



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1998

Stubbing Court CTG

SUMMARY

Stubbing Court CTG provides good training in horse care. It uses a wide range of employers in different equine disciplines. Excellent skills-check booklets are available for trainees of all levels to identify and track learning needs. An excellent-quality key skills toolkit is used to develop an understanding of key skills in an occupational context. Most employers produce good monthly reports on trainees' progress. Recording of trainee support is weak. Formal training in the workplace is sporadic. A good-quality procedures manual is used, both by staff and to inform employers. Some tracking of trainees' progress is poor.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive vocational skills-check booklets
- ◆ excellent provision for training in work placements
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities in marketing materials
- ◆ reinforcement of workplace induction by company staff
- ◆ regular industry updates to employers

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor assessment of related knowledge
- ◆ weak recording of trainee support
- ◆ weak tracking of trainees' progress
- ◆ insufficient internal verification documentation

INTRODUCTION

1. Stubbing Court Combined Training Group (CTG) is based near Chesterfield, in Derbyshire. It was established in 1983 by the present manager of the organisation, in response to a clear perceived need to provide a well-trained equine workforce for high-class competition horses, both in this country and abroad. The company offers training at NVQ levels 1 to 3 in horse care, along with key skills. It contracts with South Derbyshire, North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). A small percentage of private clients uses Stubbing Court CTG to achieve national vocational qualifications (NVQs). A team of four staff administers the programmes and tracks trainees' progress. Most of the training takes place in the workplace, the only off-the-job training being for first aid, riding and road safety.

2. The number of Derbyshire school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 43.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 53 per cent, for 1997. The unemployment rate has fallen and is now in line with the national figure of 5.1 per cent, as at November 1997, but employment opportunities in the agricultural industry continue to decline. Lifetime target achievements in north Derbyshire are in line with the national average. North Nottinghamshire has a high percentage of unemployment among those aged 18 to 24. In south Derbyshire, progress has been mixed for national training and education targets (NTETs), for the foundation learning targets. Improvement in foundation learning level 1 is counterbalanced by a slight decline in level 3. Foundation level 2 is proving difficult to measure. The proportion of minority ethnic groups in south Derbyshire stands at 5 per cent; 10 per cent for the whole of Derbyshire. Trainees come from a range of urban and rural areas in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. In some cases, employers provide trainees with accommodation.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The whole team at Stubbing Court produced the self-assessment report after attending training provided by the co-ordinating TEC. The report gave an outline of the company's activities and did not fully address the strengths and weaknesses of the company. Labour market information was based on the whole of the equine industry. Several strengths identified by the company were no more than normal practice, but further strengths were identified by inspectors in trainee support, along with some weaknesses in management of training.

4. A team of two inspectors spent eight days at the company during September 1998. They met company staff, 28 trainees, six past trainees and 12 employers. They visited 16 work placements and reviewed company documentation, trainees' portfolios and awarding body documents.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture (equine studies)		1	4		1	6
Total	0	1	4	0	1	6

Agriculture (equine studies)

Grade 2

5. Stubbing Court provides training leading to NVQ levels 1 and 2 in horse care, and level 3 in horse care and management. It also offers key skills to level 2. A wide range of work placements, from carriage driving, trekking and competition to commercial yards, is available to trainees. Many of the employers are reputable trainers in their respective equine disciplines. All of the company's staff are trained assessors for horse care, and two have special responsibility for key skills up to NVQ level 2. There are 54 trainees, including 26 modern apprentices, 14 national trainees and 14 youth trainees. All training takes place in the workplace, except for riding, road safety and first aid. Trainees are given a standard text for the appropriate level of programme to ensure that the correct knowledge and understanding is consistently developed. Where some training is unavailable in the workplace, arrangements are made by the company for trainees to attend off-the-job training sessions at other employers' premises. Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed by the company in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive skills-check booklets
- ◆ excellent resources for training in work placements
- ◆ trainees encouraged to use wide range of evidence-gathering methods
- ◆ good development of key skills material
- ◆ monthly progress reports produced by employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor assessment of related knowledge
- ◆ lack of feedback on theory work for some trainees

6. Excellent skills-check booklets for NVQ levels 1 to 3 have been produced by the company. These are used extensively by all trainees and employers to establish whether there are any gaps in trainees' skills and to record when everything is complete, enabling employers to establish achievement of prior learning and to identify training needs and completion of training. The completed books are then used as evidence of competence for the NVQ units. A detailed health and safety questionnaire, along with a wide range of assignments for knowledge development, is included. The assessment of these assignments is poor. Many are not marked to clarify understanding, resulting in little feedback to trainees. The company has just completed the development of detailed, good-quality key skills toolkits for all aspects of key skills, in an occupational context. These materials have yet to be fully distributed in the workplace. Employers are paid to provide a detailed monthly report on trainees' progress. Where there are no workplace assessors, these reports are also used to inform the company of assessment needs. Trainees are encouraged to use diverse methods of evidence-gathering, and the use of photographs and videos is widespread. Staff are actively involved in the regional equine industry, and this means that trainees' work placements are well known to the company and that those training resources available are internationally renowned. Facilities available include carriage driving yards, some international showjumpers and eventers, trekking and a variety of competition and commercial yards.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

7. Stubbing Court has a clearly written equal opportunities policy. It endeavours to promote the understanding of equal opportunities throughout the organisation. The policy is given to all trainees and work providers in their information pack. It has an open-access recruitment policy. The information material sent to potential trainees by the company clearly states that Stubbing Court is an equal opportunities company and that it welcomes all trainees. Inspectors agreed with the grade awarded by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear promotion of equal opportunities on marketing materials
- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunities throughout the company
- ◆ clearly written equal opportunities policy
- ◆ good achievement by trainees with severe disabilities
- ◆ policy distributed to all trainees and work-placement providers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities
- ◆ no analysis of catchment area to provide targets for recruitment

8. The company's target for recruiting trainees from minority ethnic groups is low, but, during its 15 years in business, it has exceeded its target in successfully attracting trainees from minority ethnic groups. Trainees with learning difficulties are placed with appropriate work providers, and most of these trainees achieve NVQ level 1. Two trainees with severe limb disabilities have recently successfully completed training. The company has a good reputation in the area of training for those with a wide range of disabilities, and over 90 per cent of them achieve qualifications. The company does not record or monitor any aspect of equal opportunities. It does not promote opportunities in the equine industry to groups of people in the local population, who would not normally enter training in this occupational area.

Trainee support

Grade 2

9. The four members of the company's staff share in supporting trainees. All

induction is in the workplace, where there is good support, followed by initial assessment of basic skills. Guidance is given on the appropriate programme for the trainee. Inspectors found further strengths not identified by the company and awarded a higher grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ numeracy skills are assessed in an appropriate industrial context
- ◆ good reinforcement of workplace induction by company staff
- ◆ severely disadvantaged trainees well supported in the workplace
- ◆ regular opportunities for trainees to discuss progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor recording of trainee support
- ◆ trainees not given formal interview by company

10. All potential trainees are given objective advice through the company's literature and by enquiry over the telephone. The company does not formally interview trainees. The potential employer interviews trainees, using good guidance notes from the company. Once the employer has accepted trainees on the training programme, the company visits the workplace to carry out induction. Staff visit the work placement approximately two weeks later to reinforce the health and safety induction and to assess whether it is the correct placement for the trainee. An assessment of basic numeracy skills is also carried out, using an industry-specific document. In many cases, these tests are not marked or signed and dated, and specific learning needs are not always identified or actioned. In the case of trainees identified as having additional learning needs, there is no direct support given by the company, but support is given to the employer in the form of extra remuneration to ensure that the trainee is appropriately catered for. Specialist equipment has been made for trainees, for example, a special set of reins was made for a trainee with a false hand. The recording of trainee support is sporadic, occasionally resulting in trainees' needs not being fully identified.

Management of training

Grade 3

11. The company has clearly written policies, which are understood and supported by all staff and workplace providers. Policies are effectively implemented, and measurable targets are set. Lines of communication in the organisation are through a daily diary, which is used effectively by the small team, and, although formal meetings take place only twice a year, all company staff are aware of each other's rôles. The main thrust of the management of training is providing access for trainees to a selection of employers in the equine industry. The company does not structure the training on a day-to-day basis in the workplace, as all trainees are employed. Several weaknesses were identified by inspectors who awarded a lower grade than

that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good co-operative relationships between the company and work providers
- ◆ a good range of work placements
- ◆ regular industry updates given to employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ all on-the-job training is managed by employers
- ◆ no formal staff appraisals
- ◆ some trainees receive no formal training

12. The quality of training depends largely on where trainees are placed. Most receive good, frequent and well-organised training. However, a few receive no formal training from the employer. The company has built up a first-class network of employers, over many years, able to provide a wide range of work placements. Employers agree, on a yearly basis, to assist in the collection of evidence, provide assessment facilities, correctly complete forms for monitoring and assessment and to record achievement. The company sends regular industry updates to employers, for example, details of the ragwort campaign promoted by the British Horse Society. There is no formal staff appraisal system. Staff development is informal, but contractual requirements are met. A major staff development campaign in 1993-94 resulted in 19 trained workplace assessors, with 18 taking assessor training with the National Horse Education and Training Council (NHETC), but not achieving assessor awards. However, no further training of workplace assessors has taken place since then.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

13. A quality assurance policy statement and manual, containing procedures, are produced and reviewed each contractual year. The procedures clearly describe the different stages through which staff and employers must go, as trainees progress through a programme. All employers are required to renew their contract with the company each year. This involves the employer in both re-issuing the equal opportunities policy and health & safety procedure and sending back employers' liability details to the company. All employers are provided with the Health and Safety Executive booklet on health and safety in horse riding establishments. Not all of the quality assurance procedures are disseminated to those actively involved with training. Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-documented and clear quality procedures manual

- ◆ annual recontracting with providers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak tracking of trainees' progress
- ◆ resources in the workplace are not formally checked or monitored
- ◆ insufficient internal verification documentation

14. Although some internal audits are carried out to ensure that records and procedures are consistent, some trainees' files reveal gaps in the programme's procedures, making it difficult to track trainees' progress readily. None of the documents is dated or numbered, so the company is not able to clearly identify when the procedure was last updated. Internal verification does take place, but documentation on the verification of assessors is sparse and of little benefit in updating assessors and verification. The external verifier has also identified the weakness of internal verification documentation.

15. Although excellent resources are available to trainees in the workplace, details are not recorded to ensure their continued availability, especially to NVQ level 3 trainees. There is a system to track trainees' progress through element and unit completion. Employers supply monthly written reports on trainees' progress to track their advancement through element and unit completion. However, this is occasionally haphazard and inefficient, owing to variation of reports from employers.