-review sessions with the internal verifier encourage trainees' progress and work-based assessors are regularly involved in progress-review sessions with the programme co-ordinator. There is good assessment practice covering the required theoretical knowledge and skills. Assessors complete detailed assessment plans and a wide range of potential sources of evidence are discussed with trainees. Observation is routinely used as part of the assessment process and assessors provide constructive and positive feedback to trainees. The internal verifier regularly undertakes observation of assessments. Portfolios are well organised and contain good evidence supplemented by witness testimony and photographs.

21. There is little evidence of medium- and long-term planning of training. The small number of trainees spread across a wide range of programmes has resulted in a reluctance to engage in systematic and carefully recorded planning of training. Planning takes place on a case-by-case basis, structured around weekly reviews with supervisors present and progress reviews held at six-weekly intervals. On- and off-the-job training is not formally specified in training plans. Demanding short-term targets are agreed with trainees each week but standardised documents are not used to record decisions and outcomes. Achievement rates are variable and have declined. Since 1997, 12 youth trainees have entered sport and recreation training but only two have completed a full NVQ. Since 1998, 14 New Deal clients have started training, of whom three have achieved all the targets on their individual training plan and two are still in training. Six clients left early without achieving all the targets on their individual training plan or gaining employment. Since 1997, 17 trainees have entered playwork training, 10 have completed NVQs, and none remain in training. Since 1998, 10 New Deal clients have started training in playwork, three have achieved all the targets on their individual training plan and two are still in training. Five clients left early without achieving all the targets on their individual training plan or gaining employment.

Health, care & public services

Grade 5

GOOD PRACTICE

During a session of training in theory, one trainee mentioned that at his work placement there was a resident who suffered from methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), saying he did not understand what this meant. The co-ordinator immediately used the opportunity to help the group develop their understanding even though it was not part of the planned session. This demonstrated that the trainer had current knowledge of the condition and recognised how important it was that trainees understood it. She was responsive to their needs and able to offer accurate and useful advice which assisted trainees to practise safely.

22. The company has a large private training contract with a local agency and offers a small amount of government-funded training, which is the subject of this report. There are 10 government-funded trainees working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care. Seven are on TEC-funded youth programmes and one is an adult trainee. The other two are New Deal clients, one on the full-time education and training option and one on the voluntary sector option. Trainees meet the company's induction team before being referred to the care co-ordinators. Most trainees complete a week-long induction programme at ETEC's premises, during which time their literacy, numeracy and occupational skills are assessed. Further induction also takes place at their work placement. Following a reorganisation of the staff, two care training co-ordinators job share. Both are qualified assessors with current occupational qualifications and experience. A designated training room at ETEC's premises is provided for care trainees. It is equipped with learning materials which can be accessed at any time. Trainees are offered the opportunity to attend short certificated courses on food hygiene, first aid and moving and handling. One co-ordinator is responsible for all internal verification and there are procedures for an annual review of assessment practices. The company hosts meetings of the local social care consortium. During preparation of the self-assessment report, ETEC included its private training in its judgements. Inspectors reviewed only the experience of the government-funded trainees and while inspectors agreed with the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, the extent of their impact on trainees' experience was underestimated in the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified further weaknesses and found the training provision poor. They awarded a lower grade than given by the company in its self-assessment report.



STRENGTHS

- ◆ awareness of career opportunities increased during training
- ◆ extensions to programmes for some disadvantaged learners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ very slow progress of trainees and clients towards achieving NVQs
- ◆ poor understanding of NVQ standards and assessment by trainees
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous co-ordination of programme
- ◆ no training and assessment in key skills
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

23. As a result of their training, some trainees have recognised their potential for the first time. New Deal clients are positively considering careers in nursing and care management and are determined to achieve their training targets. Work experience has provided trainees with good opportunities to demonstrate that they are reliable and thorough workers. Some trainees are unable to achieve all the targets on their individual training plan in the time available and ETEC has made extra resources available to encourage those who show a high level of commitment to care work. Extended personal support is provided by co-ordinators who remain in contact with trainees when they have gained regular employment.

24. All trainees and clients are making very slow progress towards achieving NVQ units and full qualifications. During work placements, assessment is infrequent and many opportunities are missed. Assessment planning lacks rigour and there is little evidence of assessment plans in portfolios. Trainees and assessors give priority to the demands of the workplace and progression is delayed. Work-based assessors are not effective in assisting trainees to progress and their feedback on written evidence lacks detail and guidance. Youth trainees lack motivation to achieve. One modern apprentice has been on programme for over three years and has not yet completed an NVQ at level 2 and a national trainee has not completed any units after being in training for 18 months. Two New Deal clients are halfway through their training and have not had one practice assessment for the two units specified on their individual training plans. Although trainees are introduced to NVQs at the start of training their understanding of the assessment process is poor. They do not play an active part in planning assessments and do not demonstrate an adequate understanding of the process. Portfolios hold very little evidence of trainees' work and contain a narrow range of evidence. Provision for developing theoretical knowledge is inadequate and not managed in a systematic manner. Although trainees are offered weekly off-the-job training at ETEC's training centre, attendance is poor and schemes of work and lesson planning need updating. There is very little individualised testing of knowledge and understanding by work-based assessors and trainees' experience is not routinely assessed and used as a basis for their individual development.



25. Visits by training co-ordinators are not effective. Agreements between work-placement providers and ETEC are informal and no effective monitoring of training is undertaken. Work-placement providers do not understand their role and responsibilities for work-based training. Progress reviews are ineffective and targets are not set. Learning resources at work placements are scarce and while the company's training room has satisfactory facilities they are little used by trainees. Weekly sessions on theory and portfolio-building are poorly attended and not linked effectively to what trainees are doing in their work placement. Portfolio-building sessions concentrate mainly on answering standardised questions rather than developing the skills needed to present evidence. Key skills have not been developed in youth training programmes. Although the company's action plans identify the need to develop key skills, trainees' individual target dates for completion are not being met. Despite active attempts to recruit trainees there has been little sustainable success. Of the 18 modern apprentices recruited since 1997, only four remain on programme. Nine were transferred by the TEC from another training provider after being on programme a year without any training but they all left shortly after the transfer. None has completed the framework and only two have completed an NVQ at level 2. Recruitment of adults is decreasing and, of those who started in 1997, 44 per cent achieved level 2 NVQs, but this has fallen to 18 per cent of those who started in 1999. Thirty per cent of leavers achieve all the targets on their individual training plans but 54 per cent of adults who started left without any qualification, although a quarter of them left to enter employment.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

26. ETEC offers youth and adult foundation for work programmes. There are 27 participants on a youth programme which is the life skills option of the Learning Gateway. The programme has been offered since December 1999 and is designed to bring young people back into education, training or employment. The average time spent on the programme is 13 weeks but the programme is flexible and can be extended to suit individual needs. The programme includes personal development activities, consideration of issues relevant to the target group, job-search sessions, work preparation and basic skills support for those with identified development needs. Two full-time youth development workers and one youth worker seconded from a local organisation for six sessions a week are involved in this work. Between December 1999 and November 2000, five trainees gained a first aid qualification, 20 per cent entered employment and 25 per cent entered further training. Two adult programmes are offered with 33 trainees on basic employability training and eight on an eight-week introductory programme from which suitable trainees are encouraged to transfer to the 21-week basic employability training programme. During the contractual year leading up to the inspection, the average length of stay was 19 weeks. Both programmes are aimed at trainees with barriers to employment although those on the basic employability training programme have a clearer idea of their development needs. Trainees on both programmes undertake at least 28 days of work experience and are expected to achieve milestones relating to health and safety, first aid and work experience. All trainees are expected to attend job-search and basic skills training where a



need has been identified. The programme is led by a full-time co-ordinator, who monitors trainees and reviews their progress in their work placement. In-house staff identify work placements and others offer basic skills support and job-search facilities. Trainees have achieved 128 milestones during the current contractual year and five trainees have gained employment. Inspectors found more strengths than the company and identified other weaknesses than those contained in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of external support agencies
- ◆ good understanding by experienced staff of trainees' needs
- ◆ imaginative development activities
- ◆ good learning environment for life skills programme
- ◆ supportive work experience for basic employability trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for developing basic skills
- ◆ ineffective action-planning in life skills programme
- ◆ insufficient work experience for life skills trainees

27. Every trainee is able to start good, developmental work experience immediately after completing a comprehensive one-week induction course. Youth and adult trainees have problems ranging from homelessness, drug misuse and health-related problems to lack of confidence, a criminal record and lack of basic skills. Staff have formed extensive and effective links with local agencies which offer practical support and preventative advice. Regular visits from local health centre representatives provide valuable advice on healthy living and police officers provide an open forum at which trainees can talk freely about matters which are of concern to them. A local college of further education provides good occupational taster sessions and other agencies give protection and guidance for trainees with problems relating to physical abuse, homelessness and addiction. Staff bring current and relevant experience to their work and are well qualified. Some have personal experience of unemployment and empathise with the client group. They have good understanding of trainees' needs, which encourages participation and good retention rates. A wide range of relevant activities are provided to engage trainees in group learning experiences as a first step to their eventual participation in mainstream training, education and employment. They include outdoor pursuits, swimming, bowling, go-karting and football. Activity days with the local army's youth team and with local fire-fighters are also arranged. Discussion groups to encourage reflection on equal opportunities, sexual health, communication skills, self-image and citizenship are held regularly. The training area is well decorated, airy and comfortable, with a spacious and well-equipped recreation area adjoining



which encourages socialising and team building. Basic employability trainees experience appropriate work placements which help them to overcome some of their identified barriers to regular employment, such as low self-esteem and low levels of basic skills. Work placements provide opportunities for socialising with the elderly, engagement in gardening, maintaining an orderly environment and stocktaking. Trainees' progress is reviewed rigorously while in their work placement and comprehensive records are maintained of the activities they undertake.

28. Opportunities to develop trainees' basic skills are sometimes missed. Youth trainees take part in few writing or reading tasks and adults usually attend the training centre only to undertake job-search activities. There are few written resources routinely employed to deepen understanding of the issues discussed and attendance at designated sessions in literacy, numeracy and basic skills is erratic. Use of flipcharts is sometimes ineffective and there are few specialist resources to assist with the development of reading skills. Reviews are regular but focus on personal development, such as socialising, timekeeping and attendance. Few developmental targets are set and little reference is made to each trainee's individual development plan. Reflection on the benefit of activities undertaken is not routinely carried out or recorded. While the life skills trainees receive good training in personal and social development they have little preparation in training for work, other than what is acquired by group visits to work-related environments and through discussion. This weakness has been caused largely by the illness of a key member of staff and the company is actively seeking to remedy the problem.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

29. The company's mission statement emphasises its commitment to local people in an area of high unemployment and social deprivation. A working party has developed a formal equal opportunities statement and a comprehensive policy on harassment, which directors have approved. There are almost equal numbers of men and women staff. People from minority ethnic groups comprise less than 1 per cent of the local population. Minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are represented on the staff. The company works with a large number of partners and has initiated many community projects aimed to help under-represented groups. All those offered training undergo a comprehensive week-long induction programme, which includes sessions on equal opportunities and diversity. Trainees are provided with copies of the company's policies on equal opportunities, complaints, grievances and harassment. Two of the strengths identified in the self-assessment were considered to be no more than normal practice but inspectors found others. The weaknesses were accurately reported and inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong commitment to equal opportunities and inclusiveness
- ◆ enhanced awareness among trainees of needs of disadvantaged groups
- ◆ supportive projects which engage trainees with complex health and social needs
- ◆ good learning resources in the life skills programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no routine review of equal opportunities with trainees or workplace supervisors
- ◆ no systematic or developmental staff training
- ◆ missed opportunities to promote equal opportunities

GOOD PRACTICE

The company is supportive of people from different cultures and is positive about diversity. During the period of Ramadan, a room was set aside for the use of staff and participants who wished to pray during this period.

30. Inclusive learning and equality of opportunity are at the centre of all of the company's activities. Directors take responsibility for ensuring staff have a good awareness of these issues as part of their everyday activity and include appropriate items at regular staff meetings. Managers have a good understanding of the wider issues surrounding inclusive learning and social regeneration. The company demonstrates a long-term commitment to disadvantaged people in the local community. It recently won a national training award for its work with the long-term unemployed. Funding sources which enable the company to establish new and creative partnerships to deliver responsive, effective community-based projects are actively and successfully sought. Monitoring data on equal opportunities are collected regularly but do not routinely guide management decisions. Directors are active in generating new ideas for projects which meet the needs of future participants. For example, a recent successful bid will enable ETEC to offer a waged option to all New Deal clients, which is critical in an area of high levels of poverty and unemployment. All staff are highly committed to working with people who experience barriers to work and training. Homeless people and those with drug and alcohol problems, criminal records and health-related needs are welcomed and well supported. Since 1997, 21 per cent of adult participants have been people with a disability. During the induction week, creative activities are carried out through the careful use of video and group exercises to raise trainees' awareness and challenge thinking about equality of opportunities. Gay and lesbian issues are dealt with sensitively. Most trainees have good short-term recall of work done during induction. Many projects and work placements involve trainees and clients working with people who have a wide range of needs, such as those with learning difficulties, those with visual impairments and ex-offenders. These experiences are very effective in raising the trainees and clients' awareness of diversity and equality of opportunity. The needs of some members of the community when trying to access work after a long period of illness or incapacity are well understood by the staff. The company funds the staffing of community projects to provide mentors for those with specific difficulties. Good learning materials for equal opportunities and diversity are used effectively in the life skills and induction sessions. The participants enjoy these sessions and they raise their awareness of current issues in the wider community. However, these materials are not routinely shared with other occupational trainers

within the company.

31. No clear agreement with subcontractors exists regarding equal opportunities at work and updating is not formally monitored. Routine monitoring of trainees' experience and their understanding of equal opportunities is not undertaken and checks are not made to ensure that their rights are protected. Although trainees have good short-term recall of material discussed during induction their medium- and long-term recall is poor. All new staff participate in a comprehensive induction session which includes equal opportunities training but further training is not systematic or developmental. Awareness of developing equal opportunities is conducted through informal discussion and during regular meetings but it is not systematically planned and does not guarantee up-to-date understanding or continuing development to take account of new issues for all staff. Opportunities are missed to promote equal opportunities and celebrate diversity in training materials and in the learning environment. There are few examples of written materials adapted for people who have reading difficulties owing to visual impairment or learning difficulties. While interpreters are available for trainees when English is not their first language, there is no work done with interpreters which seeks to engage the minority of people in the community who come from minority ethnic groups. Although most facilities are accessible to those with disabilities, wheelchair users cannot reach some areas easily.

Trainee support

Grade 2

32. Most participants are recruited through referrals by the careers service and the Employment Service, although a small number make individual applications. The company has an open-door recruitment policy. Many trainees and clients need significant support to ensure they remain on programme. The organisation emphasises meeting their needs through pastoral support. Many potential clients and trainees are long-term unemployed and specialist recruitment staff advise them and carry out their initial interview. A second interview takes place with occupational staff, at which trainees are advised about the structure and content of training programmes. On entry, trainees take part in a one-week generic induction programme, which covers appeals procedures, trainees' rights and responsibilities, team-building activities, equal opportunities, and health and safety training. Occupationally specific induction also takes place, which provides general information about the qualification to be aimed for and the programme to be undertaken. The induction to the work placement supplies details on employers' policies and working procedures. Progress reviews take place at intervals during the programme. Assessors and link workers give trainees personal counselling and advice to support them throughout their training programme. Additional support is available to those with physical and learning disabilities through the work of the recruitment, induction and job-search teams. A drop-in job-search support and resource area is available for trainees approaching the end of their training programme. Several strengths identified in the self-assessment report did not apply to this generic area. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

As an example of practical support, a driver/advisor is employed to telephone all trainees who fail to attend appointments or training. The driver/advisor collects trainees by minibus and takes them to appointments or to training if they are having transport difficulties. The minibus is also used to take trainees to off-the-job training locations which would otherwise be difficult to reach on public transport. This helps to remove transport difficulties as a barrier to participation in training.

Strengths

- ◆ good pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ comprehensive induction programme offered as and when required
- ◆ good additional support for trainees with learning difficulties
- ◆ extensive support for job search

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little formal initial assessment of trainees' existing skills
- ◆ lack of focus and targets in trainees' progress reviews

33. Management responsibility for the support of trainees is clearly understood and occupational staff recognise their responsibilities by responding quickly to trainees' needs. Carefully conducted initial interviews allow staff to match available training with the aspirations of each individual applicant. Prompt acceptance and starting on training is facilitated by the well-planned week-long induction programme being offered throughout most of the year. Topics covered are reinforced through detailed paperwork, good lesson plans, clear handouts and visual aids. Staff are very experienced and are able to motivate trainees to take an active involvement in challenging individual and group activities. During induction, training in health and safety is good and closely linked to work placements through small project exercises. Trainees are made fully aware of their rights and responsibilities and those with learning difficulties and disabilities receive appropriate additional support promptly. Link workers usually ensure that there are good links with local support agencies to help trainees with drug and alcohol problems. Speech therapy sessions are arranged with a local hospital for those with communication difficulties. Job search is introduced to all trainees during induction and helpful tutorials are held in a well-equipped drop-in resource centre. Success stories of trainees who have secured jobs are well displayed around the resource area. All trainees take part in a job-search training programme towards the end of their training. The programme includes a skills audit, curriculum vitae writing, telephone styles, letter writing and interview techniques. Trainees use the Internet regularly to research local job opportunities. A successful job-finding coach contacts local employers regularly to find out about non-advertised vacancies and to set up additional work placements. Staff often continue to support trainees into their first few weeks of employment with pastoral visits and advice. Some trainees are supported in order to complete their NVQ units after funding has expired or when they are removed from the programme for short periods.

34. Only trainees who appear at interview to have difficulties with numeracy and literacy undertake an initial assessment of their basic skills. There is no systematic assessment of basic skills for all on entry and some trainees do not receive additional help until difficulties arise during training. Key and occupational skills are not systematically assessed on entry, although those starting care programmes undertake some assessment of aptitude. Outcomes of assessment are not used



systematically to update individual training plans. Trainees' reviews take place regularly across all programmes but there is no common reporting format used within the company. Reviews are recorded in a range of different forms to meet the needs of programme providers and lack a common approach to the purpose and outcomes desired to support trainees effectively. Usually, there is no distinction between pastoral and progress reviews. Most reviews lack sufficient focus and many do not lead to the development of specific action points. They are not systematically recorded or monitored.

Management of training

Grade 3

35. A managing director and a board of four executive directors manage the company. A general manager is responsible for operational matters and delegates training to a senior team charged with ensuring training and contractual requirements are met. The company employs 54 staff and operates from leased units in Lombard Street and the recently purchased Hudson House in the Hendon area of the city. The management style is based on empowering staff to work towards the company's objectives and performance is reviewed against them. Corporate objectives cover all aspects of ETEC's work. Weekly staff meetings are held to review progress and the minutes of these meetings record decisions taken and responsibilities for agreed action points. The company was accredited as an Investor in People in 1994 and has retained the award ever since. The company offers training and assessment in most occupational areas, with the largest numbers of trainees being in the programmes for construction and foundation for work. There are service level agreements for all subcontracted work. The managing director and the general manager appraise all staff annually and development opportunities are linked to business plan objectives. All staff have detailed job descriptions and new recruits participate in a structured induction programme upon appointment. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective empowerment of the staff
- ◆ good communication through regular meetings
- ◆ effective links with external partners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of reliable data to assist decision-making
- ◆ poor co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training

36. The organisation is well managed and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are empowered to manage within their delegated authority, which in most cases has resulted in prompt responses to trainees' needs, although trainees in care and information technology have not been dealt with so effectively. Weekly staff meetings for all staff have comprehensive agendas and are summarised through widely distributed minutes. Meetings are informative and provide a valuable opportunity for staff to reflect on progress and to influence policy. The outcomes of monthly management meetings are well documented and targets are set. Staff are kept well informed of decisions made by management through widely distributed minutes. Effective working groups are established to consider particular topics and are disbanded on satisfactory completion of their task. Staff volunteer for the working groups they wish to be involved in. Currently, aspects of equal opportunities and internal assessment are being developed. Regular meetings of vocational staff are well attended and provide a good forum for discussion and the sharing of ideas and best practice across all aspects of the company's business. Staff are given appropriate authority to carry out their duties. The culture of the organisation motivates staff and encourages them to make suggestions for improvements. These are carefully considered by managers and lead to continuous improvement within the organisation. All staff have clear and current job descriptions and are appropriately qualified and experienced to undertake most tasks assigned to them. Several staff are former trainees who have successfully applied for vacancies in competition with external applicants. Thorough annual staff appraisal within the context of the company's business objectives helps identify strengths and issues for development, which are promptly and appropriately addressed.

37. Extensive links and partnerships with external agencies are used effectively to broaden opportunities for all participants. Trainees are carefully supported and the projects undertaken are sensitively managed to benefit all participants. Together with a national charity, ETEC offers several projects to support and develop disadvantaged trainees by engaging them in activities. There is also a project to empower individuals by building their self-esteem and confidence to enable them to return to learning. The company has established effective partnerships with local schools and the careers service with the aim of providing young people with a purposeful training environment to help motivate them into regular participation in society. Young people from 14 years of age in danger of social exclusion are introduced to the world of work through offers of work experience and are given empathetic support by the staff. A two-year pilot programme supports those with disabilities to assist them into work. Such initiatives offer a good range of opportunity to satisfy the developmental and training needs of trainees in the locality.

38. Accurate management information is available to assist the monthly monitoring of performance against the TEC contract and is disseminated to inform training teams about their performance against business targets. Formulation and analysis of other performance-related data is poor and underdeveloped. There is little awareness of trainees' progress by occupational area, and few comparisons are made from one year to the next. Opportunities to monitor action by training



staff and subcontracted providers are missed and key performance indicators are not systematically analysed to inform managers of areas requiring their attention. External communication links with subcontractors and work-placement providers are poor and have resulted in an unco-ordinated approach to training and assessment. On- and off-the-job training are often seen as separate and opportunities to integrate the two are lost. A lack of co-ordination between work done in college, work at the training centre and experience gained at work leads to opportunities being missed for on-the-job assessment, which hinders achievement.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

39. The company works closely with the TEC and has achieved preferred supplier status following participation in a pilot exercise to help establish quality standards for training providers. A company manual of quality assurance procedures was developed by external consultants to conform to the TEC's quality assurance procedures. Responsibility for quality assurance rests with the general manager, who is supported by a team made up of staff from each of the occupational areas covered by the in-house training. Monthly audits are undertaken to review documents and procedures related to quality assurance. Any cases of non-compliance are reported to the general manager. The self-assessment process was developed through a series of staff development days conducted away from the company's premises. All staff were involved in the identification of strengths and weaknesses and in the grading. Inspectors found an additional strength and an additional weakness to those identified in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ sharing of good practice through working groups
- ◆ regular and rigorous internal audits

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance procedures
- ◆ poor monitoring and evaluation of subcontracted training and work placements
- ◆ unco-ordinated evaluation of training programmes

40. A working group composed of staff from occupational and support areas within the organisation is dedicated to the identification and sharing of best practice throughout the company. It was established following a staff development day and meets monthly. It has focused its attention on assessment and internal verification practices. New systems and documents have been produced and piloted in one occupational area. The general manager undertakes a regular evaluation of the outcomes arising from the work of the group and ensures that



newly approved procedures are adopted quickly. Internal audits are carried out regularly and rigorously. Two nominated members of staff from different areas of the company audit two areas of the organisation's quality assurance procedures. By ensuring that the composition and focus of auditing teams are changed regularly, staff become more aware of the company's procedures and increase their familiarity with departmental practices. Non-compliance is reported in writing to the general manager, who deals with issues which are brought to his attention effectively and promptly.

41. All staff were actively involved in preparing the self-assessment report. A series of five staff training days were held and contributions shared and challenged. The report contained useful background information and was presented and written in a user-friendly and informative style. A detailed action plan was included which targeted identified weaknesses and provided helpful cross-referencing to evidence sources. Although the report provided a candid and accurate insight into most activities undertaken by the company it failed to recognise several important weaknesses and their impact on achievement and progression. Inspectors did not agree with some strengths and others were regarded as normal practice.

42. Quality assurance procedures are underdeveloped and not always appropriate to the needs of a training provider. They contain insufficient detail on key aspects of training, such as the design and evaluation of training programmes. Although some areas of the quality assurance manual are easy to understand others are confusing. Evaluation of training programmes lacks co-ordination, with different aspects being dealt with in different meetings. No comprehensive programme-review meetings are held to monitor and evaluate trends. Data on matters which have an immediate effect on finance such as recruitment, retention and achievement, are discussed at senior management meetings but other indicators of programme quality are only discussed at occupational area meetings. This results in programme teams being unable to discuss measures for continuous improvement and the quality of training in a setting of financial constraints. There is no routine observation of the quality of training sessions, despite the recent recruitment of new training staff. Subcontractors and work placements are not systematically monitored, although link workers often visit trainees twice a week. Local arrangements require subcontractors to be approved by either the TEC or the Employment Service but ETEC does not validate their quality assurance procedures for itself. Trainees on work placements are asked regularly about the quality of their training but there are no formal procedures to underpin this monitoring or to observe the training. External verifiers are not routinely requested to provide reports and levels of resources provided by subcontractors are not systematically checked. Progress of trainees is inadequately monitored and there is no evaluation of the opportunities available at work placements to improve their learning experiences.