



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 2000

Barnsley Met Training

SUMMARY

Barnsley Met Training offers satisfactory training in five occupational areas. Trainees on construction programmes receive a thorough introduction to their training but there is an over-reliance on using local projects for assessments because of a shortage of employers with placements. Manufacturing trainees work through a well-structured training programme. However, assessment planning and target setting are poor. The facilities and resources used for business administration and information technology training are good, but opportunities to assess trainees at their work placements are missed. Customer services trainees attend the centre for their training and are assessed at work but little attempt is made to cross-reference evidence. Foundation trainees follow a well-structured training programme but do not fully understand what the purpose of their training is and how it will help them to obtain a job. Achievement rates are low across all the occupational areas. Staff and trainees are given training on equal opportunities at their induction. However, the equal opportunities policy and staff recruitment procedures are out of date, and there are no formal systems for reviews. Trainees receive good one-to-one support from the staff, but employers are not involved in the review process. There are clear and effective lines of communication between staff and a comprehensive staff development programme. Good practice is not systematically shared between staff or across different programmes. The company has a structured quality assurance framework, with regular audits taking place. However, internal verification lacks rigour and managers do not systematically monitor the quality of training provided.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Manufacturing	3
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Foundation for work	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good resources for information technology training
- ◆ good, well-planned training in information technology and administration
- ◆ carefully planned training for foundation for work trainees
- ◆ innovative approach to dealing with harassment
- ◆ good strategic and operational planning process involving staff

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate key skills training
- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ shortage of placements with employers for construction trainees
- ◆ staff not qualified in basic skills



- ◆ insufficient monitoring of employers
- ◆ lack of involvement by employers in review process
- ◆ no preparation for non-employed trainees leaving the programme

INTRODUCTION

1. Barnsley Met Training is part of Training and Employment Services, a service area within the Development Programme Area of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. Training and Employment Services was established in 1994 as a result of the council's strategic review to assist with the regeneration of the borough. Prior to 1994, Barnsley Met Training was part of the Economic Development Department.

2. Barnsley Met Training is one of the largest training providers in the area and provides training via work-based learning for adults programmes and, more recently, for young people through a contract with Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). There are 231 trainees of whom 174 are on youth training programmes and 57 are on adult training programmes. It also provides franchised training. Barnsley Met Training also has a contract with the Employment Service to offer the environment task force option of the New Deal for Barnsley and Dearne District. It also offers a variety of European and single regeneration programme-funded commercial training programmes. Barnsley Met Training employs 44 staff within its five sections and operates from two separate sites in Barnsley. Barnsley Met Training only took over the TEC contract for youth training five weeks before inspection.

3. Barnsley has a working population of 105,000. The unemployment rate for Barnsley is 6.8 per cent. Only 0.6 per cent of the population in the district are from minority ethnic groups. Thirty-two per cent of those registered as unemployed do not possess a formal qualification at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1 or equivalent. Only 24 per cent of the local employed workforce are qualified to level 2 or equivalent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 32 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Barnsley Met Training produced its second self-assessment report and action plan in March 2000. All staff members and a significant number of trainees contributed to the self-assessment process. Information was gathered from trainees' surveys and structured interviews with staff, documentary evidence, feedback from trainees, staff and placement providers/employers and direct observation by the management team of the whole process. Staff members within each section were involved in conducting occupational self-assessments, highlighting strengths and weaknesses and developing action plans for their sections. All occupational areas then worked together to assess all of the generic areas.

5. A team of seven inspectors spent 27 days at Barnsley Met Training in May 2000. Inspectors observed training and assessment activities for groups and individual trainees, including progress reviews, induction and interviews. They visited 40 employers' premises to speak to trainees and employers in the workplace. They spoke to 87 trainees and all relevant company staff. Inspectors reviewed trainees' files and a wide range of documents and records of the company.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction			2			2
Manufacturing		2	2			4
Business administration		2	3			5
Retailing & customer service		1	2			3
Foundation for work	1	1	3			5
Total	1	6	12	0	0	19

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

6. There are 38 trainees on construction training programmes. All trainees are working towards achieving NVQs at level 2. Twenty-two are on brickwork, one on wood occupations and the remainder are working towards NVQs in general construction operations. Three trainees are on national traineeship programmes, 29 are on other youth training programmes and the rest are on adult training programmes. There are also eight New Deal clients working towards NVQs at level 2, five in brickwork, two in wood occupations and one in general construction operations. Barnsley Met Training uses a separate training centre for construction training which is located at Hoyle Mill, one mile from the main

training centre in Barnsley. Two trainees are employed in small or medium-sized local companies and the rest are based at the training centre where all of the theory training takes place. These trainees work on three local projects, comprising a community refurbishment scheme, a heritage centre and a country park. They are assessed on these projects. All seven instructors are occupationally qualified with four being qualified assessors and the remaining three instructors working towards achieving the assessors qualification. The number of trainees has remained constant over the period 1998-2000. In 1999-2000, 36 per cent of trainees achieved their qualification, with 80 per cent of trainees leaving the programme early. Data available on the small number of trainees for 2000-2001 demonstrate a significant rise in the achievement rate. The self-assessment report included some strengths which were no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive introduction to occupational area
- ◆ good system for monitoring trainees' progress
- ◆ excellent use of projects and placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow introduction of key skills
- ◆ some muddled information in trainees' portfolios
- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ shortage of placements with employer

POOR PRACTICE

When trainees are approaching the final weeks of their level 2 NVQ they take several 'job knowledge' question papers, covering a significant number of the NVQ units. Some trainees have completed five or six tests in the space of four weeks, and so the theory is not linked to the practical training which has taken place over several months.

7. All trainees have an initial interview with a member of the training centre's staff and complete an occupationally based assessment designed to identify any additional literacy and/or numeracy support needs. The results of the exercise are used to decide on the level of support required and the most appropriate level of NVQ. A comprehensive induction programme is used to familiarise trainees with the training centre. They are also given fire-awareness training and an equal opportunities session to help them to understand specific issues. To enable trainees to get used to training and a work-related environment, the training centre runs an introductory course in brickwork. This helps trainees to increase their confidence and self-esteem and gain practical skills. A certificate is issued on completion of the introductory course. Staff at the training centre have considerable experience in the construction industry and hold appropriate occupational qualifications, as well as assessor and verifier awards. One member of staff has the key skills assessor award.

8. The way in which workshop practice, training and theory are integrated is inconsistent and is not effectively monitored. Lesson plans are not readily available. Training is planned on a broad basis to enable individual trainees to progress through each NVQ unit. This is shown on a chart contained in trainees'

master files. These files are comprehensive and include an individual training plan, details on their progress and personal information. All assessment records and reviews are updated regularly.

9. Trainees' portfolios contain theory work for the NVQ and specific information on safety, fire-awareness training and equal opportunities. The portfolios of level 1 trainees are referenced and clearly indexed. Those for level 2 trainees are muddled and information is not easy to locate. It is therefore difficult to assess trainees' work and keep track of the amount of evidence already gathered for separate NVQ units.

10. Barnsley Met Training makes effective use of local projects. The local council projects provide valuable opportunities for trainees to be trained and assessed in a working environment. Trainees help with building work and renovating council properties. The work provides ample evidence of trainees' practical competencies. Assessors work closely with the work-based instructors, who are qualified and experienced trainers and assessors employed by Barnsley Met Training. Staff are careful to make sure that the projects are used to give trainees realistic work experience and assessment opportunities and complement the work undertaken in the training centre. Three work placements have recently been secured with employers. Employers are encouraged to become involved with the training and efforts have been made to further increase the number of placements available. However, the lack of placements means that when trainees are back at the centre when a project has ended, they work on small-scale practical jobs in order to collect evidence for the NVQ.

11. Some national trainees have been on the programme for 13 weeks. An initial awareness session for key skills has been carried out but no further training or assessment has taken place. Trainees have attended the main centre to improve their information technology skills but have not been assessed against the key skills standards.

12. Achievement rates are low, with only 36 per cent of trainees achieving their NVQs over the last two years. Eighty per cent of trainees leave their programme early. The average length of stay for youth trainees is 73 weeks and 43 weeks for adults.

Manufacturing

Grade 3

13. There are 32 trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 in performing manufacturing operations. Four are on adult training programmes, 19 are national trainees and the rest are on other youth training programmes. All national trainees and four of the other youth trainees are employed. A variety of work placements is available, for example in double-glazing, glass products, fitted furniture production and joinery. Training is provided in the workplace using learning packs for employed trainees and regular training sessions in the construction training centre for unemployed trainees. The trainees at the training centre manufacture products from wood and metal and carry out circuit board assembly. The wood and metal

products, which are mainly garden accessories and window frames, are sold commercially to local organisations. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths recorded in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured training programme
- ◆ strong teamwork between trainers and employers
- ◆ good support for trainees from diverse backgrounds

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unrealistic targets set for trainees
- ◆ inadequate planning of assessments
- ◆ low achievement rates

14. There is a well-structured four-week rolling programme, which is designed to develop the skills and knowledge of level 2 youth trainees. Training sessions are designed so that trainees can join in at any time. The well-planned theory training is carried out in a well-equipped training room with a good range of visual aids. Employed trainees or those in work placements can attend this programme for times when the theory being taught matches the job skills they are developing at work. Trainers encourage trainees to take part in the off-the-job training sessions. However, some of the non-employed trainees on placements prefer to stay at work rather than attend training, because they do not regard it as improving their employment prospects. The trainers have produced a number of open-learning packs as an alternative way of increasing trainees' knowledge of manufacturing. One-to-one tutorial sessions are also available to trainees at their workplace and these are well utilised. The effectiveness of the quality of the training the centre is recognised by a large national timber company which uses the facilities there to provide its own job skills training. Trainees are given workbooks for key skills and work towards them alongside the NVQ.

15. Trainers work well with employers and involve them in the NVQ process. In one small company the production supervisor attended the NVQ induction session, and an effective work schedule was produced for the trainee. One trainer works with all of his companies to analyse the production jobs which the trainees will work on. The job analysis is cross-referenced against the performance criteria and range statements of the NVQ standards. This process has enabled managers to monitor trainees' progress and to plan on-the-job training more effectively. The other manufacturing trainers are not yet using this technique.

16. Trainers have recognised the low achievement rates and are attempting to encourage trainees to remain on the programme and to achieve. They have created a distance learning programme for those trainees who find it difficult to attend group training sessions at the centre. Training materials are effectively prepared to

meet trainees' individual needs. One trainee who had motivation problems started on the Gateway for young people and successfully transferred to the manufacturing programme. The trainee is now into his 10th week on a placement and is progressing towards an NVQ with confidence and the prospect of employment.

17. The speed with which information on NVQs and portfolios is given to new trainees varies between one week to 10 weeks from the start of the training programme. A plan has been prepared in which they state that 20 weeks is a realistic length of time to achieve the full qualification. Individual training plans have target dates for achieving individual NVQ units. However, these target dates have been amended by up to four months because trainees' progress is slower than trainers expect. Assessment plans contain a broad indication of the units which might be assessed, but they do not indicate which elements will be assessed. The actual assessments are generally narrower in scope than the planning indicates and additional assessments are required.

18. Achievement rates for the number of trainees leaving and gaining an NVQ are low. The average length of time for all youth trainees was over 70 weeks compared with 33 weeks for adults. In 1999-2000, 42 (86 per cent) of adult trainees left training early and of those remaining, 12 achieved an NVQ at level 2. Six national trainees left training without achieving a qualification while the seventh left having achieved an NVQ at level 2, but not having completed the framework. Twenty-three (56 per cent) trainees on other youth training programmes left training early with 21 (51 per cent) of those remaining on the programme achieving an NVQ at level 2.

Business administration

Grade 3

19. There are 103 business administration trainees, 74 of whom are working towards NVQs at level 2 or 3 and 29 are working towards an information technology NVQ at level 2 or 3. Fifty are national trainees, 13 are modern apprentices, 25 are on other youth training programmes, and 15 are on an adult training programme. Sixty-six trainees were employed and 37 are on work placements. Most trainees attend Barnsley Met Training one day each week for two weeks out of every three and each has at least one visit from an assessor in the workplace every six weeks. All four administration instructors and all three information technology instructors are qualified assessors and all have or are working towards a teaching qualification. In addition there are three qualified internal verifiers. For each of the last two years (1998-99 and 1999-2000) the proportion of adults achieving NVQs was 41 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. The corresponding rates for youth trainees were 62 per cent and 26 per cent respectively. The proportion of adults leaving early over the last two years was 59 per cent and 77 per cent and for youth trainees, 38 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. The proportion of adults gaining a job on leaving was 22 per cent and 24 per cent for the last two years, and 59 per cent and 30 per cent for youth trainees. One of the strengths and one of the weaknesses listed in the self-assessment report were confirmed by inspectors who identified other strengths and

weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good, well-planned training
- ◆ excellent information technology resources
- ◆ good availability of additional courses
- ◆ excellent programme jointly run with local authority
- ◆ good-quality and well-indexed portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ key skills not fully integrated with NVQ training
- ◆ poor initial assessment

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees requested that they be allocated named individual assessors. In response, each of the eight assessors is now responsible for his or her own group of trainees, and to ensure that assessments and reviews continue during assessors' absences, a 'buddy' system is used, in which assessors are paired, with one taking responsibility for the other's trainees during their absence.

20. The theory training that is provided at the training centre is of a high standard, and trainers are enthusiastic. In addition to trainees attending on a day-release basis, additional courses are offered to all administration and information technology trainees through their employers. These include information technology skills, software packages and word-processing qualifications and are provided at no cost to the trainee or employer. A number of these additional courses are certificated.

21. The centre provides state-of-the-art computer systems and industry-standard software. There are four special computer training rooms, each with eight systems, three of which have a special screen display for trainers' instruction sessions. In addition there are two other rooms with another 58 systems available for training, self-study and assessment purposes. Eight of the personal computers have Internet access for trainees' use. There are 12 laser printers, half of which are colour, and two scanners. These resources are available for the use of all administration and information technology trainees.

22. One of the largest placement providers is the local authority, with 48 trainees. Both the local authority and its major union, together with Barnsley Met Training, carry out initial interviews in July each year after publicly advertising local authority placements. These trainees normally complete level 2 NVQs within 12 months and level 3 during the second year, and over 90 per cent gain employment with the local authority. Trainees who fail to gain employment on completing their level 2, are normally transferred to another section within the local authority to increase their experience and opportunities of employment.

23. Trainees' portfolios are of a high quality and contain a variety of work-based

evidence from trainees' individual placements or jobs. They are clearly indexed and referenced separately by trainees in an assessment record. Information technology trainees have the added advantage of being able to use CD-ROM technology to access the cumulative assessment record (CAR) templates for their own use.

24. NVQ assessments are normally carried out during the six-weekly review visits, with the review sheet being signed by the assessor, the trainee and the workplace supervisor. Progress and guidance sheets are used to encourage the collection of evidence and an assessment plan details the work to be done by trainees between visits. Trainees keep a copy of all forms in their portfolios. Trainees are aware of their progress with the qualification and know exactly which elements and units they have completed. However, workplace supervisors have little involvement in portfolio building, are unaware of the NVQ framework and are not provided with the details of the planned programmes that their trainees are following. They cannot therefore plan on-the-job training to link in with the off-the-job training, although they are responsive to requests from assessors for certain job roles to be carried out at specific times. Several supervisors have NVQ experience, some holding assessor awards, but opportunities to use this expertise have been missed.

25. Key skills are covered as part of the induction process but they are often worked on separately to the NVQ work. Many trainees, who have completed or are about to complete their NVQ in administration or information technology, still have significant amounts of key skills work to complete. Separate training sessions are being offered on application of number to those trainees who require it.

26. Trainees are not given an initial assessment in either occupational or key skills areas, are not always being placed on appropriate programmes, and do not always receive additional support when needed. However, their prior learning and achievements are accredited and used to allow trainees to progress more quickly where appropriate.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

27. There are 19 trainees in this area, comprising two adults, 11 national trainees, one modern apprentice, and five trainees on other youth training programmes. Barnsley Met Training introduced the customer service programme for adult trainees in October 1999, and in April 2000 took over the contract for youth training, for which it had previously been a subcontracted training provider. The trainees are in a wide range of work placements including local government offices, small offices and travel agencies. Barnsley Met Training has a central location with resources such as computers, fax and photocopier. Trainees also have access to additional guidance and support if they need it. Trainees are informed that a series of workshops is available throughout the year to further enhance their knowledge and understanding if necessary. The workshops are offered on alternative days so that trainees can fit them in with their individual workplace requirements. Training and assessment take place in the workplace. No

achievement rates are yet available for adult trainees, national trainees and modern apprentices, as these programmes have only been available for a short period. In the period 1999-2000 one youth trainee achieved an NVQ at level 2, and one achieved at level 3. One modern apprentice has achieved an NVQ at level 3 during the year 2000-2001. The self-assessment report included three strengths and one weakness. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ good resources both on and off the job
- ◆ high standard of evidence in portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ slow progression
- ◆ little cross-referencing of assessment evidence

28. A planned schedule for off-the-job training is given to all trainees at the start of their training, alternative dates are plotted and trainees are able to choose the workshop session most appropriate to their needs. Training sessions are well constructed, varied and interesting. Trainers use a variety of methods to maintain trainees' interest. For instance, a member of local authority staff is invited to present a session on using sign language which includes updating their knowledge on the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*. At the end of each session, the trainer gives a clear explanation of the various points discussed in the session and how it links into the NVQ standards. Trainees are able to relate the workshop activities to their NVQ and use the knowledge and skills learned to give an improved level of service in their jobs. Trainees are encouraged to use the course details as part of their portfolio of evidence for the NVQ.

29. Training resources in customer service are comprehensive and varied. They include a selection of videos, NVQ open-learning resource packs, a booklet on effective communication and telephone courtesy books. Supplementary information on the *Data Protection Act 1998* and *Computer Misuse Act 1990* is also given to trainees. The assessor has used this information when putting together appropriate off-the-job sessions for the relevant workshops. Barnsley Met Training provides trainees with open access to resources and equipment if they need to do any extra research.

30. Trainees are given an additional occupational initial assessment to establish their competence and decide on the qualification level suitable to their workplace and job role. Employers are supportive of trainees and allow them sufficient time

to spend with their assessor on a regular basis. Trainees have access to all of the employers' equipment and resources.

31. Trainees take pride in the content and quality of their portfolios. The evidence comprises a high standard of work products and a combination of personal reports and witness statements. Trainees are encouraged by their assessors to complete the matrix page of the evidence, which is then validated by the assessor. However, there is little use of cross-referencing of evidence in the portfolios of national trainees and youth trainees. Although they have collected a wealth of evidence to support the first NVQ unit, this has not been effectively cross-referenced to other units where appropriate.

32. Key skills work is well integrated with NVQ work. Key skills evidence is included with customer service evidence in trainees' portfolios and is supported with relevant off-the-job training sessions as appropriate. Trainees are knowledgeable about the NVQ and the assessment process. All trainees are in workplaces appropriate to the level of NVQ being undertaken and are in positions where they are able to produce the range of evidence required for their portfolio.

33. Trainees make slow progress towards completing their NVQs. Short-term targets are set and discussed and reviewed at monthly visits. Where trainees have not met the planned target, it is carried over to the next visit. Assessors and trainees discuss the length of time between visits and trainees can, in theory, reschedule the next appointment as and when they require a visit. In practice they rarely do this.

34. NVQ achievement rates are low. During 1998-99, six trainees left the programme, and of these, two completed their NVQs over an average of 119 weeks, one at level 2 and one at level 3.

Foundation for work

Grade 3

35. Barnsley Met Training offers prevocational training to long-term unemployed adults. There are 31 trainees on the basic employability programme, including 27 men and four women. Most trainees are referred by the Employment Service and can join the programme at any time throughout the year. Some trainees refer themselves directly. All prospective trainees are interviewed before joining the programme. At their initial assessment, individual trainees' needs are identified, including any additional support needs. The aim of the training is to provide employment skills through increasing trainees' confidence and independence, improving their team-working abilities and communication skills, as well as providing literacy and numeracy training if appropriate. The occupational areas used for placements are construction, customer service, business administration and information technology, and performing manufacturing operations. Where appropriate, trainees can achieve an NVQ at level 1. Barnsley Met Training awards its own certificates to trainees for successfully completing a job search. On average training lasts for 20 weeks, with trainees attending for a maximum programme of 40 hours a week. The programme has been operating since 1998.

Seventy-two per cent of trainees have achieved at least one target or 'milestone' before leaving. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths given in the self-assessment report, identified two additional strengths and three weaknesses, and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ trainees well matched to placements
- ◆ frequent visits to provide personal support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ staff not qualified to teach numeracy and literacy
- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ lack of understanding by trainees of training programme

36. Training is planned using a variety of methods appropriate to the activities trainees are undertaking, including large- and small-group activities, as well as working on their own. Activities are related to trainees' own experiences. For example, they were asked to identify the different kinds of reading they do every day as an introduction to one of the units in the wordpower qualification. Trainees are encouraged to talk in a group situation and listen to others, as well as working as a team. Materials used to develop literacy skills are appropriate to each individual's interests and level of ability.

37. All trainees are expected to undertake a work placement as part of the programme. Trainees are informed about the range of work placements available at interview. It is at this time that trainees express their preferred occupational area. All trainees are placed in their first choice of placement on completion of the initial assessment and induction. Once in the work placement, trainees receive frequent visits from the training co-ordinator. For some trainees, this is as frequent as every week, particularly at the beginning of a placement. During the visit, the training co-ordinator checks to ensure that trainees have settled, whether any problems have arisen and if the training is appropriate to their needs.

38. Staff have a broad range of appropriate qualifications. Basic skills training in numeracy and literacy is carried out in a friendly and imaginative style designed to motivate and put trainees at ease. However, staff are not qualified to teach literacy and numeracy.

39. Trainees lack understanding of their training programme. Most trainees do not understand the purpose of the initial assessment, which lasts for 15 days. Some trainees find the activities they undertake at this stage of the programme repetitive and do not understand how they relate to their chosen occupational area. Once in

their placements, most trainees do not understand the purpose of the off-the-job training, why they are asked to do it and its relevance to their individual development. Most trainees do not know in advance when the off-the-job training will occur during the time they are on the scheme. Trainees find the documents in their files confusing and unhelpful and, in most cases, irrelevant.

40. Achievement rates are low. No trainees completed their individual training plans in 1999-2000. Nevertheless, 72 per cent of trainees completed at least one milestone. Eight trainees (16 per cent) gained employment.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

41. Barnsley Met Training uses the borough council's equal opportunities policy. The council has an equal opportunities officer who has responsibility for promoting understanding of equal opportunities and supporting other parts of the council's activities, including Barnsley Met Training. Barnsley Met Training has developed an equal opportunities policy statement. At induction, all trainees and staff are issued with a copy of the policy statement, and harassment and complaints procedures. Reference is made to equal opportunities issues on most information and promotional materials. Responsibility for monitoring and implementing the equal opportunities policy lies with the quality assurance manager at Barnsley Met Training. Trainees are monitored at recruitment for gender and ethnicity. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and two of the weaknesses given in the self-assessment report. They identified two more strengths and two more weaknesses and awarded a lower grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective complaints procedure
- ◆ innovative approach to dealing with harassment
- ◆ good response to individual staff and trainees' needs to remove any barriers to training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements
- ◆ equal opportunities policy not reviewed
- ◆ out-of-date staff recruitment and selection procedures
- ◆ no use of equal opportunities data to guide decision making

42. Barnsley Met Training has a complaints system and procedure, a copy of

which is issued to both staff and trainees at induction. The quality assurance manager within Training & Employment Services has responsibility for ensuring that all complaints are dealt with according to the council's procedures, and she monitors the complaints procedure. All complaints are recorded systematically and monitored through to resolution. A quarterly feedback report is supplied to the council which identifies the number of new complaints, the number of ongoing complaints and those that have been resolved. Once a complaint has been resolved, a brief questionnaire is sent to the complainant asking them how satisfied they feel about the way in which the complaint had been handled.

43. There are two harassment officers within the development programme area, one man and one woman. The harassment officers offer a confidential service, which is easily accessible to both staff and trainees. The service is guided by clear procedures for managing complaints of this nature, some of which are of a very sensitive and delicate nature. Where complaints of harassment have been made, they have been dealt with effectively and sensitively and, in some cases, resulted in training being offered to both staff and trainees.

44. Staff at Barnsley Met Training are responsive to staff and trainees' needs and provide specialist equipment if required. For example, a member of staff with a visual impairment is using a computer with an extra-large screen as well as a magnifier. Such resources are also available for trainees. Barnsley Met Training has a placement set aside for trainees with particular identified needs. The staff member who works with this placement has specialist expertise including counselling and guidance skills. Barnsley Met Training has a flexible approach to meeting trainees' needs in order to ensure all can access training. For example, training timetables can be amended to allow trainees to meet children from school, and the company offers financial support towards childcare arrangements. In addition, there is access to interpreters and translators as well as signers. Training in equal opportunities is available to staff and has recently been undertaken by many within the organisation.

45. The council's equal opportunities policy is not reviewed on a regular or frequent basis. The current policy is out of date and the version in use has not been revised for 11 years, since 1989. It does not make reference to changes in legislation, which have occurred since that time, such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

46. The council's procedures and guidance documents for staff selection and recruitment do not ensure equality of opportunity. The handbook makes reference to the council's equal opportunities policy of 1989, so the information given is not current.

47. Data on the gender and ethnic background of trainees are recorded at the initial interview. Information about disability is not gathered. Trainees are not asked if they have any specific needs. The data that are gathered are not analysed, or used to plan or promote equal opportunities in the wider community. The make-up of trainees currently on programmes conforms to gender stereotyping. For example, there are no female trainees in construction and there are no male trainees in

customer service. Barnsley Met Training is making no attempt to address this.

48. Employers' equal opportunities arrangements are not systematically monitored. The system relies on employers signing a form to agree that they support equal opportunities but no check is made to ensure that this is the case. New documents have recently been introduced to allow Barnsley Met Training to monitor and evaluate employers' equal opportunities practices. It is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

Trainee support

Grade 3

49. Trainees are referred to Barnsley Met Training by the careers service, or the Employment Service in the case of adult trainees and New Deal clients. A member of Barnsley Met Training interviews all potential trainees. The interview includes an initial assessment of their basic skills and a discussion about the reasons for choosing the particular occupational area, including any previous experience and qualifications already held. All trainees receive a two-day general induction. During induction, individual support arrangements are agreed and recorded in trainees' files. A second occupational induction takes place, either at the trainees' placements or in the training centre for those trainees who are in full-time training in the centre. Reviews are carried out at regular intervals, usually every two to four weeks. All trainees who are not employed receive job-search training. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and one of the weaknesses included in the self-assessment report. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified and the same grade awarded.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of initial interview to identify any support needs
- ◆ good, well-planned induction
- ◆ regular and frequent opportunities for trainees to discuss their progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of involvement by employers in review process
- ◆ no record of support details on individual training plans
- ◆ no preparation for non-employed trainees leaving the programme

50. Potential trainees are warmly received at the first interview and are given accurate advice. The interview explores occupational skills, qualifications and their preferred occupational area. Basic skills are also assessed in a non-threatening manner during the first interview. Individual training needs and any support needs identified at the initial interview are passed onto the induction trainer and the occupational training officer when the applicant joins the

programme.

51. The two-day induction programme is carried out for all trainees, including those who return for further training. The induction course is well structured and the content clearly relevant to the trainees. The style of training used encourages trainees' participation and the content is tailored to trainees' requirements. Trainees build up a comprehensive catalogue of information, which is contained in an attractive folder. The induction includes a training agreement, which informs trainees of their rights and responsibilities. A second occupationally focused induction is carried out on the third day and the training officer responsible for the trainee prepares their individual training plan with them. General information about the placement is given at this time and employers contribute to this.

52. Trainees have frequent and regular opportunities to discuss their progress with their trainers. The maximum time between reviews is six weeks but is typically four weeks and as frequent as twice-weekly for those trainees who have particular support needs. Personal advice is available to trainees throughout their programme, including a freephone link which can be used during working hours. Basic skills training needs are assessed during the induction course and trainees requiring structured basic skills training, including wordpower and numberpower, are referred to a specialist trainer. Reports from the basic skills trainer are sent to training officers, but this information is not always added to the individual training plans.

53. Training officers do not systematically update individual training plans. The individual training plan is concentrated on the occupational aspects and does not include additional support details. The additional support details are sometimes recorded on the review sheets. Trainees' reviews do not involve the employers in the discussions but simply require an employer's signature when the review is completed.

54. An interview is held with all trainees leaving the programme, but there is no preparation programme for trainees who are not employed. Although they receive some job-search training during their programme, this can be in the early part of the training, rather than in the later stages when it becomes more relevant.

Management of training

Grade 3

55. Barnsley Met Training is part of the Training and Employment Services Division of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This in turn is part of the council's development programme area, one of the Council's four programme areas. There is a clear organisational structure for Barnsley Met Training. Some management controls and functional guidance are provided at council or programme area level, some at division level, and some by Barnsley Met Training itself. Barnsley Met Training has its own policies and procedures for most aspects of its work. In some areas, for example personnel, it is also subject to procedures from a higher level. The Training and Employment Services Division achieved the

Investors in People Standard in 1996 and was successfully reassessed in 1998. Barnsley Met Training does not subcontract any of its training to other training providers. It issues standard contracts work to employers or placement providers which are supplemented by detailed information packs. The self-assessment report included several strengths and one weakness. Some of the strengths were no more than normal practice or were judged not to significantly affect the trainees' experience. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good strategic and operational planning process involving staff
- ◆ clear and effective lines of communication
- ◆ well-managed staff development framework

GOOD PRACTICE

An assessor in one occupational area is on long-term sick leave. An occupationally experienced staff member from another department is being seconded and trained as an assessor in order to cover. Until she is qualified to take over on her own, her manager is carrying out the workplace assessment and review visits.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ employers' lack of understanding of values, policies, strategies and targets
- ◆ no systematic sharing of good practice

56. Team briefings are held monthly at senior management, management and team levels. Briefings are provided by the development programme area director, by the head of the Training and Employment Services, and by the training manager. The provider's values, policies, strategies and targets are communicated and discussed at these briefings. When appointed, staff receive a small laminated card with a brief general statement of the Training and Employment Services Division's mission, the importance of the business plan, communications, staff training and development, and performance review and evaluation.

57. Employers and work-placement providers have a poor understanding of those values, policies, strategies and targets. New procedures and documents have been developed within the last few weeks. Staff have developed clear and effective lines of communication both internally and with employers since taking over direct responsibility for youth training. Barnsley Met Training has developed a formal contract with all placement providers which was recently sent out to all employers. It is monitoring employers' responses.

58. The Training and Employment Services Division has produced an annual business plan outlining policy and strategy for the next three years. This is supported by yearly operational plans with quantified performance indicators. The staff and team meeting framework is used to build up and generate ownership of these plans. Contractual targets are issued annually for all sections and agreed with staff through the meeting framework. Performance is monitored each month against targets and again discussed at management meetings. Relationships with

placement providers and other agencies are good.

59. There is inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training, which is dependent on individual training officers and assessors. The new contract for placement providers requires employers to outline the on-the-job training which will be given to the trainee, and to relate it to the NVQ requirements, before returning a signed copy. These requirements are explained in a new information manual for employers.

60. Barnsley Met Training has detailed procedures for staff induction and professional development. Training needs are analysed using surveys, and the results are recorded on individual training plans for staff. Training records and development plans are logged in individual staff training 'passports', for every staff member. Barnsley Met Training's policy is that all trainers should have or be working towards training qualifications at NVQ level 3 as well as assessor qualifications. All staff have job descriptions and understand their roles. There is also a detailed matrix of responsibilities covering 30 staff and seven areas of activity. All staff have access to e-mail. Individual and team achievements are recognised.

61. A computerised management-information system is used to produce monthly data in tabular, pie chart and histogram form for the monthly management meeting. The system also provides data on trainees leaving the programme and achievement rates and information on the frequency of reviews. Since parts of this system are new it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

62. Despite the clear and effective lines of communication with Barnsley Met Training, there are variations in practice between and within occupational areas. In addition, some confusion arises from the existence of different procedures at provider, division, programme area and council levels, such as staff recruitment and appointment procedures.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

63. Barnsley Council's Training and Employment Services Division holds the ISO 9001 quality standard. The council's trained auditors from work areas other than the ones being audited carry out regular and structured internal audits of Barnsley Met Training. Internal verification is subject to written procedures. Internal verification and assessment issues are standing items on team meeting agendas. Quality assurance is a standing item on the agendas of the monthly staff and management meetings. A continuous improvement group meets every other month. Some of the strengths included in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ detailed quality assurance framework
- ◆ good evaluation and use of trainees and employees' views

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some weak internal verification practices
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of training by managers

64. The Council's Training and Employment Services Division has a designated manager responsible for quality assurance. It also has clearly recorded quality assurance arrangements. Many of these refer exclusively to Barnsley Met Training which also has its own systematic internal audit procedure. Trained internal auditors check designated areas for compliance. Each area is audited at least annually. Some internal audit reports are incomplete and items on the audit matrix have not been covered. Other reports are not signed or actions are not signed off. In others, some sections are blank. Quality assurance is a standing item on management and team meeting agendas.

65. The views of trainees and employees are sought and taken into account in the self-assessment process. In June 1999, detailed questionnaires were developed and issued to employees and adult trainees, seeking their views on various aspects of training. The questionnaires related to the quality statements in *Raising the Standard*. There was a good response, returns were evaluated by occupational area and the resulting summaries were sent out to the training sections for discussion. All staff contributed to a self-assessment report for their sector, all of which were then used to prepare the overall self-assessment report. The completed self-assessment report was then circulated to all staff for discussion. The same process was repeated in December 1999 for the inspection self-assessment report. Managers made comparisons between the June and December summaries of the questionnaire responses. An action plan was also produced.

66. The internal verification process is not consistent across all of the occupational areas. In some occupational areas there is a lack of observation of assessors' performance. Planning of internal verification focuses heavily on moderating completed units and whole qualifications. There are cases of assessors failing to agree specific assessment plans with trainees which have not been picked up by the internal verification process.

67. Trainees are asked for their views on the training sessions they attend, although there is no routine observation and monitoring provided by managers of the training. Feedback is gained from trainees at regular intervals on various aspects of their training. Trainees evaluate the induction programme and improvements are then made to it. Questionnaires are also used to find out the reasons why trainees have left and decided not to continue with their training.

