



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT DECEMBER 1999

Newstart, Burton College

SUMMARY

Training offered in engineering is well structured and effective, especially at foundation level. Hairdressing and information technology training is also above average, and trainees clearly understand what they need to do to achieve success. The catering programme has improved considerably since the first inspection. The on-the-job training and assessment are well planned, and effective workplace reviews now take place. In most occupational areas, employers do not have enough information about their role in training. There is sufficient general support for trainees, and strenuous efforts are made to meet any special individual needs. Quality assurance systems are well structured and beginning to effect improvements.

As a result of the reinspection of Newstart, Burton College, the original published report text for hospitality (catering) has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	2
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	4
Hair & beauty	2
Health, care & public services	3

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

REINSPECTION	
Hospitality	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training provision
- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ experienced, well-qualified staff
- ◆ coherent strategic planning

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of work-based assessment in some areas
- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ weak communication between college departments and Newstart
- ◆ insufficient integration of key skills

INTRODUCTION

1. Newstart is the section in Burton College which manages government-funded, work-based training. It forms part of the college's business development unit. Burton College itself is the largest provider of further education in east Staffordshire. It also draws students and trainees from south Derbyshire, northwest Leicestershire and north Staffordshire. The Further Education Funding Council funds the vast majority of the college's work. The college has a long history of providing work-based training.

2. Newstart offers training for young people in a wide range of occupational areas. The largest number of trainees can be found in business administration, engineering, care, hairdressing, motor vehicle technology, retail and distribution. Other specialist areas include accounting, information technology, construction and catering. Most trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3, through modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and youth training programmes. Some trainees are also working towards other nationally recognised qualifications. All the training with young people is funded through contracts with Staffordshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and South Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE). There were 379 young people in training at the time of inspection. A few areas were not inspected, owing to the small number of trainees. At the time of reinspection, there are 14 trainees on the catering programmes, which is five more than there were at the time of the first inspection.

3. Most of the training is delivered through a combination of off-the-job training in the college and work-based training at employers' premises. Trainees commonly attend college for one day each week, during term time, and may also have access to other less formal support, covering key skills, for example. Training in retail, distribution and customer service is delivered entirely in the workplace. There is a wide range of organisations involved in either employing trainees or providing placements. These range from large hospitals and local authorities to small retailers and builders.

4. The Staffordshire area shows a heavy dependence on manufacturing, which accounts for nearly 30 per cent of employment. Full-time jobs for men are in decline. In the south Derbyshire area, employment in the clerical, engineering and construction sectors is declining, while employment in professional and service industries is growing. In January 1998, unemployment stood at 4.4 per cent in Staffordshire and 3.4 per cent in south Derbyshire, compared with a West Midlands average of 5.2 per cent and a national average of 5.3 per cent. At the time of reinspection, the unemployment figure for Staffordshire and south Derbyshire was 3.6 per cent for both areas, compared with a West Midlands average of 4.6 per cent and a national average of 3.8 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups make up 2.6 per cent of the Staffordshire population and 1.6 per cent of the south



Derbyshire population. In Staffordshire, these groups are concentrated in the Stoke-on-Trent and east Staffordshire areas.

5. Educational attainment levels vary considerably among different districts in Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Overall achievement levels in Staffordshire and south Derbyshire are marginally above regional and national averages when measured against the foundation learning targets of the national targets for education and training. In 1997, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 46.3 per cent in Staffordshire and 50 per cent in south Derbyshire, compared with a national average of 53 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 48.1 per cent in Staffordshire and 49.1 per cent in south Derbyshire, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent. 'Staying-on' rates for pupils in full-time education in 1997 stood at 67.5 per cent in Staffordshire and 59.5 per cent in south Derbyshire. Staying-on rates in 1999 were 72.1 per cent and 69 per cent respectively. Newstart competes with a wide range of further education colleges and private training providers, for trainees.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. Newstart produced its self-assessment report approximately three months before the first inspection. Newstart's staff and their colleagues in the various schools in the college were involved in producing the report which is comprehensive and detailed, but, in several areas, identifies as strengths practices which should be considered normal operating requirements. The proposed action-plan was particularly detailed. Most of the judgements included in the reports for engineering, hairdressing, business administration, trainee support, equal opportunities, quality assurance and management of training were found to be accurate. In other areas, weaknesses found during inspection were either understated or not identified during the self-assessment process. Following inspection, Newstart produced an action plan which addressed the weaknesses identified through self-assessment and in the Training Standards Council's original report. In October 1999, Newstart produced a report describing how the weaknesses identified in the catering training had been addressed and detailing the improvements which had been made. The action plan gave an accurate picture of the changes, but no further strengths and weaknesses were identified and no grade was awarded by Newstart.

7. During the first inspection a team of 10 inspectors spent a total of 40 days at Newstart during September 1998. The seven main occupational areas offered by the organisation were inspected, together with the smaller provision in catering. Inspectors examined a wide range of documents generated by awarding bodies, subcontractors, Staffordshire TEC, South Derbyshire CCTE and the college itself. Interviews were conducted with 80 trainees, 56 workplace supervisors/employers and 19 of Newstart and the college's staff. Inspectors visited 66 workplaces and observed five training sessions, six assessments and 13 reviews. Trainees' portfolios, assessment records, individual training plans and learning materials were also scrutinised.

8. Reinspection was carried out by a different lead inspector and one associate inspector for a total of four days. They interviewed seven trainees, seven of Newstart and the college's staff and seven workplace supervisors and employers. They visited five workplaces. Two training sessions, one assessment and one review were observed. They examined trainees' files and portfolios, assessment records, individual training plans, learning materials and management data.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

9. There are 27 trainees involved in construction training. Nine trainees are modern apprentices; the remaining trainees are on other vocational training programmes. These trainees are following NVQ programmes at levels 1 to 3 (in plumbing, painting and decorating, brickwork and carpentry) and BTEC national certificates

(in built environment/civil engineering). All are employed and attend college on a day-release basis. All assessment takes place off the job, at college. Tutors are well qualified. Workshops have limited space, but are adequate and meet awarding bodies' requirements. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were partially validated, but others were identified during inspection, thus lowering the grade proposed by Newstart.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexibility of programmes
- ◆ action-planning particularly evident in BTEC programmes
- ◆ effective feedback to trainees
- ◆ staff strongly committed to helping trainees to succeed

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of continuity of staff carrying out reviews
- ◆ limited information given to employers about NVQ process
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ on-the-job assessment is not used

10. Roll-on/roll-off provision for NVQ programmes and two-semester BTEC national certificate programmes help trainees to study at their own pace and to increase opportunities for success. Detailed individual action-planning for BTEC trainees gives clear, demanding, but realistic, targets for progression. NVQ achievements are well documented and cross-referenced. Trainees are fully aware of the NVQ system: portfolio-building, evidence-gathering and the assessment process. Readiness for assessment is negotiated, the process is well documented, and feedback, about progress and performance, is given effectively.

11. Initial and basic skills' testing does not take place systematically. Monitoring reviews take place regularly for most trainees, but this is a pastoral process, rather than one involving goal-setting or planning for achievement. Individual training plans are seen as contractual, rather than working documents and do not detail progress. Over the last two years, there has been poor continuity of staff who carry out reviews, resulting in failure to follow up some of the issues raised. Employers have limited access to information about NVQ systems and requirements and about Newstart's policies and procedures. They are not involved in the planning or progress of training, as reviews do not monitor this aspect of the NVQ programme. There is no liaison or co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. This results in missed opportunities for skills to be practised and assessment to take place. On-the-job experience is used, in some instances, for portfolio-building, but there are no opportunities for work-based assessments. Key skills are currently integrated in the NVQ programme for plumbing, but the way in which they are

delivered is under review to bring them in line with other college provision. Achievements recorded so far are exceptionally low, at 8.3 NVQs per 100 leavers in 1997-98.

Engineering

Grade 2

12. There are 36 trainees in engineering. Of these, 27 are modern apprentices and nine are vocational trainees. All trainees are employed and working towards NVQ qualifications. Most trainees attend Burton College full time during their first year and achieve NVQ level 2 and a supporting qualification. In their second year, trainees spend one day each week at college, and gather evidence in the workplace towards their NVQ level 3. Assessors attached to the school of science and engineering carry out assessment in the workplace and help to collect performance evidence. Achievement rates for 1996-97 and 1997-98 were 69.4 and 64 NVQs per 100 leavers respectively. These rates are average for the sector. There are also 60 trainees on motor-vehicle training programmes at NVQ levels 2 and 3. There are 21 modern apprentices on light- and heavy-vehicle repair courses and four trainees on vehicle-body courses. Most trainees are employed and attend off-the-job training one day each week for underpinning knowledge, together with an additional eight one-week block release periods for practical training and assessment at college. All staff are occupationally competent, and most hold trainer and assessor qualifications. The training facilities include a well-equipped workshop for practical training and assessment, a classroom for delivering related underpinning knowledge and a computer room. Some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are standard practice, and additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed by Newstart.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff
- ◆ effective tracking systems at NVQ level 2
- ◆ regular trainee reviews
- ◆ frequent and comprehensive work-based assessment
- ◆ well-maintained log books
- ◆ good relationships among trainees, trainers and workplace staff
- ◆ effective, well-planned training
- ◆ well-maintained and resourced workshops

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ key skills not integrated in all programmes
- ◆ some trainees do not understand their assessment route
- ◆ some workplace staff have no knowledge of NVQs

- ◆ no assessment planning at NVQ level 3
- ◆ unit achievement is not recorded at NVQ level 3

13. Most engineering trainees attend college full time in their first year and pursue NVQ level 2 in a variety of trade areas. Training is carried out in good workshops, which are clean, tidy and contain a wide range of well-maintained equipment. There is a good supply of machine tools, supported by a wide range of hand tools. The welding and fabrication workshop has recently been refurbished and has new portable extractors and welding equipment. The progress of students is tracked very closely with an effective system which identifies progressive achievement. This good practice is not followed through to NVQ level 3, where no documented tracking system is in place, and progressive achievement at unit level is not, subsequently, recorded. All training at the college, both practical and theoretical, is well planned and delivered, by teaching staff who have a high level of technical expertise and are qualified teachers. Two members hold the accreditation of prior learning adviser award. The interactive computer software package at college allows trainees to monitor their own progress. In most workplaces, engineering trainees follow planned, structured training. Some companies have formal training programmes, which have an element of recording of progress. Supervisors and managers carry out periodic assessment. This reflects the high quality of most work placements where trainees receive effective on-the-job training. In motor vehicle, trainees are confident that they can rely on staff to resolve any work problems in a professional and caring manner. The 'student of the year award for endeavour and achievement 1998' was presented by the Institute of Road Transport Engineers to a trainee working towards a heavy-vehicle NVQ. A recently appointed member of staff regularly reviews motor-vehicle trainees' progress. Engineering trainees produce well-maintained logbooks which contain good, clear descriptions of tasks carried out in college and at work. In all cases, these are supported by clear, well-constructed drawings.

14. Some employers and trainees do not understand how the work-based evidence collected in trainees' logbooks will meet the requirements of the NVQ. Some employers do not understand the active rôle which they should play in the process. Lack of assessment planning reflects this, and recorded assessment is a summative activity after most of the evidence has been collected. College staff are unaware of the additional training and development unit required in the modern apprenticeship framework. For motor-vehicle trainees, assessment in the workplace is not formally planned. However, opportunities for assessment are used as they arise naturally, and best use of this is made during review visits. The visiting workplace assessor makes good use of question-and-answer techniques during assessment to evaluate trainees' understanding of underpinning knowledge. Answers are recorded, and trainees countersign the assessment document which is used as evidence. Where particular competencies cannot be assessed in a work placement, arrangements are made to use the centre's facilities. Formal assessment in the workshop takes place during the block-release periods, however this approach provides limited flexibility for trainees, who miss this opportunity. Key skills are not fully integrated in all

programmes and, again, are left towards the end of the programme for some trainees. For NVQ level 2 trainees, the situation is better, and key skills are being introduced at the beginning of their programme.

15. Effective working relationships are developed between engineering trainees, on NVQ level 2 courses, and their trainers. This continues when they move to the workplace, where they are supported by on-the-job trainers and supervisors. Good working relationships are formed between Newstart's assessors and work placement staff, but these staff are not fully involved in the review process; some have little knowledge of the NVQ process. There is no effective formal internal quality system in place covering assessment of motor-vehicle trainees. Internal verification of trainees' achievement is not documented; assessors' performance is not monitored. Motor-vehicle staff are not aware of Newstart's written internal verification policy or associated procedures.

Business administration

Grade 3

16. Newstart has 48 trainees in business administration, undertaking NVQs in administration and accounting at levels 2 and 3 through youth training, national traineeship and modern apprenticeship programmes. Sixty per cent of trainees are employed, with the remainder in appropriate work placements. Day-release training takes place at Burton College, and, in the workplace, training is supported by good open-learning material. There are also 21 trainees working towards the achievement of NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in the use of information technology. Most trainees are registered for youth training programmes. More recently, modern apprenticeships have been introduced, and five trainees are registered. In addition, three trainees are registered for national traineeships. At NVQ level 2, all information technology trainees attend Burton College for day release and are placed with an employer for the rest of the week. NVQ level 3 trainees are primarily work-based and attend college only when they need support or to gain underpinning knowledge. Sixty-two per cent of trainees are employed. College-based assessors undertake assessment, using evidence drawn from the workplace and college. There are no resident work-based assessors.

17. Work-based training in information technology is relatively new to the college, having started in April 1997, when staff and trainees were transferred from another local provider. Organisational and staffing changes have occurred since the self-assessment report was produced. Information technology training is now located in the newly formed school of computing and information technology, and a new course tutor has been appointed. The self-assessment report failed to recognise many of the shortcomings in business administration training, and many of the strengths identified in the report were seen by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. The grade awarded by inspectors was, therefore, lower than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ frequent monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ excellent learning resources, incorporating provision for key skills
- ◆ stimulating and well-delivered, off-the-job training
- ◆ high percentage of trainees achieve full-time employment
- ◆ trainees have a clear understanding of their training programme
- ◆ regular short-term target-setting, with demanding achievement dates
- ◆ broad range of effective assessment methods used
- ◆ excellent working relationships between tutor and trainees
- ◆ good success rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ individual training plans not used effectively
- ◆ links between training in the workplace and the NVQ process are insufficiently developed
- ◆ key skills are not integrated in vocational training
- ◆ trainers and assessors do not work effectively as a team
- ◆ widely differing assessment practice
- ◆ some trainees do not understand assessment
- ◆ slow progress
- ◆ low achievement rates for administration trainees
- ◆ work supervisors have little awareness of their trainees' programme
- ◆ lack of communication between Newstart and employers
- ◆ most trainees are unaware of the NVQ appeals procedure

GOOD PRACTICE

One trainee, who had recently completed NVQ level 2 in administration, was encouraged to use evidence from her portfolio to contribute to elements of her NVQ level 3 in the use of information technology.

18. Effective vetting of employers by Newstart staff ensures that work placements are of a high quality and provide trainees with a wealth of opportunities to develop good portfolios, as well as to practise new skills. Employers are committed to training and are supportive of trainees' progress. However, inadequate involvement of employers in the training process as a whole, combined with their poor understanding of the NVQ programme, results in trainees receiving less effective training and skill development than they otherwise might. Newstart's training staff visit trainees in the workplace on a regular basis and monitor their progress. Trainees are offered a wide range of academic courses to provide underpinning knowledge for the main NVQ. They have access to excellent learning resources in Burton College and are provided with a wealth of choice, opportunities and provision, including those for the development of key skills. Instruction is effective and follows structured lesson plans. In these sessions, staff integrate theory and practice well. Instruction is lively and relevant, and good support material is provided to support the learning process. A high percentage of trainees is

successful in achieving full-time employment during, or on completion of, their training.

19. In information technology, trainees work hard to achieve success in their training programmes. They recognise and value the excellent support provided by their tutor. NVQ level 2 trainees are actively involved in planning their own training. They meet their tutor weekly to review progress and are encouraged to identify learning opportunities which could be achieved in the workplace. Trainees and tutors work productively to agree on realistic short-term targets and set demanding deadlines for completion. Trainees with prior knowledge and experience are encouraged to identify relevant evidence for inclusion in their portfolios. Trainees are clear about the content of their NVQ programme and what they have to do to achieve success. They are thoroughly briefed on assessment opportunities and actively encouraged to draw evidence from the workplace. Only where this is impossible is simulation used. Tutors use a broad range of assessment methods, including direct observation in the workplace. As a result, there has been steady progress towards completion and certification. Success rates are good.

20. Individual training plans are not used effectively to inform teaching staff of individual trainees' needs and are not negotiated with employers. A completion date for the full NVQ is recorded on individual training plans, without individual unit targets to monitor progress. They are not updated to reflect changing circumstances or achievement. None of the trainees taking national traineeships or modern apprenticeships has key skills assessed at commencement of training, and there is no evidence of progress towards their achievement. Some modern apprenticeship trainees, nearing completion of the main NVQ, are unaware of key skills requirements.

21. Although the level of staffing in Newstart is adequate, trainers and assessors do not work effectively as a team, and communication between trainers and assessors is weak. One particular member of the assessment team is very competent, and trainees benefit from this experience. The assessor discusses unit requirements, plans the assessment and observes workplace performance, reviews progress and progressively signs off completed units. Other assessors fail to sign off completed units regularly and simply issue trainees with a list of evidence requirements. This latter approach results in both trainees becoming frustrated and a lack of understanding of the NVQ process. Several trainees have been on the programme for a considerable length of time and have made little progress towards achievement of their NVQ. Most trainees do not know of the NVQ appeals procedure: they would not know what to do if they considered their assessment unfair. Achievement data for the last two years show that, on average, 60 per cent of those starting training either leave before completion or fail to gain the qualification in the time expected.

22. Communication between Newstart and employers is weak. Work-based supervisors have little awareness of the content or structure of their trainees' NVQ or modern apprenticeship programme. This is compounded by the fact that they are

not directly involved in planning on-the-job learning opportunities, resulting in missed opportunities for evidence collection. Employers do not receive summative reports on trainees' progress or attendance. Trainees and employers are not asked to contribute to course review or evaluation. Recent organisational and staffing changes have led to a lack of continuity. Staff are unaware of what stage trainees are at in their training programme and, as a result, some progress review meetings are of little benefit to trainees. Internal verification is not rigorously applied.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

23. There are 43 trainees in retail, warehousing and customer services. This includes 21 modern apprentices, three national trainees and 19 vocational trainees. The occupational breakdown of trainees shows that eight trainees are on retail programmes, four on warehousing, with the remaining 30 in the customer service area.

24. Trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 or 3 in retail operations, customer services, warehousing and distribution. Trainees are trained and assessed in the workplace. Peripatetic assessors are employed by the college for this purpose. The self-assessment report identified some strengths which are contractual requirements and normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses, resulting in the grade awarded being lower than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working relationships between assessors and trainees in retail
- ◆ good learning resources available to trainees
- ◆ frequent visits by peripatetic assessors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ supervisors not fully informed of rôles and responsibility
- ◆ trainees have poor awareness of key skills
- ◆ poor feedback to employers
- ◆ trainees unaware of the specific programme which they are on

25. All trainees display a clear understanding of the particular NVQ towards which they are working. They are confident that their remaining units will be completed on time. The retail section has only eight trainees, but they are well motivated, and there are good working relationships between trainees and assessors. The college has several open-learning resource packs in retail, warehousing and customer service, available to trainees if required. Most trainees are able to recount the training points expressed during their half-day induction which is held at the college. Assessors visit trainees in their work placement every two to four weeks.

26. Owing to inconsistent liaison with assessors, supervisors are often unaware of the programmes in which their trainees are participating, and have little or no perception of the support rôle which they are expected to fulfil. Some of the trainees are half way through their NVQ level 3 and either do not understand key skills or have not started any work towards them. This problem is being addressed by a series of key skills workshops. During the last year, trainees have been visited by three different assessors. This has led to a lack of continuity, and some trainees had not started their NVQ until the current assessor arrived. This has clearly affected their progress, with one trainee needing a six-month extension to complete the programme. Trainees' portfolios are of a varied standard. Some trainees are not aware of how much progress they have made towards the completion of units. Some customer service trainees are taking higher academic qualifications, as well as NVQ level 3 and key skills. This has resulted in the NVQ and key skills work being accorded lower priority than that of the achievement of targets on the academic qualification. Individual training plans are not updated regularly, resulting in reviews and alterations to training programmes not being recorded.

**Hospitality
 (catering)**

Grade 3

27. At the time of reinspection, Newstart has 14 trainees in catering, 13 of whom are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in food preparation and cooking. The other trainee is following a food and drink service NVQ at level 1. Six of the trainees are modern apprentices, seven are national trainees and the remaining trainee is on the vocational training programme. Ten trainees are employed status and the remaining four trainees are trainee status. Trainees work in a variety of placements in and around Burton upon Trent, including hotels, restaurants and public houses. All but one of the trainees attend college on a weekly basis for practical skills training, theory, and portfolio development. All trainees are visited regularly by the learning facilitator in the workplace. Trainees, staff and placement providers confirmed improvements in the programmes offered.

At the first inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ initial assessment not used to inform individual training plans
- ◆ no goals or targets set for completion of the qualification
- ◆ irregularly completed reviews are of little benefit to trainees
- ◆ some poor communication between Newstart and the catering school
- ◆ assessments at college are not completed in a realistic work environment
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ early leaver rates are high
- ◆ achievements are low

28. The updated self-inspection report produced before reinspection explained the progress made to address the weaknesses identified during the original inspection. It did not identify any additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with comments in the report and identified new strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-resourced training
- ◆ well-planned work-based assessment
- ◆ effective review process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inflexible training programmes
- ◆ some inappropriate off-the-job assessments
- ◆ underdeveloped integration of key skills

29. Catering school staff have worked hard to address the weaknesses identified at the first inspection in the delivery of their programmes. The catering training is well resourced. Staff who provide both on- and off-the-job training and assessment are well qualified and experienced. There are good off-the-job training facilities at the college which are used to develop trainees' skills in addition to those gained in the workplace. Most of the workplaces have industry standard equipment and resources with which the trainees work. The appointment in January 1999 of a learning facilitator, who regularly visits trainees in the workplace to assess, review and monitor progress, has led to improvements. Regularly planned assessments are of a good quality. Trainees understand what they have to do to achieve their qualification and influence the planning and assessment process. Trainees' reviews are completed on a monthly basis and are used to identify achievement, monitor progress and plan future targets, which are recorded in the individual training plans. A member of the catering school staff, who has experience of helping those with additional learning needs, supports one such trainee. This has had a positive impact on the trainee's progress. Action-planning is used by the catering school staff to ensure required improvements identified in external verifiers' reports are put into practice. Communication between Newstart and the catering school team is regular. Monthly meetings are held with a member of Newstart's staff, with key skills staff in attendance, to discuss and action issues relating to trainees and their programmes.

30. Off-job-training lacks flexibility in how it is provided. College staff follow a prescribed scheme of work, which does not reflect the diverse needs of trainees and their employers. In some instances, trainees receive adequate skills training in the workplace, which does not need to be further developed by off-the-job training. A number of trainees are in work placements which have good facilities for assessment and training, but they are still required to attend college for both. Some theory training sessions are unimaginative. The sessions lack variety in teaching and

learning strategies. There has been progress in raising staff awareness of key skills and their implementation since the original inspection. A member of the catering school staff has been given time to develop vocationally related key skills materials, particularly in application of number and information technology. These are task-based and do not reflect the opportunities to gather evidence in the workplace. Assessments of competence for the NVQ are not used to assess key skills. Trainees' retention has increased substantially since the first inspection. Twenty-six per cent fewer trainees now leave the programme without achieving a qualification. In 1997-98, 83 per cent of trainees left the programme without achieving a qualification compared with 57 per cent of trainees leaving the programme without achieving a qualification in 1998-99.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

31. Newstart has 38 trainees in hairdressing training. Thirty-two are working towards hairdressing at NVQ level 2 and six towards level 3. Seven trainees are following the modern apprenticeship framework, 16 are national trainees and 15 are youth trainees. All are employed. Trainees attend off-the-job training one day each week, with the other four days spent working in a salon. Training towards key skills has not yet started. On-the-job training is provided through both structured model sessions (when trainees practise on clients under supervision) and the use of naturally occurring training opportunities in the salon. Some NVQ level 3 trainees have their own client base in the salon and continue to build on this as they progress. Assessment is carried out in the workplace and during off-the-job training. Newstart's self-assessment report failed to recognise many of the strengths and weaknesses, however, inspectors confirmed the grade proposed.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong staff commitment to training and improvement
- ◆ good information available to potential trainees
- ◆ frequent work-based assessments
- ◆ good individual instruction in the workplace
- ◆ trainees understand the assessment process
- ◆ some trainees maintain their own client base

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ individual training plans do not specify goals or targets
- ◆ reviews neither set targets nor involve employers
- ◆ workplace supervisors are not always clear about their responsibilities
- ◆ insufficient on- and off-the-job co-ordination
- ◆ implementation of key skills is weak
- ◆ low rate of achievement

GOOD PRACTICE

A handbook has been developed for NVQ levels 2 and 3, detailing the content of the course, assessment procedures, types of evidence which can be used and a portfolio-building guide. It also contains a contract detailing the responsibilities of the trainee in the NVQ process which they are asked to commit to and sign.

32. The hairdressing programme has undergone considerable changes in recent months, with the transfer of off-the-job training from Newstart's own provision to that of the college. The hairdressing team leader has identified many of the weaknesses in the programme and has developed a comprehensive improvement plan, with the support of senior management. All of the trainees and workplace subcontractors have been visited to explain the changes. Subcontractors welcome this involvement, and trainees are motivated, but it is too early to determine whether these changes have fully addressed the weaknesses. Trainees are involved and enthusiastic, during their training and assessment sessions, and have a clear understanding of how they will be assessed and what is expected of them. Trainees can ask to be assessed at any point in their training, as well as at the normal eight-weekly assessment and review visits. This encourages them to be fully involved in the NVQ process. Support in work placements is good, with training in salons often taking place with individual tuition and supervision. Trainees also have access to training from manufacturers' technical staff and through artistic and promotional activities.

33. Once trainees are established on the programme, training is designed to accommodate individuals' own abilities, but initial assessment does not inform individual training plans. The lack of goal setting and review has resulted in some trainees being slower to achieve their qualification than expected. Trainees have not achieved full potential, as shown by the rate of NVQs per 100 leavers, at 34.6 per cent in 1997-98. Employers are unclear about their rôle, the content of the programme and the trainees' progress. Opportunities for assessment in the workplace are missed, for both hairdressing and key skills, and there have been insufficient liaison and co-ordination between Newstart and the salons.

Health, care & public services**Grade 3**

34. There are 56 trainees in care, childcare and pharmacy. Twelve trainees are modern apprentices. Fifty-five per cent of the total group are employed. Local resources in the private nursing home and residential sector have grown recently, providing jobs and placements for trainees in care for the elderly, while private or voluntary day nurseries have generated several opportunities for those trainees committed to a career in childcare. Two large local hospitals have contracts with Newstart to manage the training and assessment of trainees. In one hospital, they are training and assessing healthcare assistants at NVQ level 2, while, at the other, a larger group of trainees is following a programme of training and assessment at NVQ level 3 to become pharmacy technicians. Both subcontractors have their own assessment centres, but Newstart is responsible for monitoring quality and providing pastoral support for trainees in these settings. For NVQ levels 2 and 3 trainees in care and childcare, whether employed or on placement, there is a structured programme of learning offered on a half-day-a-week basis. All trainees are encouraged to attend. On the same day, there are key skills workshops offered in the college. These are scheduled either before or after the taught vocational

programmes to ensure that modern apprenticeship candidates are able to access them. Inspectors were unable to agree with Newstart's self-assessed strengths and weaknesses, hence the grade is lower than that proposed by Newstart.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ off-the-job training provides a systematic approach to underpinning knowledge
- ◆ clear links between theory and practice
- ◆ qualified and experienced trainers and assessors
- ◆ additional peripatetic assessors have been appointed
- ◆ good resources for underpinning knowledge, including open-learning materials

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ assessment practice is variable
- ◆ poor control of subcontractors' training and assessment practice, particularly in pharmacy
- ◆ some poorly planned and delivered training
- ◆ inconsistent induction to NVQs
- ◆ no integration of key skills
- ◆ slow pace of achievement
- ◆ no targets set, in individual training plans, for trainees' achievement

35. Most trainees attend the college for off-the-job training and receive well-planned instruction, which links well with the work that they do. Resource materials help them to work at their own pace, although support is available when required. Trainees' portfolios are well structured and demonstrate clear integration between theory and the skills required in the workplace.

36. Internal verifiers use an effective set of documents to track progress and provide detailed feedback to assessors. Several feedback sheets show verifiers asking for more information where they feel that the available evidence is inadequate. There is one internal verifier for care and one for childcare, but they work collaboratively to ensure consistent verification between them. The sampling frame is a recent addition. It is acknowledged that some work-based assessors have not yet been seen assessing trainees. As yet, no trainees have been passed through the college assessment centre for certification, as this is a relatively new facility. All trainers and most assessors have the appropriate training, assessment or verification qualifications and lengthy vocational experience.

37. The exclusive use of work-based assessors has created inconsistencies in the speed with which trainees are able to achieve qualifications' units. Induction to the NVQ is not consistently carried out. Trainees have different levels of understanding of the NVQ and have few short-term goals to work towards. Peripatetic assessors have been introduced to speed up the process of evidence-collection, with work-

based assessors still able to contribute expert witness testimony. Assessors have not been brought into the college for standardisation meetings or for an introduction to the new awards in care. Some aspects of training are unsatisfactory. In pharmacy, technicians, rather than pharmacists, have delivered over 20 per cent of the sessions of underpinning knowledge. Childcare trainees experience teaching sessions which contain no group teaching, but each trainee follows his/her own agenda. These sessions are unstimulating. In 1996-97, trainees achieved 76 NVQs per 100 leavers and 38.1 in 1997-98. The company has recognised, in its self-assessment report, the weaknesses around key skills and has produced action-plans to remedy the lack of integration.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

38. Newstart draws its equal opportunities policy from the same college of which it is a part. The policy is now five years old. The monitoring of both staff and trainees, for gender, ethnicity, age and disability, is a normal practice. There is a lack of marketing material in languages or media other than in English. Pledges and contractual documents used by Newstart, when placing trainees with employers, ask signatories to confirm that they are aware of the equal opportunities policy. Inspectors agreed with many of Newstart's proposed strengths and weaknesses and identified further strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded was the same as the company's self-assessed grade.

GOOD PRACTICE

There is a documented example of Newstart enforcing its equal opportunities policy when a trainee alleged harassment in her placement. The trainee was removed to a safer environment. Notification of this event to the TEC resulted in an instruction that that particular company should not be used again for training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ policy is reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and relevant
- ◆ the students' charter explains trainees' rights and responsibilities
- ◆ some staff are learning sign language
- ◆ positive marketing to minority ethnic groups
- ◆ training and social areas accessible to wheelchair users
- ◆ data collected, collated and analysed for gender, disability, age and ethnicity

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ significant gender imbalance of trainees in some vocational areas
- ◆ some placement providers unaware of Newstart's equal opportunities policy
- ◆ some placement providers do not have an equal opportunities policy
- ◆ lack of marketing materials in languages other than English

39. One single regeneration budget (SRB) project, based at the college, is specifically targeting minority ethnic groups in seven local electoral wards. The options being considered include some carefully focused outreach work to attract the mainly Asian population living in these areas which currently does not access

education and training through the more traditional routes. The commitment to attracting both staff and trainees from minority ethnic groups is seen through a recruitment campaign, which placed advertisements in papers, and journals aimed at minority groups in a wide area around the college. Currently, the college has only seven staff from minority ethnic groups among its full-, part-time and support staff and would like to increase this representation, as it currently does not match the profile of the catchment area. The college population has a significant number of students with hearing impairment. Fifteen staff have been trained in British Sign Language (BSL) to increase their ability to communicate effectively. The employment service awarded the college a certificate, displayed on a noticeboard, for its commitment to disability awareness.

40. All new trainees are issued with a small pocket-sized booklet entitled *The Students' Charter*. It contains information which identifies rights and expectations of each and every student, including the rights of others to be able to study and train safely and effectively. The charter also includes expectations about standards of conduct and the responsibilities of being a student. These run alongside their rights.

41. Some of the male-to-female ratios, in certain vocational areas, reinforce occupations' traditional gender imbalance. The ratio of men to women in care is one to 30. Currently, there are few images, which reflect, in a positive light, ethnicity, disability or gender rôles at work. The prospectus does not contain sufficient visual images to reinforce Newstart's stated commitment to equality.

42. Despite having an equal opportunities policy and requiring that placements confirm acceptance of this through a signature, it is clear that several placement providers are committing themselves without reading or acknowledging the policy. Of more concern is the fact that some workplace employees not only declare ignorance of Newstart's equal opportunities policy, but also do not know whether they have a policy themselves.

Trainee support

Grade 3

43. Newstart is committed to providing its trainees with the skills and knowledge required to secure employment. Every trainee receives an induction, and those identified as having learning difficulties or other disabilities are offered additional learning support. All trainees are allocated a named reviewer who monitors progress. Newstart's good intentions are expressed in its self-assessment report against each occupational sector, but these intentions are let down by inconsistency of application. For this reason, inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong links with careers service
- ◆ well-planned induction

- ◆ frequent and well-documented reviews
- ◆ good use of national records of achievement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor personal counselling and advice
- ◆ initial assessment not carried out for all trainees
- ◆ results of initial assessment not used in the design of individual training plans

44. Links between Newstart and the careers service are strong. Most trainees are interviewed by the careers service before starting training, and, where basic skills needs have been identified during interview, information is passed to Newstart to enable extra support to be provided. All trainees are given a well-planned induction at the start of training. Induction is effective, but does not provide sufficiently detailed information on the NVQ process.

45. In most cases, use of national records of achievement has been effectively developed and record trainees' progress and achievement. Trainees' reviews are carried out frequently and are well documented. Trainees are issued with copies of the review which, in most cases, help them to progress towards unit achievement. Communication with, and involvement of, employers in the review process is not always sufficient to ensure optimum progress.

46. Access to personal counselling and support, while strong in some areas, is not available to all trainees across the whole provision. Initial assessment is not fully exploited. Where it does occur, methods used are not entirely effective and tend not to accurately identify individual trainees' needs. Many trainees who attend on a part-time basis are not assessed at entry, and late recognition of their requirements results in trainees not receiving appropriate resources. Initial assessment does not take place for customer service trainees. This has been recognised by Newstart, which is presently looking at alternative practices. Employers are not consulted about workplace training requirements, so individual training plans do not reflect the overall objectives of work-based training. In some areas, this reinforces the apparent lack of integration between on- and off-the-job training.

Management of training

Grade 3

47. Newstart is managed by Burton College's TEC contract manager and consists of six other full- and two part-time staff. Three of the staff, the training programme advisers, are responsible for establishing and maintaining links with employers and monitoring trainees' overall welfare and progress. Each programme adviser is linked to a group of curriculum areas in the college. The actual training and assessment of trainees, whether in the college or the workplace, are the responsibility of college staff in the relevant occupational area.

48. Strategic direction for Newstart is provided through the college's corporate plan and the annual operating statement which detail specific areas for development

during the academic year. Further clarification of the context in which Newstart works is provided by the corporate marketing strategy. There has been considerable growth recently in the volume of training activity contracted through Newstart. Approximately 75 per cent of current activity is funded by Staffordshire TEC, with the remaining 25 per cent being funded by South Derbyshire CCTE. The self-assessment report for this area was detailed, but failed to identify several weaknesses, which became apparent through inspection, particularly in the areas of communication and control processes. As a result, inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by Newstart.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ sound planning and target-setting at strategic level
- ◆ management practices are reviewed and adjusted to meet operational needs
- ◆ clear division of rôles
- ◆ well-established staff development and appraisal system
- ◆ good links with external agencies

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate internal communication between other parts of the college and Newstart
- ◆ employers receive insufficient information about trainees' progress
- ◆ inflexible management-information reporting
- ◆ responsibility for some aspects of training is not clear or accepted

49. Newstart has undertaken an analysis of its actual and potential market and developed a strategy based on this. Strategic and operational planning shows appropriate levels of detail, and staff understand the direction in which the organisation is moving. Newstart's main internal targets depend on income generated. Key performance indicators have also been established, but these are based on external requirements and take little account of current performance levels. There is no clear plan as to how these specific targets might be achieved, and no targets to measure incremental progress towards them. Staff recruitment and development practices are systematic. Staff have appropriate training opportunities which are identified through the appraisal process. Training is evaluated at an individual and corporate level. Communication in Newstart is sound, with regular meetings ensuring that staff are kept up to date with developments and that performance is monitored.

50. The structure and organisation of Newstart has recently been reviewed, resulting in a move to the main college site, redefinition of staff rôles and closer functional integration with main college activities. Service levels have been introduced to define the respective responsibilities of Newstart and the schools in the college. In some cases in the past, college staff have either not understood or failed to carry out their full responsibilities towards trainees. This has been

particularly evident in terms of communication with employers and in its knowledge and application of NVQ systems. Weaknesses in internal communication systems with other parts of the college have contributed to this. Externally, the organisation is involved with several local agencies, including the council for racial equality, a community enterprise agency, the community partnership and a local special school. These links support recruitment and help to ensure that Newstart is aware of business and community needs.

51. Two distinct management information systems are used. One provides overall college management information, but separately identifies Newstart trainees, while the other is based in the Newstart section and is used primarily to generate TEC/CCTE claims. The Newstart system, although it contains all the relevant basic information, is not easy to manipulate and cannot provide the range of aggregated information at occupational level which is required for active programme management. As a result, overall trends in participation and performance are difficult to identify.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

52. Newstart meets the requirements of the ISO 9002 quality standard and several awarding bodies and is regularly audited by two local TEC/CCTEs. It is also encompassed by the quality system of Burton College. The college's quality assurance model is based on self-assessment against self-identified performance indicators, which are influenced by internal and external sources. Performance indicators and self-assessment criteria are identified in a quality assurance manual. A further quality assurance manual contains procedures. Heads of school and service area managers are responsible for producing an annual report, containing strengths and weaknesses against which the specified performance indicators and improvement action-plans are drawn up. A college self-assessment review group monitors all reports and produces the annual self-assessment report. A quality audit team oversees the entire process. Some of the procedures and processes are relatively new and not fully embedded. Quality assurance mechanisms do not identify or subsequently correct all areas of weakness. For this reason, inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clearly documented procedures
- ◆ quality assurance system is understood by all staff
- ◆ self-assessment has led to improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor internal verification practices
- ◆ reasons for those leaving early are not analysed

- ◆ unrealistic performance indicators
- ◆ self-assessment did not identify all weaknesses

53. The college, and hence Newstart, has in place the basis of an effective quality assurance system. It is based on a self-assessment and continuous improvement model, involving most staff in its implementation. The business development unit's quality assurance manual contains performance indicators imposed on Newstart by a local TEC/CCTE which are not achievable in the suggested timescale. Realistic and demanding performance indicators have not been developed to enable more discriminating measurement of performance and quality improvement.

54. The quality assurance systems are supported by clearly documented procedures. Newstart's staff are clear about their quality assurance responsibilities and are very knowledgeable about new procedures which have recently been introduced. These are in the form of service folders, which contain auditable procedures applicable to a particular area. General knowledge of the quality systems among staff is good.

55. Some occupational areas, particularly in care and construction, demonstrate effective internal verification practice, but this varies across the college. In motor vehicle, there is no formal internal verification system. Internal verification of trainees' achievements is not documented, nor is assessors' performance monitored. Although there is an internal verification policy and procedure, motor-vehicle staff are unaware of it. In engineering, EMTA internal verification procedures are being used, but are not incorporated into the overall procedure. There is little action being taken by designated internal verifiers to standardise the assessment process.

56. The process of self-assessment which has been carried out has led to improvements taking place. Identification of weakness in the assessment system, caused by a lack of assessors, has resulted in new assessors being trained, and further recruitment is being carried out. The care area has a new, peripatetic assessor in place. Statistics about those who leave programmes early during 1996-97 and 1997-8 respectively are 47 per cent and 67 per cent. Despite these figures, there is no effective mechanism to identify the reasons for trainees leaving their programmes early. Action has begun in this area – a questionnaire has been developed, but has not yet been implemented.