



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT DECEMBER 1999

Wandsworth Borough Council

SUMMARY

Wandsworth Borough Council delivers work-based training for young people, many of whom have underachieved at school, in the occupational areas of childcare and business administration. Training in both areas is well planned and effective, meeting the needs of trainees. Trainees are given good opportunities to acquire job skills. Trainees' achievement rate is good and the standard of trainees' work in portfolios is high. Induction for trainees is thorough and trainees are well supported by training staff and workplace supervisors. Promotion of good practice in equal opportunities is inherent in the training programmes. Training is systematically reviewed at all stages, although policies and procedures are not formally monitored. There is no overall quality assurance framework, although well-developed systems are used routinely to evaluate and improve the quality of training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	2
Health, care & public services	1

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	1
Trainee support	2
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees' good achievement rate and high retention
- ◆ extensive on-the-job learning opportunities
- ◆ good range of work-based evidence in portfolios
- ◆ effective and comprehensive application of equal opportunities
- ◆ thorough induction procedures
- ◆ good individual support for trainees
- ◆ frequent review and evaluation of training programmes

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some weak assessment practice
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of policies and procedures
- ◆ no overall framework for quality assurance

INTRODUCTION

1. Wandsworth Borough Council is the largest employer in the locality, with a full-time equivalent workforce of over 5,500 people. The council is divided into seven directorates for the delivery of a wide range of local government services and has been involved in government-funded, work-based training for twenty years. All work-based training is funded through the training and enterprise council (TEC) AZTEC and consists of programmes in the occupational areas of childcare and business administration. Until 1997, the two occupational areas were operated through separate contracts with AZTEC. Although all funding for work-based training is now administered through a single contract, the council manages and delivers the two programmes separately. Childcare training programmes are administered by the play & community services division of the leisure and amenities directorate and account for two-thirds of the contract with AZTEC. Training in childcare offers national vocational qualifications (NVQs) to level 3 and includes modern apprenticeship programmes. Training is given in the workplace, with off-the-job theory training delivered in classrooms on the council's premises. Business administration training is delivered through the central personnel services department as part of the services of the administration directorate. National traineeships are offered in business administration and include training to NVQ level 2 in administration and using information technology. Trainees work in the council's departments and training is given in the workplace. The council's staff have responsibility for all training, assessment and internal verification. The council holds approval with awarding bodies as an assessment centre for its training programmes. There are 67 trainees engaged in work-based training. Wandsworth Borough Council holds 14 Charter Marks, awarded by the government for excellence in public service, including a Charter Mark for the Leisure and Amenities Directorate. This directorate also holds the Investors In People award.

2. Southwest London, served by AZTEC, encompasses the London boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The area is bounded by the River Thames to the north and west and adjoins the county of Surrey in the south. The area is well placed to benefit from the economic activity of central London as well as being within easy reach of two international airports. It is served by good road links to the motorways and public transport to central London and beyond. Wandsworth is the second largest of the twelve Inner London Boroughs and contains the districts of Balham, Battersea, Earlsfield, Putney, Roehampton and Tooting. The characteristics of the borough vary considerably from industrialised Battersea on the south bank of the Thames to the open parkland of Putney Heath and Wandsworth Common. The multicultural population of the borough is 265,000. The 1991 census indicates that 16.2 per cent of the 600,000 community of southwest London belong to minority ethnic groups. The greatest concentrations of people from these groups are found in Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston, where present estimates indicate that Wandsworth has 20 per cent minority ethnic representation, Merton 16 per cent and Kingston 9 per cent.

3. The area is one of considerable economic potential with a diverse business base and a highly qualified workforce. Main areas for employment lie within finance and business services, retail and wholesale distribution, public services and manufacturing. Key growth sectors during the 1990s have been service industries, retailing and distribution, and hotels and catering. The manufacturing and construction industries have seen considerable decline during this period. In line with national and regional trends, unemployment in southwest London has fallen steadily since a peak in 1993. In September 1998, the unemployment rate in southwest London was 4.2 per cent compared with the national average of 4.7 per cent and the London average of 6.5 per cent. Despite the area's prosperity, however, pockets of deprivation exist, especially in Wandsworth and East Battersea, where levels of relatively high and long-term unemployment, poor housing and low educational achievement persist. In areas of Kingston, unemployment is below 2 per cent, but in some wards in Wandsworth, unemployment levels are as high as 9 per cent. Wandsworth has an average unemployment level of around 5 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above for Wandsworth was 47.9 per cent which is the national average. In southwest London, GCSE achievement varies considerably, with 57 per cent of Kingston's school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grades C and above, compared with only 38.8 per cent in Merton and 35.6 per cent in Wandsworth.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The first self-assessment report was produced in April 1997 in response to the requirements of AZTEC and formed a quality assurance development plan. Development of self-assessment continued over the next two years and resulted in review and amendment of the original quality assurance development plan. In anticipation of the Training Standards Council's inspection, the council's staff worked closely with advisors from AZTEC, through a series of meetings, workshops and training sessions, to devise strategies for self-assessment and prepare staff for the TSC's inspection. Training programme managers attended two training sessions for self-assessment organised through the TEC. The quality assurance development plan was replaced by the present, more detailed and comprehensive, self-assessment report based upon *Raising The Standard*. This self-assessment report was completed in September 1999. Close co-operative working between all staff involved in training was co-ordinated by the programme manager for childcare. A series of staff meetings was held over several months to evaluate gathered evidence and identify commonality in findings across the two programme areas. Evidence was collected systematically from trainees, employers, workplace supervisors and the council's staff. Through staff debate, judgements were identified and agreed. After further review and amendment, the final self-assessment report received endorsement from all training staff. The self-assessment report is based on a wide range of evidence and involved all staff with responsibilities for training or its management.

5. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 15 days at Wandsworth Borough Council in December 1999. Inspection covered training programmes for young people funded through AZTEC in the vocational areas of administration and information technology, and childcare. Inspectors observed seven instruction sessions and made a total of 13 visits to business administration trainees at work in the council's town hall offices and to childcare trainees placed in schools and nurseries throughout southwest London. Interviews were conducted with 29 trainees and 18 meetings were held with the council's training programme staff, including senior divisional officers, managers of training programmes, training officers, and employers and work-placement providers. A range of documents were inspected, including management and quality assurance files, TEC contracts, external audit reports, minutes of meetings, job descriptions and staff's qualification certificates. Trainees' files and work portfolios were inspected. Data relating to trainees' achievement and progression and equal opportunities were viewed. Inspection was made of resources and accommodation for on- and off-the-job training.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		1	1			2
Health, care & public services		5				5
Total	0	6	1	0	0	7

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 2

6. Wandsworth Borough Council offers training in administration and information technology to 16-17 year old trainees leading to the achievement of NVQs at level 2 in administration and using information technology. Training in information technology skills takes place during the first six months of the training programme, with successful completion of the NVQ at level 2 in using information technology enabling trainees to progress to training for the NVQ at level 2 in administration. Training in administration has been established over many years, but training in information technology was introduced in August 1998. Twelve national trainees are following 12-month business administration programmes as employees of the council. Trainees start training in August and work in the council's departments for four days a week. Off-the-job training in portfolio building, individual coaching and information technology training, is delivered in the council's offices one day a week by the council's staff. Apart from one subcontracted part-time assessor, all NVQ assessments are conducted at work by four of the council's staff. Internal verification takes place routinely throughout training. Staff have appropriate assessor and internal verifier qualifications. On-the-job supervisors have written agreements clearly outlining their roles and responsibilities in the training process. All trainees receive a structured three-week induction programme, during which they are given comprehensive information and guidance and are initially assessed for basic skills and key skills. Trainees are systematically interviewed before being placed within the council's departments. Trainees' progress is formally reviewed every three months. Informal reviews take place every two weeks.

7. Self-assessment was not sufficiently self-critical. It did not identify weaknesses in assessment and failed to include comment on the good quality of work placements. The self-assessment report correctly identified the good achievement and retention rates. All other strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were not highlighted in the report. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-delivered on-the-job instruction
- ◆ extensive on-the-job learning opportunities
- ◆ good range of work-based evidence in portfolios
- ◆ trainees' high achievement and retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ infrequent assessment in the workplace
- ◆ no routine monitoring of trainees' progress

8. Trainees' induction programmes are well planned and comprehensive. Sessions include a range of activities which give appropriate initial training in information technology and key skills, telephone skills, interview techniques, and preparation for the NVQs. Trainees are well supported throughout training and receive guidance and, where appropriate, additional training. Trainees, as employees of the council, receive the same benefits as other full-time employees and are able to attend council-run training courses. Following induction training trainees are interviewed. Trainees are placed appropriately in the council's departments where learning opportunities suited to the abilities and preferences of the trainees are provided. Work placements provide extensive opportunities for trainees to acquire job skills which meet the requirements of the NVQ. Trainees make good use of evidence of their job skills for the NVQ requirements of both administration and information technology. Trainees use their acquired skills effectively at work and competently carry out a wide range of practical tasks, such as organising and ordering stock, and setting up filing systems. Trainees have good computer skills and a clear understanding of the computers they use, including a range of commercial and internal software packages. Training officers keep workplace supervisors well informed about training programmes and provide supervisors with detailed information packs. Supervisors are fully involved in trainees' reviews and attend quarterly meetings with training officers to discuss their roles in supporting trainees.

9. Trainees' understanding of NVQ standards and key skills units is good and they demonstrate a sharp awareness of the course units and elements being covered. Trainees are kept well informed of their progress, and targets for achievement are set and reviewed systematically. Trainees' portfolios contain a good range of work-based evidence of their job skills. They are enthusiastic about collecting evidence and work hard to produce good-quality portfolios. Excellent use is made of daily, often complex, work tasks to generate evidence of competencies for the NVQs. These include producing multi-page letters with enclosures mailed to the council's clients, and database printouts requiring high levels of accuracy. Trainees receive good on-the-job instruction from supervisors, which enables them to carry out a wide range of tasks competently. Good instruction is provided when the need arises, but the individual support supervisors give to the trainees in the workplace is well informed and takes full account of NVQ requirements. Trainees observe clear

demonstrations of the tasks they need to undertake before carrying them out under supervision. Trainees' achievement in business administration and information technology is good and all trainees who complete programmes achieve NVQs. Achievement rates have steadily improved during the last three years. Seventy-eight per cent of trainees completed their programmes and achieved NVQs in 1997-98, 88 per cent completed their individual training plans in 1998-99 and for the current year, 92 per cent of trainees have achieved their qualification.

10. On-the-job assessment of current trainees has been infrequent. Staff absence has resulted in assessment schedules not being met and insufficient observation of trainees has taken place. Records indicate that some trainees have not been assessed in the workplace for three months. Use of clear strategies for assessment planning is not systematic. Opportunities for workplace assessment are not always taken, and, in some cases, cross-referencing evidence from information technology to key skills and administration has not happened. Monitoring of trainees' progress is not routine and is neither fully recorded nor systematically updated. Monitoring documents in trainees' files are unclear and lacking in detail and are unhelpful in informing workplace supervisors of trainees' progress and achievement goals.

Health, care & public services

Grade 1

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainers have arranged for local nursery school children to visit the training centre. Children participate in practical activities planned and supervised by trainees. Trainers observe and assess trainees completing these activities and carrying out a variety of challenging tasks. Staff take photographs for the trainees to use in their portfolios of evidence, to illustrate good practice, and to include in the council's marketing displays. Images are carefully selected to illustrate the mixed gender and multi-cultural profile of the trainees.

11. Childcare training programmes have been provided within the leisure and amenity services department of Wandsworth Borough Council since 1979. There are 39 national trainees, and 16 modern apprentices following NVQs in early years care and education programmes at levels 2 and 3 respectively. Trainees work in local schools, council and private nurseries and creches. One trainee is placed in a school for children with special learning needs. Many work-placement providers have a long association with the council-run childcare training programmes. A small number of trainees with additional learning needs gain the practical caring skills qualification before moving on to level 2. Two-year national traineeships generally start in September, but trainees may join the programme at any time up to the following February. Modern apprentices are trainees who have progressed from NVQs at level 2 or employees from work placements with proven ability and experience. Modern apprenticeship programmes are completed within 14 months. At the start of training, national trainees receive a one-week induction programme, which includes an initial assessment in basic and key skills. National trainees attend weekly off-the-job training sessions in a local training centre. There are separate sessions for first- and second-year trainees. Most trainees are assessed by a work-based assessor or supervisor. A few assessments are carried out by the training officers. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out at the work placement and in the training centre. Modern apprentices have a short induction, often in the workplace. They spend one day a month in the training centre for off-the-job training. This is supplemented by individual tutorials at a time and place to suit the trainee.

12. The self-assessment report was thorough and correctly identified the effective training, high achievement and opportunities for assessment in the workplace. Inspectors identified further strengths that related to the quality of the work placements and the trainees' portfolios. Failure to fully integrate key skills into training identified in the self-assessment report had been rectified by the time of inspection. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the council.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned and interesting off-the-job training
- ◆ good co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent assessment in the workplace
- ◆ use of good range of job experiences for portfolio evidence
- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ strong, productive links between trainers and work-placement providers
- ◆ good trainees' retention and achievement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some work-based assessment conducted by unqualified workplace assessors
- ◆ no reference of evidence to NVQ standards by trainees

13. Off-the-job training sessions are well planned. Trainers have developed detailed training plans for theory sessions, and trainees are routinely asked to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching at the end of each session. Frequent staff meetings are used to discuss and evaluate training and develop strategies for improvement. Theory sessions are interesting and good use is made of a variety of teaching methods, including direct teaching, discussion and practical sessions, to engage and sustain trainees' interest. Sessions are at a level suited to trainees' abilities. Trainees' work experience is broadened through the effective use of opportunities to work with children in a wide range of settings. For example, several times a year, children from a local nursery come into the training centre and take part in activities prepared and supervised by the trainees. Staff review training annually. This has led to substantial changes and improvements in training and in the assessment of key skills which now forms an integrated part of training schedules. Trainees have access to a good range of suitable study materials and resources, including care industry journals and magazines. Text books for use in portfolio-building during classroom sessions are less accessible to trainees as they are not kept in the room used for training.

14. Trainers give good support to individual trainees to assist in the compilation of work portfolios. Staff have produced 'user-friendly' guidelines for trainees with clearly identified lists of evidence to be gathered to satisfy the NVQ requirements for each element and unit. These guidelines effectively help trainees to identify

appropriate written work and materials for inclusion in their assessment portfolios and enable them to monitor their own progress. Evidence checklists for trainees, which include key skills requirements, match sources of evidence to trainees' likely job experiences. Effective use is made of a wide range of work experiences to gather evidence of trainees' acquired skills. However, trainees do not have copies of the NVQ standards to which they can refer, and responsibility for cross-referencing gathered evidence to these standards is undertaken entirely by training staff. Trainers routinely complete assessment record sheets without the involvement of trainees. Trainees' have little influence on training and assessment planning.

15. Careful attention is paid to trainees' work placements during the initial interview and assessment phase of recruitment. Trainees are placed in establishments which offer work experience suited to their needs and preferences. Work placements are good and provide trainees with good support and ample opportunities to learn and acquire job skills. Trainees may change employers for the second year of training and some trainees, based in schools, work in day nurseries during the school holidays in order to broaden their work experiences. On- and off-the-job training is well co-ordinated and practical tasks at work are complemented with theory training at the training centre. Training staff have developed strong links with employers and work-placement providers, many established over a number of years, fostering co-operative working relationships. Employers are supportive of trainees and the training process and value the good-quality training services provided by the council. Employers are kept well informed of training issues by weekly telephone contact and visits by the council's staff, invitations to meetings and through being provided with comprehensive information packs.

16. The trainees are well supported in all aspects of training. Contact with training staff is frequent. Six-weekly planning and feedback sessions are held at work and involve workplace supervisors. Trainees receive weekly pastoral support meetings with the training centre manager. Review meetings with trainers include evaluation of trainees' progress and result in clear and realistic targets for achievement being set. Work commitments for many modern apprentices allow only monthly attendance for one-day theory training. Trainees identified as needing more support than that available during off-the-job training sessions, receive extra support through one-to-one tutorials. Trainees' achievement of qualifications is good and has increased over the past three years from 56 per cent of leavers achieving an NVQ in 1996-97 to 72 per cent in 1998-99. All trainees who complete training achieve an NVQ. Retention rates are good, with 72 per cent of trainees successfully completing training in 1998-99. All the trainees who began training in September 1999 are still on the programmes. Many trainees achieve more than one NVQ while in training. Progression into jobs for trainees who complete training is consistently high, greater than 90 per cent. For all trainees who start training, including those who leave early, around 60 per cent find permanent employment.

17. Procedures for assessing trainees are effective. Trainees are frequently observed in the workplace by occupationally experienced and vocationally qualified

work-based supervisors. Assessments are rigorous and assessors systematically use real work tasks when observing trainees. Records of assessments are detailed and complete. Many workplace supervisors are qualified as teachers and/or nursery nurses and most hold appropriate assessor qualifications. However, 12 supervisors (20 per cent) acting as assessors do not hold assessor qualifications. Eight of these supervisors have been identified for training as part of the council's annual programme for assessor training. The council's training staff give effective guidance to unqualified assessors and all assessments are conducted to high standards. Direct observation assessments conducted by unqualified assessors are endorsed and countersigned by qualified assessors. present arrangements, however, do not comply fully with the awarding body's requirements that all assessors are suitably qualified or are registered for training as stated in the awarding bodies' *Common Accord*. Trainers regularly monitor observations carried out by work-based assessors and routinely give oral feedback. Trainers only record the feedback they give to assessors if problems with assessment are identified. Internal verification conducted by the training manager is systematic and comprehensive. Internal verification of completed units is carried out progressively during training, with routine verification of all completed portfolios at the end of training. Assessors' meetings are held, but they are infrequent and some assessors are unable to attend because of work commitments. All assessors are kept informed of relevant information by the training staff.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 1

18. The council has an equal opportunities employment policy which includes information on recruitment and selection guidelines, harassment and disability discrimination. It encompasses all the council's activities. There is no separate policy or procedures specific to training and its management. Codes of practice and procedures for the implementation of equal opportunities meet legal and contractual requirements. Monitoring of the council's equal opportunities arrangements is the responsibility of the equal opportunities advisor who operates within the central personnel service of the administration department. The council's policies and procedures are reviewed annually and amended where necessary. All applicants for training receive an interview and monitoring of applicants for race, gender and disability is routine. Equal opportunities is discussed during induction training when new staff and trainees are issued with the council's equal opportunities policy statement. There is a written formal complaints procedure for trainees and it is included within trainees' handbooks. The council's offices and the training centre are accessible to people with restricted mobility.

19. Self-assessment was accurate in identifying the effective promotion of equal opportunities and that the staff and trainee profiles reflect the local population. However, inspectors judged that equal opportunities achievements had been undervalued in the self-assessment report. Insufficient weighting had been given to

staff training and the effective use of performance data. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the council.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Effective and comprehensive application of equal opportunities
- ◆ frequent staff training in equal opportunities issues
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities at induction
- ◆ good protection for staff and trainees against all forms of discrimination
- ◆ good inclusion of those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups
- ◆ effective analysis and use of equal opportunities performance data

GOOD PRACTICE

Staff in childcare use a form to test the accessibility of work placements for trainees with disabilities. This allows staff to collect comprehensive information on the appropriateness of all their work placements for people using wheelchairs or parents with buggies. Information is collected on the number of steps inside and outside of the building, the number of ramps and their gradients, the width of doors, the accessibility of toilets and the equipment available for children with disabilities.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no specific reference to trainees in equal opportunities policy and procedures

20. Equal opportunities are effectively and comprehensively applied in all the council's services, including training. Responsibility for implementation of equal opportunities lies at senior management level, but support for equality of opportunity is reflected by staff throughout the organisation. Policies and procedures for equal opportunities are well documented and clearly identify staff responsibilities for supporting and implementing codes of practice and procedures. These responsibilities are reiterated within staff's job descriptions. However, although the equal opportunities policy is comprehensive in all matters relating to staff, it does not make specific reference to trainees or training. The format and wording of the policy and procedures does not promote ownership by trainees. The council's managers have a good awareness and understanding of employment legislation and promote understanding to staff and trainees. Council-wide working groups for equal opportunities ensure that issues are raised and addressed as appropriate. Information from quarterly meetings attended by training staff is clearly disseminated to other members of the training teams.

21. Procedures to protect staff and trainees from harassment and discrimination are effective and clearly recorded. A detailed grievance and complaints policy is in place, but written procedures relate specifically to the council's employees rather than trainees. Written guidelines on dealing with assaults, threats and verbal abuse are provided for managers and work supervisors, who raise awareness of these issues with other staff and trainees. All staff and trainees are encouraged to report cases of unfairness and discrimination so that appropriate action may be taken. Staff and trainees express confidence in being able and willing to report all formal and informal complaints, allegations of unfair treatment or service dissatisfaction. Procedures to address complaints promptly are clearly recorded and understood. Complaints procedures are produced in leaflet form in several languages reflecting the multi-cultural composition of the council's workforce and the trainees.

Complaints and the effectiveness of procedures are monitored systematically. Monthly summaries of complaints are analysed by the personnel department's staff to identify emerging trends and, if necessary, make recommendations for dealing more effectively with infringements of equal opportunities. The council has a written code of practice for people with disabilities. It has introduced a questionnaire for staff and trainees to complete in order to improve its services to people with disabilities. Information leaflets, written in several languages, are available to staff and trainees detailing support services.

22. Trainees' awareness of equal opportunities issues is good. Training programmes include discussion of equal opportunities to reiterate, and expand upon, topics covered during induction. Trainees' agreements contain information on equal opportunities, and induction training includes discussion of legislation, and disciplinary and grievance procedures. Staff training in equal opportunities is systematic and well planned. Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues, fully support the policies of the council and contribute effectively to their implementation. All staff involved in interviewing trainees attend training on equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection procedures. This training includes information on dealing with trainees with disabilities, use of standard questions and interview records. Staff also attend disability awareness training, including discussion of the implications of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*. Further training is promptly arranged, as required, to update staff on equal opportunities issues. The council demonstrates good practice in advertising jobs and training opportunities. All advertisements are closely monitored to ensure equal opportunities criteria have been met. Marketing materials and advertisements emphasise equality of opportunity through depiction of multi-cultural and mixed-gender images of groups of trainees. Clear guidelines on equal opportunities are given to recruiting staff for all stages of staff and trainees' selection. Recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups is good. During the three years from April 1996 to March 1999, 36 per cent of trainees were people from minority ethnic groups compared to the estimated 16 per cent of people from minority ethnic groups in southwest London. The corresponding average figures for gender show that there are 25 per cent male trainees in administration and 4 per cent in care. Staff appointments reflect the ethnic mix of the local area, and the harmonious and cohesive working relationships of staff act as good role models for trainees.

23. Performance data are routinely collected and analysed and used systematically to measure the council's performance in equal opportunities. Evaluations of the effectiveness of policies and procedures are included within the council's annual report. Data collected for ethnicity, disability and gender of applicants are used effectively to compare applications, recruitment, achievement and destinations of people from minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities with those of white and non-disabled counterparts. The data show that procedures are effective for all. The council monitors trainees at entry to ensure the profile reflects the local ethnic population. Data are recorded and used to influence marketing decisions, to ensure certain minority ethnic groups are not excluded. For example, staff have recently liaised with local communities by distributing information at mosques in order to

increase the number of Asian trainees. Written agreements between the council and employers for the provision of work placements for trainees demand that employers strictly adhere to statutory requirements and accept the council's codes of practice. However, there is no formal monitoring of employers to ensure consistent good equal opportunities practice at work placements, although regular incidental monitoring is undertaken by training officers on work placement visits.

Trainee support

Grade 2

24. All applicants for training are interviewed and given advice and guidance to enable them to make informed choices. Induction programmes for childcare trainees are completed during the first week of training; in business administration, induction is spread over the first three weeks of training. All trainees are systematically assessed for their basic skills and key skills during induction. Trainees are given information handbooks containing health and safety requirements, the equal opportunities policy statement and grievance procedures. Trainees' rights and responsibilities are discussed as part of standard induction procedures. Trainees sign learning agreements at the start of training. Systems for trainee support are not formally recorded and differ between training for childcare and business administration. There are arrangements for addressing the needs of trainees with learning difficulties and personal problems. Some trainees start training with wordpower or numberpower to improve basic skills before beginning their NVQs. In childcare, some trainees with low self-esteem or little occupational experience or achievement follow practical caring courses as introductions to childcare programmes. The council's staff conduct surveys of trainees when they leave the programmes to monitor their destinations.

25. The self-assessment report includes detailed description of trainee support systems. The identification of the absence of initial assessment of key skills has resulted in effective remedial action being implemented before the start of inspection. The overall strength of support for trainees has been undervalued in the self-assessment report and inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the council.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough selection and induction procedures
- ◆ accurate initial assessment to identify individual training needs
- ◆ effective and frequent trainees' reviews
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ good job-search support
- ◆ regular celebration of trainees' successes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal structure for trainee support
- ◆ some poor recording of accreditation of prior learning

26. Selection procedures for trainees are comprehensive and thorough. Interviews of applicants are well structured and conform to standard procedures to ensure equality of opportunity. During interview, applicants discuss their reasons for wanting to train, their goals, aspirations, previous experiences and achievements, as well as indicating areas where they feel additional learning support may be required. Detailed records of interviews are routinely kept and used to guide prospective trainees in their choice of training programme and influence the development of individual training plans. For most trainees, prior learning is identified during interview and appropriate credit is given to it during training. However, procedures for accreditation of prior learning are not formally recorded and, in a few cases, they have been ineffective resulting in trainees repeating work unnecessarily. Induction programmes for new trainees are well planned and effective in providing essential information and enabling trainees to overcome initial fears. Assessment of trainees' occupational suitability and work preferences is conducted during induction and trainees are well supported in the choice of work placement. Trainees visit proposed places of employment to meet employers and work colleagues in order to gauge their suitability. Childcare trainees spend half a day in prospective work placements as work 'tasters' to inform their choices. Business administration trainees are given effective guidance in preparation for interviews with work-placement providers. The effectiveness of induction programmes is systematically evaluated using trainees' feedback, and findings are used to make improvements.

27. Routine initial assessment of trainees' basic skills and key skills is used effectively by staff to identify the learning support needs of individual trainees. Findings of interviews and initial assessments are used systematically in the development of individual training plans. Training plans are developed in negotiation with trainees and take account of their abilities, experiences and aspirations. Individual training plans, which are detailed and contain clearly identified targets for achievement within set timescales, are subject to review throughout the training. Staff review trainees' progress frequently, in some cases every two weeks. Reviews are conducted at work and during off-the-job theory training days. Reviews are thorough and focus on trainees' progress, and support needs and are effective in ensuring that training and personal needs are identified and met. Discussion and setting of achievement targets, including schedules for assessment, is completed during review, although in business administration programmes, some setting and meeting of targets has not been achieved. Trainees receive high levels of pastoral support. Staff are caring and highly responsive to the trainees' individual needs. Early identification of difficulties in training and personal problems is achieved through discussion with trainees and employers, which enables training officers to implement effective remedial action. Workplace supervisors are well supported and kept fully informed of training issues by the council's staff.

Workplace supervisors, in turn, are supportive of trainees and provide encouragement and guidance. In many cases, workplace supervisors enable trainees to link job skills to theory training and the requirements of their NVQs.

28. During the final three months of training, trainees receive substantial help in searching for jobs. Job-search programmes are well prepared and provide comprehensive guidance on applying for vacancies, and sessions to improve trainees' interview techniques. Up-to-date lists of vacancies are provided for trainees' use and liaison between the council's staff and local employers generates many employment opportunities for trainees. As part of the job-search programme, trainees attend job fairs and interviews with staff from the careers service to receive independent advice. Effective use is made of former trainees who return to the council's offices to relate their employment experiences to trainees. Staff support for trainees is good and they are committed to enabling trainees to succeed. Trainee support, however, occurs outside a formal system, and procedures for support and guidelines to staff are not well recorded. The effectiveness of trainee support is largely dependent upon the experience and knowledge of present staff, gathered over many years of work within training. There are no clearly written staff procedures for responding to trainees' needs or for the referral of specific problems to specialist support agencies. Systems do not guarantee that newly appointed members of staff would have the necessary guidance to ensure appropriate support for trainees when addressing sensitive issues. Trainees' successes and achievements are celebrated publicly at award presentation ceremonies. The high profile of these prestigious occasions, attended by the trainees' friends and families, highly motivates trainees to achieve, and emphasises the value placed on their achievements.

Management of training

Grade 2

29. Wandsworth Borough Council's business administration and childcare training programmes have separate management and operating structures. The childcare training programme was moved within the leisure and amenity services directorate from the youth service to become part of the play and community services division. The programme is funded jointly by the council and AZTEC. The three members of staff, all full-time employees of the council, form a designated team with day-to-day responsibility for training, the welfare of the trainees and the programme development. The programme manager reports to the chief officer for play and community services who reports to the public services and safety committee of the council. The business administration training programme operates within the administrative directorate, in the central personnel assessment centre. Of four core department training staff, three have additional responsibilities for recruiting and training the council's staff, as well as managing and delivering NVQ training programmes. One of the two personnel officers has full-time responsibility for the day-to-day running of the training programme and the internal verification of assessment. The programme manager reports directly to the head of human

resources. The monitoring of work placements for all trainees conforms to the council and TEC's requirements, with risk assessments conducted by the council's own qualified safety officers. Childcare work placements are also subject to external audit by the social services department and the education department. Data on trainees' recruitment, retention and achievement are collected through manual systems. Computerised management information systems are being piloted.

30. The self-assessment report was not comprehensive. The strengths drew attention to the wide links with internal and external agencies, but failed to identify the effectiveness of staff appraisal systems and staff development. The report was not sufficiently self-critical and did not explicitly note any weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the council.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective staff appraisal systems
- ◆ comprehensive target setting and reviewing
- ◆ effective teamwork within programmes
- ◆ well co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ extensive links with local agencies

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete recording of all policies and procedures
- ◆ no established links between programmes

31. Systems for staff appraisal are effective. Arrangements are comprehensive and well established within management procedures. Staff appraisal is used effectively to influence staff development strategies to satisfy personal and corporate needs. All staff are appraised and have a clear understanding of, and full involvement in, self-appraisal. Staff complete self-appraisal forms prior to appraisal interviews which are used as the basis of individual performance reviews. Management strategies commit the council to the support of professional development for all staff. Staff are encouraged by managers, and financially supported by the council, to participate in development programmes. Individual development programmes are appropriately linked to departmental objectives. Council-run training programmes enable staff to improve vocational skills and update their knowledge. For example, recent training programmes have focused on raising awareness of the *Disabilities Discrimination Act 1995* and improving computer skills. Target setting for achievement at divisional and staff levels is comprehensive and the review of targets is routine. Performance targets for individual staff set during appraisal are formally reviewed every six months. Training staff hold scheduled work programme meetings to discuss and review their performance against TEC targets, and to evaluate set targets for continuous

improvement in the delivery and management of training. Statistics on trainees' progress and achievement are readily available and systematically analysed to monitor performance and inform targets. Strategic planning for childcare training programmes is closely linked to corporate business aims and objectives outlined within the division's annual business plan. But, there are no equivalent recorded strategic plans for business administration training programmes. Targets for all staff involved in training are clearly linked to improving the quality of training and include plans for improvements in learning resources, marketing strategies and administrative procedures.

32. Working relationships between training staff within occupational teams are strong. Staff work closely together and share information and ideas. Open debate is successfully encouraged by managers, and staff feel valued and appreciate being given opportunities to influence strategy and practice. Lines of communication are well maintained through a series of formal and informal meetings, although not all meetings are formally recorded. Weekly meetings are held by training teams to discuss training issues, consider procedures and address identified areas of weakness. Information is disseminated effectively to staff and trainees through frequent bulletins and newsletters. Working relationships between programme area teams are congenial. However, links between staff in the two training teams are informal and occur incidentally rather than in response to management policy. This is particularly so at senior management level. Since the introduction in 1997 of a single AZTEC contract for training, operational staff have met informally to discuss practice and procedures across the two programmes. However, formal meetings are not regularly scheduled and procedures to promote sharing of good practice and to ensure co-operative working between teams relies upon individual staff initiative.

33. Strong and effective working relationships exist with the council's other departments which provide work placements for business administration trainees, and with outside employers which provide work placements for childcare trainees. Training staff communicate frequently with work-placement providers and disseminate information on training matters. These strong lines of communication enable good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and in some cases, synchronising theory training and job tasks is planned. Employers and work-placement supervisors are frequently consulted during work-placement visits to check on the welfare of the trainees and the development of their learning. Any emerging issues or trends are identified and addressed or built on, as appropriate, through adjustments to training sessions or assessment plans. The council's staff have developed extensive links with local employers and businesses, local agencies, and external support groups to further the quality of training. Childcare training programme staff, for example, have good links with the local body monitoring early years care and childcare. Policies and procedures for the management and delivery of training are not comprehensively recorded. Many procedures are understood by staff and are conducted efficiently, but outside of written guidelines. Some corporate policies are clearly recorded and updated with the personnel division. However, some policies and documents, for example job descriptions, have not been recently updated and review dates are not specified. Results of evaluation and

review of procedures are not always centrally recorded. The absence of clearly written procedures has led to inconsistency in operational practices within training programmes.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

34. All of the council's services are required to comply with written codes of practice within a framework of corporate quality improvement procedures. Responsibility for quality assurance lies with staff within each service area and all service areas are required to set annual quality improvement targets. The effectiveness of quality improvement plans is monitored annually within directorates. Strategies for quality assurance have been developed separately within each directorate in response to perceived needs, and are not standard throughout the council. In childcare training programmes, for example, improvement of training is linked to the Citizens Charter Mark for leisure and amenities. All publicity materials for business administration training include a quality assurance statement. The quality of work-based training is subject to frequent audit by external organisations. Quality assurance arrangements meet the requirements of the awarding bodies and meet the requirements of the TEC contract.

35. The self-assessment report was detailed in its evaluation of monitoring training and assessment, but it failed to identify the strengths of procedures to promote continuous improvement. A lack of formal quality assurance procedures was identified, but the report did not identify inadequacies in monitoring these procedures. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the council in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent review and evaluation of training programmes
- ◆ effective use of feedback from trainees and employers
- ◆ comprehensive monitoring of the quality of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no overall framework for quality assurance
- ◆ inadequate monitoring and evaluation of quality assurance
- ◆ lack of systematic sharing of good practice between programmes

36. Quality assurance of learning and assessment is comprehensive. Training staff routinely monitor and frequently review training and evaluate its effectiveness. Quarterly review meetings are held each term to look at current practice and propose improvements. Additional meetings are arranged, as appropriate, to

evaluate the effectiveness of changes made. Data on trainees' progress, achievements, retention and destinations are systematically recorded and analysed, and the findings included within end-of-year programme reviews in July. Effective use is made of analysed data to influence departmental quality improvement plans. The importance of trainees' perceptions of training is recognised and has led to routine collection of feedback from trainees through the use of questionnaires. Feedback from trainees, and employers, is routinely used to evaluate the effectiveness of training and guide development of strategic plans for improvement of services. Review of training has led to the introduction of new initiatives and changes in the format of training and the structure of training programmes. For example, evaluation of services resulted in the extension of childcare training to include an NVQ at level 3 and modern apprenticeships. Staff have been effective in modifying systems for feedback to ensure greater accuracy and comprehensiveness of collected data, and to encourage trainees to give their views freely.

37. Training programme managers take full responsibility for the quality of the training and assessment. Good use is made by managers of observation of training, at least twice a year, using identified performance criteria. Trainers are assessed for their ability to impart knowledge and understanding, to engage trainees' interest, for their ability to cover all aspects of NVQ programmes, and for their responsiveness to trainees' needs. Feedback to observed trainers is constructive, supportive and used in staff appraisal and development.

38. There is no formally written quality assurance policy specific to work-based training. Procedures for improving the quality of the training do not form part of a formal quality assurance framework. The need for greater recording of procedures for monitoring and evaluating training is recognised within the self-assessment report. There are some written procedures which are detailed in newly compiled quality assurance manuals. However, recording of quality assurance systems is incomplete and has yet to address all aspects of training. Staff are effective in assuring the quality of training and assessment, but effectiveness of quality assurance depends upon the understanding and commitment of staff. Systems for monitoring and evaluating quality assurance are inadequate. Manuals do not give clear guidelines on self-assessment of quality assurance and its review. For example, systems used by staff during workplace visits and trainees' reviews to evaluate training are not subject to evaluation as part of the quality assurance process. Traditionally, training in business administration and childcare has been delivered separately. Links between the two departments are being strengthened and areas of commonality are being developed. Training resources, such as computers and information technology teaching, are being shared across programmes. However, sharing good practice is incidental and occurs through staff initiative rather than systematically as part of quality assurance.

39. The development of the self-assessment report has been used effectively by staff for closer working between the two departments. Working relationships have been co-operative and resulted in clear identification of areas of commonality and

disparity. Self-assessment was based upon cross-referencing training against the quality statements in *Raising the Standard*. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly defined throughout the report, together with evaluative statements. In most areas, recorded findings are insufficiently self-critical, especially in the generic areas. Staff worked as a team in self-assessment and judgements were rigorously debated and endorsed by all staff. The process involved full consultation with trainees and employers. Self-assessment has resulted in the implementation of remedial action in response to identified areas of weakness. In some cases, for example, implementation of initial assessment of key skills, action plans have been successfully completed. Inspectors awarded higher grades than those given in the self-assessment report in childcare, equal opportunities, trainee support and quality assurance. In these areas, strengths of training had been undervalued and newly introduced procedures had resulted in improvement. Inspection grades for business administration and management of training agreed with self-assessed grades. The action plan addresses weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and includes clearly identified aims and objectives, action required, staff responsibilities and timescales for implementation.