



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT FEBRUARY 2000

Shape Accredited Training Centre

SUMMARY

Shape Accredited Training Centre offers training in six occupational areas, none of which is satisfactory. In agriculture, business administration, retailing and customer service, and health, care and public services, the quality of training is poor. Progress towards qualification is slow and achievement of national vocational qualifications is poor. In all but one area there is no training in, or assessment of, key skills. The number, quality and appropriateness of work placements are unsatisfactory in information technology, customer service and construction. The organisation does not ensure equality of opportunity and has a discriminatory dress code for female members of staff. Trainee support measures are inadequate, with insufficient initial assessment, a high number of early leavers and ineffective reviews and training plans. The management of training is poor. Employers are unaware of their obligations, there is failure to respond to identified problems, and no unified approach to operational and strategic issues. Quality systems do not ensure continuous improvement and are ineffective and out of date. Assessment and internal verification procedures are inadequate. The self-assessment report was late and, while critical in part, was largely inaccurate.

GRADES

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

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	5
Trainee support	5
Management of training	5
Quality assurance	5

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good awareness of health and safety
- ◆ some examples of good portfolio-building
- ◆ good pastoral support

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low levels of NVQ achievement
- ◆ poor retention of trainees
- ◆ no key skills training or assessment in all but one area
- ◆ poor assessment practices
- ◆ insufficient and inappropriate work placements in some areas
- ◆ unrealistic training in information technology
- ◆ poorly managed training programmes
- ◆ employers' ignorance of obligations and responsibilities
- ◆ little initial assessment



INSPECTION REPORT: SHAPE ACCREDITED TRAINING CENTRE
FEBRUARY 2000

- ◆ no promotion of equality of opportunities
- ◆ no induction for some trainees

INTRODUCTION

1. Shape Accredited Training Centre (Shape) is based in Middlesbrough. It was established by its parent organisation, Cleveland Youth Association, in 1978 as a company limited by guarantee. Responsibility for the operational management of Shape rests with a general manager, supported by seven departmental managers and a further 46 training and administrative staff. The general manager reports to the chief executive and a board of directors. The members of the board are drawn from local businesses, the voluntary sector and youth work and, with the exception of the chief executive, act in a non-executive capacity.

2. Shape contracts with Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and has been delivering government-funded training since 1978. There are currently 320 trainees and New Deal clients pursuing national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 4 in agriculture, construction, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, health, care and public services, and foundation for work. Thirty-eight trainees are modern apprentices, 117 are national trainees, and 144 are on other work-based training for young people. There are also 12 trainees on work-based training for adults. Eighty-five of the trainees are employed, and this includes all but one of the modern apprentices, 24 of the national trainees and 24 of the other young people. Shape is a member of the local partnerships engaged in the delivery of the New Deal and nine young people are receiving training through the full-time education and training, subsidised employment, and environment task force options. Shape is also involved in the Tees Valley Employment Zone and receives money from the European Social Fund (ESF) for two trainer-training projects, one for teaching assistants placed within Shape, the other for teaching auxiliaries in local schools.

3. Shape's head office is in Middlesbrough, where there are two training centres situated across the road from each other. One acts primarily as an administrative centre, with some facilities for off-the-job training, while the other is wholly used for providing off-the-job training for trainees from a range of occupational areas. There is another training centre in Redcar, which is used to support the foundation for work programmes. Shape also operates two small, satellite centres. One is at Grangetown in Middlesbrough, and acts as the base for those New Deal clients on the environment task force option. The second is at Kirkleatham Hall, near Redcar, and is the main training centre for the agricultural trainees not on work placement. Training for all occupational areas takes place on the job at employers' premises, or off the job on a day-release basis at one of Shape's training centres.

4. The area served by Tees Valley TEC covers the unitary authorities of Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool and Darlington. Prior to boundary changes in April 1998, the town of Darlington was part of County Durham TEC's area of responsibility. The total population of the Tees valley area is 653,700. Unemployment levels across the Tees valley vary

considerably, but in October 1999, overall unemployment stood at 7.8 per cent, which compares unfavourably with the national average of 4.3 per cent. However, this figure disguises the fact that in some areas of the Tees valley, unemployment is not far short of 20 per cent. These areas include the wards of Parkfield, and Portrack and the Tilery, in Stockton, Thorntree and St Hilda's in Middlesbrough, and Owton in Hartlepool. Unemployment for men is particularly high in these areas, ranging from 24 to 27 per cent. In 1999, unemployment for 16 year old school leavers in Teesside stood at 8 per cent.

5. The service sector accounts for 67 per cent of employment in the Tees valley. However, manufacturing continues to provide 22 per cent of employment opportunities in the area, a figure slightly above the national average. Hard-to-fill vacancies, and especially those linked to recognised skill shortages, are predominantly in highly skilled craft trades, such as those found in the engineering and construction industries, the former including vacancies for professional engineers.

6. In 1999, 15 per cent of school leavers in the Tees valley entered government-funded training programmes. The percentage of school leavers progressing onto further education was 56 per cent, while the percentage entering employment, including those joining modern apprenticeship programmes, was 8 per cent. In 1999, the proportions of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in the constituent areas of the Tees valley region were between 31 and 45 per cent, all were below the national average of 47.9 per cent. Overall, minority ethnic groups account for less than 2 per cent of the population in the Tees valley. However, the members of these groups are unevenly distributed across the region, with Middlesbrough having the highest concentration, at 4.4 per cent, and Hartlepool and the borough of Redcar and Cleveland having the lowest, at 0.7 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. Shape completed its first self-assessment in January 1999, having begun compiling information in the previous year. It drew up an action plan as a result of the process but did not produce a formal report detailing the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. Self-assessment for inspection began in the autumn of 1999. The general manager led the process, supported by departmental managers, who identified strengths and weaknesses and proposed grading judgements for their areas of responsibility. However, work on writing the self-assessment report was not begun until early January 2000, led, in the absence of the general manager, by the quality manager. Departmental managers and the quality manager completed the report in mid-January, only two weeks before the start of inspection.

8. A team of eight inspectors spent a total of 31 days with Shape in January and February 2000. With the exception of hospitality, where trainee numbers were insignificant, all occupational areas were inspected. Inspectors visited 67 employers and interviewed 50 workplace supervisors. They interviewed 110 trainees and visited all of Shape's training centres. Twenty-seven staff were interviewed. Inspectors examined a range of documentary evidence, including 86 NVQ portfolios, together with assessment and review documents, and internal and external verifiers' reports. Policies and procedures, marketing information and a wide range of performance and occupancy data were also examined. Inspectors observed 15 training sessions, assessments and progress reviews and the grades awarded to these are detailed below.

Table 1: grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture						0
Construction			1	1		2
Business administration			4			4
Retailing & customer service			2			2
Health, care & public services			6			6
Foundation for work			1			1
Total			14	1		15

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

Grade 5

9. There are 12 trainees and clients on the horticulture programme. One is an adult, one is a national trainee, and eight are on other youth training programmes. The other two are New Deal clients. One is on the full-time education and training option. The other is on the environment task force option and is part of a team working on occupationally specific and community-based projects. These allow the clients to develop their skills while benefiting the local community. The projects range from regenerating the town's environment to the maintenance of gardens and parks. The organisation recruits adult trainees from the Employment Service, normally by referral. Youth trainees are usually recruited through advertisements or attendance at careers conventions, or by referral from the careers service. Shape operates an 'open' recruitment policy: there are no barriers to access and trainees are recruited throughout the year. All trainees are invited to attend an initial interview to determine their desire to undertake the training programme. All trainees and clients are unemployed and are working towards NVQs in commercial horticulture (intensive crop production) at levels 1 or 2. No additional qualifications are offered. One of the youth trainees is in a work placement, and the New Deal client undertaking the environment task force option is working on community projects. The other nine people on the horticulture programme receive all their training at Shape's training centre, which is located in a large, well-resourced council-owned plant nursery on the outskirts of Redcar. Two staff deliver the training and undertake all assessment. A visiting part-time member of staff is responsible for internal verification. Seven of the youth trainees have been identified as having additional learning needs. Trainees' progress reviews are undertaken every 12 weeks. Additional learning support is available to trainees at Shape's training centres one or two days a week. All the trainees are men and there are no trainees from minority ethnic groups. The self-assessment report claimed no strengths and a number of weaknesses. Inspectors identified one strength and additional weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by Shape.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good awareness of health and safety

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ underqualified staff
- ◆ no planned training
- ◆ no assessment
- ◆ lack of individuality in portfolios

- ◆ insufficient work placements
- ◆ no key skills training or assessment

10. All trainees who decide to join the horticulture programme after their initial interview are invited back to undertake a well-recorded three-day induction programme which covers all aspects of health and safety. This is highly effective and trainees can recall the information given during the induction process. They are provided with protective clothing, including safety boots and bad weather clothing.

11. Initial assessment of trainees' skills and abilities is limited to basic skills assessment and the results are not systematically fed back to trainees. Most trainees identified as needing additional learning support have these needs met. However, in some cases, where trainees have literacy problems, these are not effectively addressed.

12. There are no experienced and occupationally qualified staff in charge of this programme. The supervisor who works closely with the trainees is currently undertaking a level 2 NVQ in commercial horticulture (intensive crop production). The programme manager holds a level 3 NVQ in horticulture but is on long-term sick leave, due to a work-related accident. Both members of staff in this area have recently begun training to become qualified as assessors. A part-time, experienced internal verifier is used to supervise assessments. Within the last two weeks, a qualified assessor has been engaged to assist in the assessment process, two days a week. The internal verification process has recently been reviewed and, following discussion with the external verifier, proper records are starting to be kept. In 1999, the awarding body suspended certification of awards in horticulture for nine months. This suspension was lifted in January 2000. The grounds for suspension related to poor resources, unsuitable facilities and the lack of qualified staff. There are no plans to develop training in amenity horticulture, despite the fact that this would provide the trainees and clients with a wider choice of qualifications. The resources for providing training in amenity horticulture are available at both the training centre and on placement. The placement currently used has two qualified assessors who are not being used to assess trainees. Trainees are not assessed during off-the-job training either, so at present no assessment is taking place.

13. Shape has written guidelines for its training processes but these are not consistently followed by the trainers. Trainees' NVQ portfolios lack individuality. There are few examples of the use of diverse evidence in these portfolios. Trainees are often unaware of their progress towards completing their qualifications. Progress reviews are held every 12 weeks but are ineffective. Targets are rarely set and the information recorded from the reviews is superficial and sparse. Trainees do not have individual assessment plans. Individual training plans are not updated with the information obtained during reviews.

14. Shape has negotiated access to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's horticultural nursery at Kirkleatham. This area offers trainees and clients access to

intensive glasshouse production, hard landscaping, intensive outdoor crop production and a wide range of plants. The horticultural training centre has good resources, facilities and equipment to support the trainees throughout their NVQ programme.

15. None of the trainees or clients is employed and there is currently only one work placement in use. There are no plans to find more work-placement providers. There are no lesson plans, and no training plans. Practical training sessions are usually informal and undertaken as and when jobs around the nursery require doing. Some training is given on a one-to-one basis.

16. Retention and achievement rates are poor, as is the level of trainees' progression into employment. In 1999-2000, no qualifications have been awarded so far, and in 1998-99, only one trainee (4 per cent) completed their individual training plan, out of the 26 who started on the programme. This is a significant decline from the year before, when 40 per cent of trainees were awarded an NVQ. Few trainees go on to find jobs. Over the last three years, the proportion of trainees gaining employment has remained constant at 20 per cent. Retention is also a major problem. In the current year, 45 per cent of those who started the programme have already left without completing their individual training plans. Although this is better than in previous years, when 80 per cent of trainees left early, it is still poor. Additional qualifications to increase trainees and clients' employability are planned but have not yet been introduced.

17. Trainees all attend the training centre for five days a week. The trainees are told what their training plans are for the day, but are not given any written notes. The staff operate informal systems. Trainees are not fully aware of when or how they will be next assessed. National trainees are unable to complete their qualifications, as key skills are not yet taught or assessed.

18. The external verifier's reports are now positive, although there are a number of action points which have yet to be addressed. Accreditation of trainees' prior learning and achievement is unsystematic. There are written guidelines, but opportunities for accrediting prior learning are missed. There are no occupationally experienced staff who hold the necessary qualifications to accredit prior learning and achievement. Attendance rates for those trainees who remain on the programme are good.

Construction

Grade 4

19. Shape has 40 trainees and clients in construction. Of these, three are New Deal clients on the environment task force option, undertaking two units of an NVQ at level 1. Three trainees are modern apprentices, two are national trainees, one is on work-based learning for adults and 31 are on other work-based training programmes for young people. Of the 40 trainees and clients, 14 are working towards NVQs in general construction operations at levels 1 and 2, and 26 are working towards NVQs in wood occupations (bench joinery) at levels 1, 2 and 3. Those who are employed or who are in work placements attend off-the-job training

on a part-time, day-release basis, but the training is full-time for all those without placements. All off-the-job training is provided at Shape's training centre in Middlesbrough and covers both the theoretical and practical aspects of each trainee's chosen qualification. Nineteen trainees are on placement with local employers. Four others are employed. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in the organisation's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good guidance on portfolio-building

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work placements
- ◆ inappropriate work placements
- ◆ no development of key skills
- ◆ poor achievement levels
- ◆ missed opportunities for on-the-job assessment

20. Shape's staff have developed a good system for their trainees to use in recording work-based evidence and building portfolios. Trainees are given clearly written guidelines, which express the requirements of construction NVQs in the language actually used by the industry. Trainees are encouraged to use site diaries by both their personal tutor and the placement officer. Evidence collected from the workplace is validated by the placement officer and, in many cases, the workplace supervisor. Materials gathered in this way provide additional evidence of background knowledge. Most workplace supervisors name the site diary as their only source of information when asked how much they know about their trainees' training programme.

21. Shape's staff explain the assessment progress effectively. All trainees are aware of their progress and can name the units which they have completed, and those they are attempting next. They know their target dates for completing the current unit and this knowledge encourages them to collect suitable evidence and maintain well-prepared portfolios. Every trainee knows the title and level of their NVQ, although many are confused as to their status, and are unsure whether they are modern apprentices, national trainees, or on other work-based programmes for young people. Shape maintains details of unit completion and work placement information for all construction trainees, at all levels, across all programmes. Trainees' portfolios contain unit summaries which are signed, up-to-date and understood by the trainees themselves.

22. There are few work placements, and just under half of the trainees do not have any workplace experience. Placements are not always suitable for the programme the trainees are following. For example, the only construction NVQs on offer are in

bench joinery and general construction, but many trainees are placed with UPVC window installers or general glazing firms which cannot give them the type or breadth of work experience they require to complete their qualifications. Trainees often change from one level 1 course to another, based on the placement they are given. This delays their completion dates and often results in them having two level 1 qualifications in the time it took other trainees to gain levels 1 and 2. Although placements help trainees to gain work-based skills such as time-keeping, teamwork and customer relations, they do not enable them to develop an appropriate range of occupational skills.

23. No training or assessment of key skills takes place. Shape has a complacent attitude towards this important requirement and has made no progress whatsoever in introducing key skills. It has nominated staff to carry out this task, one of whom is a temporary replacement tutor, and is planning to send staff on external training. Key skills are a required part of both the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship programmes. None of the trainees on these programmes can complete their courses until key skills have been introduced. No trainees have had any training in information technology, even though this is a mandatory requirement set by the awarding body.

24. Achievement rates are poor. In 1999-2000, only nine out of the 44 who started on the youth programme have achieved a qualification so far, and in 1998-99, only eight young people completed their training plans out of 88 starters. Fifty-nine left early with no qualifications. Only one modern apprentice has achieved an NVQ since 1997 and no one has completed a full apprenticeship or individual training plan. Retention rates are consistently significantly less than 50 per cent. Initial assessment is not sufficiently thorough, and not enough is done to ensure that trainees' skills and interests match the occupational area in which they are training. Many trainees are on the wrong training programme. The programme manager has plans to develop prevocational courses in construction, but these have not yet been implemented.

25. The construction department has a member of staff who finds placements, and liaises with employers. In a minority of cases, the placements match the requirements of the NVQs, but no on-the-job assessments are carried out. This is despite the fact that the placement officer is vocationally experienced and is qualified to carry out assessments in the workplace. Reviews are carried out by the tutor at the training centre. Reviews are not carried out in the workplace and therefore never involve the trainees' workplace supervisor. Some trainees, generally those without a placement, see the placement officer on a regular basis. Others, especially those who work in houses all round the area fitting windows, rarely see any of Shape's staff at their workplace.

26. Off-the-job training is carried out in Shape's own workshops. These are of an adequate standard and contain the equipment and power tools required to carry out the NVQs offered. However, the hand tools are old and often blunt. Work areas are adequate to carry out practical training and assessment.

Business administration

Grade 5

27. Shape offers training towards NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in administration, and at levels 1 and 2 in information technology. Trainees have the opportunity to progress, both from level to level and between these and other qualifications. For example, from level 2 to level 3 in administration, or to level 2 in information technology or customer service. The following tables show how many trainees are working in each subject area within business administration, what training programmes they are on, how many are employed or on placement, and what level of NVQ they are pursuing. Note that the three people who are listed as working towards a level 1 NVQ in information technology are New Deal clients who are working towards both levels 1 and 2, but have not yet been registered. Placements range from small local employers to subsidiaries of national companies and include suppliers to the motor trade, glaziers, ceramic tile retailers, and organisations providing public services. Trainees in placements attend off-the-job training one day a week. Training days alternate between support for portfolio-building and taught sessions. The latter cover subjects such as health and safety, and are supported by the use of videos. In addition to seeing trainees in the training centre, assessors also visit them at work. For administration trainees, the assessor's visits can be as often as every week. Assessors observe trainees at work to assess performance, and check their understanding. Assessors finish their assessments by giving trainees written and oral feedback. In each case, the next visit is planned and the trainees agree what work or preparation they need to do by then. Information technology trainees who are not on a placement work full time in the training centre. They have daily access to assessors and are given tasks to produce work for their portfolios. The self-assessment report identified two strengths and one weakness. Inspectors did not agree with either of the strengths claimed. They confirmed the weakness and found others. Contrary to the prescribed format, Shape self-assessed and graded administration and information technology separately. Inspectors awarded a single grade, lower than those given in the self-assessment report.

Table 2: breakdown of business administration trainees by subject and programme

	MODERN APPRENTICES	NATIONAL TRAINEES	OTHER YOUTH TRAINEES	ADULT TRAINEES	NEW DEAL CLIENTS	TOTAL
Administration	3	12	4			19
Information technology		6	6	4	3	19
Total	3	18	10	4	3	38

Table 3: breakdown of business administration trainees by subject and employment

	EMPLOYED	ON PLACEMENT	UNEMPLOYED & NO PLACEMENT	TOTAL
Administration	4	7	8	19
Information technology		2	17	19
Total	4	9	25	38

Table 4: breakdown of business administration trainees by subject and level of NVQ

	NVQ LEVEL 1	NVQ LEVEL 2	NVQ LEVEL 3	NOT REGISTERED	TOTAL
Administration		18	1		19
Information technology	3	14		2	19
Total	3	32	1	2	38

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear progress summary in most portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ few placements for information technology trainees
- ◆ unrealistic information technology training
- ◆ poor assessment practices
- ◆ no development of key skills
- ◆ poor NVQ achievement rates
- ◆ unsystematic progression

28. Most trainees are aware of their progress and refer to a chart in their portfolio which records their achievement of NVQ units. In most cases, assessors update this each time a unit of an NVQ is achieved.

29. There is a serious lack of placements for information technology trainees. This has been recognised by Shape but the organisation has failed to introduce successful measures to redress the problem. Workplace supervisors across the sector know little about NVQs or the programmes their trainees are following. They are not involved in assessment planning, although they write witness statements to confirm trainees' performance in the workplace. Employers are not involved in trainees' reviews. Information technology trainees not on placement

attend the training centre on a full-time basis. There is little structured training. Formal training takes place one day each week. During the rest of the week, trainees gather evidence from simulated tasks given to them by the trainer or complete work requests from Shape's administration office. Trainees do not have the opportunity to gather evidence and demonstrate competence in a real working environment. Trainees are encouraged to complete a level 2 NVQ within 12 weeks to make way for more TEC-funded trainees. They are assessed as competent in the tasks they achieve, but this is within a classroom situation and not over a sufficient period of time to prove that they have an established grasp of their training. The head of the information technology programme is unaware of the recent introduction of a new set of NVQ standards for this area, and of significant changes in their content which should have a direct impact on the training methods used within Shape. For example, simulation of tasks is no longer allowed. Evidence must be gathered during real work and over a period of about six months for a level 2 NVQ. The last entry date for the old standards was the end of December 1999, so all new starters from January 2000 must be registered on the new framework. There are adequate resources, with modern computers and up-to-date software but the computer room is poorly ventilated and untidy.

30. Assessment practice is poor and evidence in portfolios is not always appropriate. For example, one trainee included a copy of a review from another NVQ programme which was not relevant to their current qualification. Two other units had been assessed as complete when there were gaps in the evidence required. Assessment plans and feedback records have recently been introduced. It is too soon to evaluate their impact.

31. Assessors frequently visit administration trainees at work, weekly in some cases, to carry out observations of trainees performing tasks. Information technology assessors visit less frequently. One information technology trainee, who has been on placement since November, has not yet had a visit from an assessor. Trainees receive written feedback from observations of their performance but they are not helped to understand how these meet NVQ standards, and assessment decisions are not clear. Assessors complete the awarding body's evidence reference sheets for the trainees. Trainees do not understand their qualifications. Evidence is poorly cross-referenced, which has also been identified by the external verifier. There are trainees who have been registered since July 1999 and have yet to achieve a single unit of an NVQ. Others started in November 1999 and have not yet been registered with an awarding body. One of these trainees only received a copy of the NVQ standards three months after starting their programme. Employed trainees do not receive off-the-job training and some have found it difficult to meet assessors. Internal verification is the responsibility of one person because there are currently insufficient qualified assessors to share the role. Several staff are working towards assessor qualifications so need qualified staff to support their decisions before these can be verified.

32. There is no training in or assessment of key skills, and there are trainees who are unable to complete their programme because of this. Trainees expect to be

assessed for key skills after they have completed their NVQs and have not been encouraged to integrate the two aspects of their programme. This contributes to the poor achievement rates. Thirty-two per cent of all leavers since 1996-97 have left without achieving a qualification. Since 1996-97, only 96 out of 167 starters on adult and youth programmes completed their individual training plans, although 64 youth trainees and nine adults entered employment. No modern apprentices have ever completed their training plans, and in 1998-99, only 20 per cent of modern apprentices achieved an NVQ. None have completed their apprenticeships. In the current year, 60 per cent of national trainees have gained an NVQ but again, none have completed the full national traineeship. Only 25 per cent of other young people have completed their training programmes. Absenteeism is high at 22 per cent last year, and attendance at some off-the-job training is poor. Staff tolerate this as acceptable practice and have taken no effective action to address the problem.

33. When trainees progress from one level to the next, or change from one NVQ to another, the transfer process is poorly managed. For example, a trainee completing level 2 in administration who expressed interest in progressing to level 3 in information technology was told this was not available. He is currently pursuing a second level 2 qualification without any assessment of his needs and capabilities or of the workplace opportunities. One former level 2 administration trainee is now a modern apprentice working towards a level 3 in administration but has no support from workplace staff and very little access to the staff at Shape. Staff complete a form stating the programme to which the trainee is to transfer. However, these contain very little explanation as to why the transfer is taking place, give no indication that the programme has been assessed for suitability, and do not they record any additional training needs which may apply. When it is identified that a trainee would benefit from additional support, staff discuss the case before making a referral to Shape's mentor, but there is little written information to support their decisions.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 5

34. There are 74 trainees working towards NVQs in retailing or in customer service. Seventeen are modern apprentices, 35 are national trainees, 18 are on other youth training programmes, and four are on work-based training for adults. All the modern apprentices are employed, as are a further 12 trainees. The remaining trainees gain work experience while on placement with a selection of employers. These range from local retail shops and dental surgeries to regional organisations with town-centre offices. Shape offers NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in retail operations and at levels 2 and 3 in customer service. Until April 1999, the customer service NVQ was offered as an additional qualification for trainees following NVQs in administration. The retailing and customer service programmes are run independently. They each have a member of staff appointed as a programme head. Both members of staff are also assessors, and both joined the organisation during the past six months. An additional assessor is employed on the customer service programme. Trainees are recruited onto the programmes either by referral from

local careers offices or by word-of-mouth recommendations. Unemployed trainees attend a three-day induction programme at Shape's training centre, then start work experience at their placements. Assessors usually visit trainees at work once every two weeks. All training and assessment is carried out in the workplace. Employers provide on-the-job training and assessors from Shape conduct the NVQ assessments. In the self-assessment report, Shape assessed and graded the occupational areas of retailing and customer service independently. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report and found additional weaknesses. The grade awarded was lower than either of the grades given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ detailed recording of naturally occurring workplace evidence in retailing
- ◆ flexible access to assessors for customer service trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no training for some customer service trainees
- ◆ inappropriate work placements in customer service
- ◆ inadequate planning, co-ordination and recording of training and assessment
- ◆ poor assessment practice
- ◆ lack of individuality in portfolios
- ◆ no integration of key skills with occupational training
- ◆ poor levels of achievement

35. Unemployed trainees attend a three-day induction at Shape's training centre. Employed trainees frequently do not have an induction. Trainees who have an induction find the half-day session on first aid helpful. Retail trainees, mostly unemployed, enter work placements appropriate to their qualifications. This allows for the collection of real workplace evidence. The assessor who visits each placement at least once every two weeks takes full advantage of the visits by recording, in detail, the performance of the trainee during the visit. This report is used as evidence towards their NVQ.

36. Customer service assessors offer an after-hours service to trainees, to give advice and guidance on the collection of evidence and portfolio-building skills. This has been in operation since September 1999.

37. Prospective trainees are interviewed, usually by the programme heads, although some customer service trainees are assigned to the programme without the knowledge of the customer service department. Some trainees who have been on the programme for more than six months have yet to receive any training. They have not had any contact with their assessor, and the assessor has not visited their

workplaces or assessed the suitability of their work roles to a customer service qualification. All trainees who have not been visited by their assessor are employed as dental nurses in local dental surgeries. Other customer service trainees who are regularly visited are often employed or gaining work experience at work placements inappropriate to a qualification in customer service. These include dental surgeries, childcare nurseries, care homes for the elderly and solicitors' offices. Trainees in these placements work as dental nurses, nursery nurses, care assistants and legal secretaries. Customer care is certainly a part of their work, but it is not their primary job role, as required in the occupational framework for the customer service NVQ.

38. Shape's staff fail to explain the training and assessment process effectively and there is a general lack of awareness and understanding about NVQs, key skills and training programmes among trainees and their employers. Usually, trainees are aware of how their work duties fit their NVQs, but few can explain how the evidence collected and put into their portfolios for assessment relates to the NVQ standards. Assessors, when advising candidates, do not make reference to units, elements or the performance criteria of the NVQs. Shape does not have or distribute any information to employers explaining what NVQs, key skills, modern apprenticeships or national traineeships are, or how they work. Assessors rarely meet trainees' employers and employers have little involvement with the NVQ programmes. Assessors give employers verbal updates on trainees' progress, but employers are not invited to comment on or to be involved in trainees' progress review meetings. Review forms are completed regularly, but the information recorded is not sufficiently detailed or informative. Too often, the content merely consists of references to earlier comments, without adding any new information. Sometimes, the information recorded is ambiguous or misleading, and implies that units of the NVQ have been completed when this is not the case.

39. Usually, employers are not involved with the authentication of trainees' evidence generated in the workplace. Many employers are responsible for the internal training of their staff, including Shape's trainees, and some employers have well-established, structured training programmes. Shape's trainees attend these training sessions alongside other staff. As part of this training, some trainees produce portfolios of evidence for their employers. The evidence in these 'store portfolios' is regularly assessed by their supervisors or managers. Shape's assessors, however, are not aware of the existence of these other portfolios. All evidence contained in the store portfolios could be used as evidence towards NVQs and some of the key skills awards.

40. All trainees have individual training plans. Frequently, sections of the training plans are incomplete. The plans are not used by Shape as working documents. There are no targets set. Details of progression and transfer between programmes are often unrecorded. When a trainee does transfer between occupational programmes there is no assessment of the trainee to establish their suitability to achieve the new qualification. None of the on-the-job training is recorded on the trainees' individual training plans. This failure to integrate the different elements of

the training lengthens the time trainees take to achieve their qualifications.

41. Shape's assessors do not use assessment plans. Trainees are assessed without prior knowledge or agreement. No units are assessed until the end of the qualification. Trainees on the retailing and customer service programmes are assessed in the same way, even though they are undertaking different types of work and pursuing different qualifications. Trainees do not complete the evidence cross-referencing sheets in their portfolios, as the assessors do this on their behalf. Trainees are issued with a set of standard documents, which they use to record witness testimony, case studies and evidence. Portfolios lack individuality, and there is little diversity in the types of evidence included. Assessors place a heavy reliance on written work, such as case studies, personal statements and witness testimonies. Records of direct observation of trainees' work skills are also used, but these rarely record assessment decisions or the feedback given to trainees. There are no records of assessment in the portfolios, although the evidence checklists which assessors maintain in each portfolio do give the trainees an indication of their progress. One assessor observed by inspectors confused advice with assessment. The assessor also considered the candidate's evidence to have met the NVQ standards, when this was clearly not the case.

42. Internal verification on both the retailing and customer service programmes is weak. There is little planning of sampling, and where sampling records exist, most are not signed by the assessor. Where action points are identified, no records are kept to show that the actions have been carried out. Sampling of assessors' performance by the internal verifier does not extend further than checking portfolios.

43. Some modern apprentices have completed their level 3 NVQs but are only just beginning their key skills awards. The programme head of customer service is a qualified key skills assessor. At present, key skills are not integrated with the NVQ programme, although there is now some assessment of key skills at work.

44. NVQ achievement levels are poor. For a year there have been no NVQ achievements in customer service or retailing. In 1997-98 and 1998-99, 50 per cent of those who started training left early, and the 50 per cent remaining gained an individual NVQ. No modern apprentices or national trainees have completed their framework, and 22 per cent have left without any qualifications. Forty-one per cent of all those who have started on the youth programme since 1996-97 have left without gaining a qualification. Only 39 per cent have completed their individual training plans over the same period.

Health, care & public services

Grade 5

45. Shape provides training towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care and in early years care and education. It is also accredited to provide training and a nationally recognised qualification in dental nursing. There are 108 trainees. The following

tables show how many trainees are working in each specialism within this occupational area, what training programmes they are on, which qualifications they are pursuing, and how many are in employment. The one New Deal client working in care is following the employment option of New Deal. The dental nursing trainees are working towards the nationally recognised qualification in dental nursing.

46. Early years care and education trainees attend off-the-job training on a fortnightly basis. A fortnightly evening class is offered for those who are unable to attend off-the-job training during the day. Care trainees attend weekly off-the-job training sessions held at the training centre. Dental nursing trainees attend a weekly off-the-job training session. A weekly evening class is also available for those who are unable to attend during the day. A programme of additional training and qualifications is offered. The topics covered include first aid, moving and lifting, and team-building workshops.

47. All trainees are in work placements. Shape has links with 78 local employers providing work placements. The early years care and education trainees use 41 work placements in local authority schools and nurseries, playgroups and private day nurseries. The care trainees are placed in 16 residential and nursing homes and a day-centre for clients with disabilities. Dental nursing trainees are placed in 20 dental surgeries. All assessment for early years care and education trainees and care trainees takes place at work. There is no formal assessment in the workplace for dental nursing trainees. Their assessment is carried out through nationally set examinations.

48. There are six members of staff in Shape's care section, which is subdivided into three areas. A programme manager has overall responsibility for the section. There is one full-time and two part-time tutor/assessors for early years care and education, one full-time tutor/assessor for care, and one full-time tutor for dental nursing. All the staff are occupationally qualified and experienced. Five members of staff have assessors' qualifications and one is awaiting verification of their assessor's qualification. There are two staff members with internal verifiers' qualifications, one each for the care and early years programmes. Most of the assessment for the early years programme is carried out by Shape's staff, acting as mobile assessors. There is also one work-based assessor. Assessment for the care programmes is carried out by work-based assessors, of whom there are 17. Early years trainees work daytime shift patterns of 8.30 am to 4.00pm. The care trainees work varying shift patterns which cover daytime and evening working and range from six to eight hours in length. Some trainees also work weekends. The ratio of trainees to qualified staff varies from 1:35 to 1:5 in early years, and from 1:3 to 1:7 in care. The self-assessment report identified separate strengths and weaknesses for each subsection of this occupational area and awarded separate grades accordingly. Inspectors confirmed one of the strengths and all of the weaknesses. Most of the remaining strengths represented no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified one additional strength and six additional weaknesses and awarded a single grade, lower than those in the self assessment report.

Table 5: breakdown of health, care & public services trainees by subject and programme

	MODERN APPRENTICES	NATIONAL TRAINEES	OTHER YOUTH TRAINEES	NEW DEAL CLIENTS	TOTAL
Early years care & education	15	33	11		59
Care		11	10	1	22
Dental nursing		15	12		27
Total	15	59	33	1	108

Table 6: breakdown of health, care & public services trainees by subject and qualification

	NVQ LEVEL 2	NVQ LEVEL 3	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE	TOTAL
Early years care & education	45	14		59
Care	21	1		22
Dental nursing			27	27
Total	66	15	27	108

Table 7: breakdown of health, care & public services trainees by employment

	EMPLOYED	ON PLACEMENT	TOTAL
Early years care & education	17	42	59
Care	14	8	22
Dental nursing	15	12	27
Total	46	62	108

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good initial assessment of trainees' suitability for occupational area
- ◆ programme of additional qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no off-the-job training for level 3 NVQ in early years care and education
- ◆ no key skills training or assessment
- ◆ poor assessment practices

- ◆ slow progress of some trainees
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ dental nursing trainees not working in the occupational area for which they are registered

POOR PRACTICE

Some documentation is poor. The care trainees are given a handbook which has been externally produced as a guide to GNVQs and NVQs. It has not been customised to meet the needs of the NVQ trainees and the information on GNVQs is misleading.

49. All trainees are interviewed prior to acceptance onto their training programme. Two references are requested for early years trainees. Care trainees who have no experience of working with the elderly are interviewed by prospective placement managers and are given the opportunity to work for a day in the placement to determine their suitability and to give them an insight into the work involved. Off-the-job training sessions are arranged at times to suit the working patterns of trainees in early years care and education and dental nursing. This ensures that some access to training is available. Care trainees who do not attend training sessions are contacted and given the training materials related to the sessions they have missed. Training plans showing the topics to be covered at each training session have been written for all three aspects of the occupational area. Copies are given to trainees. However, the level of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training varies. Employers in care receive a copy of the weekly training plan but employers in early years care and education and dental nursing are not made aware of the content of off-the-job training. Some employers in early years care and education have very little knowledge and understanding of NVQs. There is no off-the-job training for trainees taking the level 3 NVQ in early years care and education, although portfolio-building support sessions are available.

POOR PRACTICE

In one private nursery, staff absences and shift patterns regularly meant that the number of qualified staff did not meet the statutory staffing levels. At times, there were more trainees than qualified staff.

50. Off-the-job training sessions are of satisfactory quality. Trainees are given the opportunity to participate through question and answer sessions and discussions. The checking of trainees' knowledge and understanding is a particular feature of the training sessions for dental nursing trainees. Each training session on the dental nursing programme includes time for checking trainees' understanding of topics covered in previous classes. Training in the workplace is planned and in some situations there are written training programmes. All trainees are given an induction to the workplace which covers health and safety, fire procedures and basic guidance on working practices. Trainees work alongside a qualified member of staff in the initial stages of their training. Trainees have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications, which enhance their occupational qualification. Early years trainees and care trainees are given the opportunity to achieve first aid qualifications at a higher level than the basic first aid certificate offered to all Shape trainees during induction.

POOR PRACTICE

Trainees working towards level 2 NVQs in care make slow progress towards completion of their awards. One trainee has been in training since July 1997 and has only achieved two units of her NVQ.

51. Fifteen trainee dental nurses are inappropriately registered as customer service trainees for funding purposes. Their individual training plans identify a level 2 NVQ in customer service as the qualification aim, but they have received no training in this occupational area and are working towards the dental nursing qualification.

52. There has been no development of key skills in this occupational area and, contrary to requirements, training in and assessment of key skills are not included as

part of the modern apprenticeship or national traineeship programmes. Staff have received no training in key skills and have no plan detailing how key skills are to be taught or assessed. Trainees are not aware of key skills or how they will be assessed. Trainees' review sheets include a section which allows the recording of suitable evidence for key skills. The comments recorded in each review are repetitive and do not contribute to the trainees' understanding of key skills.

53. Trainees' training plans are not individual working documents and are not updated during training. Most, but not all, reviews are carried out within the required three monthly interval. The target-setting in reviews is brief, and in some cases non-existent. Issues identified are not always followed up in subsequent reviews.

54. There are poor assessment practices in both early years care and education and in care, which contribute to the slowness of trainees' progress. In early years care and education, all assessment is carried out by Shape's staff, who act as mobile assessors. Assessment recording practices are satisfactory, but there is a delay in starting the assessment planning process. No assessment planning takes place until the trainee has been on their programme for approximately six months. This results in missed opportunities for assessment at work and a bunching of assessments towards the end of the programme. This has been identified as an issue in the last external verifier's report. In care, there are many problems with work-based assessors who are unable to give the time and commitment to assessment because of other responsibilities. Some trainees do not have sufficient access to their assessor, either because they do not work the same shift patterns, or because they work in another part of the care home or at another site. The question of who will internally verify the portfolios of those candidates assessed by the current internal verifier has not been addressed.

55. External verifiers' reports for care identified a number of significant weaknesses in the assessment and internal verification process, which resulted in the withdrawal of certification for a period of time in 1999. This has now been reinstated and the internal verifier has worked hard to address some of the issues. A rigorous system of 100 per cent sampling is in place. Assessment practices in the workplace are poor. This is borne out by internal verification records. Assessment planning and records of direct observation do not cover the performance criteria and range sufficiently and assessors are not aware of this. There are many recorded examples of additional evidence being required before units can be signed off. Direct observation records are completed by trainees and signed by the assessors, but without other means of authentication. This method of recording does not give adequate direct evidence which could be used for the trainee's optional NVQ unit. There is little written feedback or action-planning by assessors. Assessment in dental nursing is solely by examination.

56. Trainees' progress in both early years care and education and in care is slow. Some trainees have been on their programme for more than 18 months and have not achieved any units of their NVQs. This slow progress contributes to the poor levels of achievement. The proportion of those who achieved the qualification in

dental nursing at the November 1999 examination was below the national average. In 1997-98, 21 trainees started on the care training programme, but so far only eight have achieved NVQs at level 2. One trainee is still on the programme and 12, over 50 per cent of the group, have left without completing the award. In 1997-98, 29 trainees started the early years care and education training programme. Of these, 13 have achieved their level 2 qualification, and one has achieved an NVQ at level 3. Fifteen trainees left without gaining the award. In 1997-98, 42 trainees started dental nursing training. Eleven have achieved the qualification. Since 1996-97, a total of 40 adults and 331 young people have joined the three programmes which Shape offers in this vocational area. Four adults and 95 young people have completed their individual training plans in that time, and an additional 46 young people have transferred from other training onto modern apprenticeships and national traineeships. Thirty-six adults and 152 young people left with no qualifications whatsoever. In 1997-98, the percentage of trainees who left without completing their training plans, excluding those who converted to other programmes, was 9 per cent in early years care and education, 35 per cent in care and 38 per cent in dental nursing. In 1998-99, the overall 'early leaver' rate for trainees on all care programmes at Shape was over 42 per cent.

Foundation for work

Grade 4

57. There are 38 youth trainees and two adults on the foundation for work programme, which is run by two full-time members of staff, assisted by three part-time volunteers. All the trainees have been identified by the careers service as having additional learning needs or experiencing barriers to training and employment. Thirteen trainees are working towards NVQs at level 1 in food preparation and cooking as part of a nine months' 'access to care' programme. The trainees undertake a three-month work experience placement in the kitchens of either a care home or nursery and attend off-the-job training sessions one day a week for background theory and portfolio-building. At the end of three months, trainees go on to take two further three-month placements, one in early years care and one in care, and have the opportunity to take on introductory certificate in working with young children. There are also 27 youth trainees on a vocational access course, which can last until a trainee's eighteenth birthday. This programme is intended to develop social and personal skills to prepare the young people for the world of work, and also offers work experience opportunities of variable length. Many trainees attend residential courses to help them develop teamwork and leadership skills. Basic skills support is provided one day a week by the local adult education service. Wordpower and numberpower at entry level, and an NVQ in information technology at level 1, are offered where they are appropriate. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths that were either normal practice or related to general trainee support. Shape accurately claimed a number of weaknesses and further weaknesses were identified during inspection. The self-assessment report treated the access to care and vocational access programmes as two separate sections and awarded an individual grade to each. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than either of those given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of opportunities for personal skills development
- ◆ well-structured access to care programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no structured on-the-job training
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no objectives for off-the-job training sessions
- ◆ lack of written individual targets
- ◆ insufficient workplace visits
- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates

58. Shape's staff ensure that activities for trainees are varied and interesting. Residential courses are available to vocational access trainees to help them in the development of personal skills, to build relationships and to challenge unacceptable behaviour. Those who attend enjoy and value the experiences. Through Shape's mentoring service, the vocational access team arrange for training sessions on a range of social and personal issues, including pregnancy and drugs awareness.

59. The access to care programme has recently benefited from the appointment of an additional tutor/assessor. The two staff in charge of the programme are now working as an effective team to develop on- and off-the-job training. The programme was modified in 1999 and approval to offer the NVQ was awarded in November of that year. There is a well-structured off-the-job training schedule, and assessment practices are satisfactory. Where there are established work placements, on- and off-the-job training are properly integrated and trainees are provided with a good learning experience. Workplace supervisors are fully involved in the training and aware of their role and of the trainees' progress. These trainees are well motivated and understand what is required to achieve their qualifications. For these trainees, this is an effective programme that introduces them to work in the care sector. However, newer placement providers and trainees are not yet fully informed of the structure of the programme and have little understanding of the qualification or training provided.

60. With the exception of the level 1 NVQ in information technology, there are no opportunities for trainees on the vocational access programme to gain occupational qualifications. The information technology training is poor, as trainees have no access to real work and cannot demonstrate competence in a real working environment. The choice of a level 1 NVQ in information technology is itself inappropriate for this particular group of trainees, as this should be a work-based qualification, but the trainees' only opportunity for gaining experience is in the classroom. Where training occurs in the workplace, it is unplanned and wholly led by the workplace supervisors. In some work placements, staff have substantial

knowledge of work-based training and NVQs but there is no planning or co-ordination of training by Shape's staff. Some trainees have been in their work placements for between six and 12 months without any assessment to accredit the skills and knowledge they have developed during this time.

61. Trainees attend Shape's training premises until a suitable work experience placement is found. During this time they undertake a range of activities which are intended to develop their personal, social and employability skills and attitudes through craft activities, sport, cooking, and external trips for project work. There is no overall structure or plan to the programme and trainees are unaware of what they will be doing until the day they attend. Sessions lack objectives and trainees are unable to see how calligraphy, rounders and painting murals will help them find a job and gain qualifications. Trainees' personal skills, motivation and confidence may be developed through these activities but this development is not reviewed and individual progress is not assessed. When trainees begin their work placements, there are no individual plans to develop their skills or to build on what they may have achieved before. Wordpower and numberpower activities are based on completion of a project while visiting a large out-of-town shopping centre. The skills needed to complete the project do not relate to the literacy and numeracy skills required in the workplace. Literacy and numeracy qualifications are achieved prior to going on a work placement.

62. Initial assessment is limited to basic skills screening, and individual personal, social and training needs are not clearly identified or recorded. Individual training plans lack specific detail on individual targets or any additional support which is needed and do not provide a useful basis for the reviewing progress. Vocational access staff do not hold records of trainees' learning activities or achievements in the basic skills classes run by the adult education service, and there are no comprehensive systems to assess overall progress. Review visits are undertaken in the workplace by vocational access staff and are not sufficiently frequent for trainees to feel fully supported or for staff to monitor progress. Although workplace supervisors are satisfied with the weekly telephone contact with Shape to monitor trainees' attendance, they do not feel fully informed about, or involved in, the overall training programme, and are often unclear about their role.

63. Two full-time vocational access staff are supported by three part-time volunteers. In addition to the 25 TEC-funded trainees, these staff also provide training and activities for children who have been excluded from school and staffing resources are, at times, insufficient to cope with so many young people who need close attention and discipline. The computer sessions rely on voluntary staff and can only be run two and a half days each week. There is insufficient furniture in some of the training rooms and the computers run software which is rarely found in modern businesses.

64. There are no 'milestone' targets set for trainees in vocational access and achievements are difficult to quantify. In 1998-99, 10 per cent of trainees completed their individual training plans, and 18 per cent gained employment. However, 70 per

cent left the programme early with no qualification. In 1999-2000, 4 per cent of trainees have gained employment, 5 per cent have completed their individual training plans and, so far, 41 per cent have left the programme early with no qualifications. No achievements have yet been claimed for trainees on the access to care programme.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 5

65. Shape has an equal opportunities policy and statement which meet legal and contractual requirements. The policy was last updated in January 1999. There is a designated equal opportunities officer. The company operates across a wide geographical area, which contains several different minority ethnic communities. Data are collected from the equal opportunities monitoring form completed by staff and all applicants for training. These data include information on age, gender, ethnicity, health problems and any additional support needs. Shape operates an 'open-recruitment' policy for most occupational areas. There are 14 trainees with disabilities and four trainees are from minority ethnic groups, this latter figure representing less than 1 per cent of the overall number of trainees. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ no significant strengths identified

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no strategy for targeting under-represented groups
- ◆ no use of equal opportunities data in the planning of recruitment
- ◆ failure to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no harassment policy
- ◆ no promotion or monitoring of equal opportunities for trainees after induction
- ◆ no reference to equal opportunities in review forms or contracts with employers
- ◆ discriminatory dress code for female staff
- ◆ insufficient equal opportunities training for staff

66. The equal opportunities officer has responsibility for up-dating the equal opportunities policy annually. It was last updated in January 1999, when an action plan was drawn up. Five items were highlighted for action. Four of these have now been completed but one is still outstanding. There is a complaints procedure. When complaints are received, they are recorded, logged and subsequently investigated. Any action taken is recorded. Wheelchair users can access both premises in

Middlesbrough. Access is only available on the ground floor in Redcar.

67. Shape does not systematically analyse data collected relating to equal opportunities. There are no systems or procedures to measure the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy. Recruitment data about staff and trainees are available, but no effort is made to identify issues or to use the information for future planning in directing recruitment towards under-represented groups. Monitoring of trainees' welfare in the workplace is limited to that which takes place as part of the health and safety audit. No other monitoring takes place to ensure that trainees are not being discriminated against. Some employers do not have an equal opportunities policy and promises from Shape's staff to supply a copy of its policy have not been fulfilled. There are no references to equal opportunities or employers' responsibilities on employers' placement contracts. Equal opportunities are not explored at reviews and trainees are only asked if they have any problems. There is no place on the review form for recording either health and safety or the results of equal opportunities monitoring.

68. Shape does not have a harassment policy. Trainees and staff receive awareness training in equal opportunities as part of their induction but there are no arrangements to ensure that equal opportunities is regularly discussed, or that the wider issues are explored in any depth. Trainees do not remember the equal opportunities issues raised during induction.

69. Equal opportunity issues are not a regular agenda item at staff meetings. Computer printouts of scantily clad woman are displayed in the information technology training room. Training and publicity materials are not examined for compliance with current legislation. There are no positive images of under-represented groups on any of Shape's literature. Overall, there is a culture of complacency within the company.

70. Shape's code of practice states that it is "committed to the development of all staff to enable the implementation of equal opportunities throughout the company." Only three staff have undergone training in equal opportunities. There are no plans for any other staff to receive training in equal opportunities. The general manager has imposed a dress code which prohibits female staff from wearing trousers at work. This decision has been opposed on several occasions but no solution has been agreed. A trial period is planned in which this ruling will be waived, but some staff are unclear as to who will then make any decision as to whether to rescind this directive.

Trainee support

Grade 5

71. Most of Shape's trainees are referred by the careers service and the Employment Service. Half of the trainees have been identified by the careers service as having additional learning needs or encountering barriers to training and

employment. All trainees attend a three-day induction to the organisation and receive a candidate guidance booklet. This general introduction is followed by a more specific induction to individual departments. During induction, all trainees are assessed for literacy and numeracy. Shape employs a full time mentor who receives referrals from either departmental staff or trainees themselves and arranges for additional confidential counselling, advice, guidance or support. Literacy and numeracy sessions are available and arrangements can be made for trainees to attend additional training sessions with the adult education service. Occupational staff are responsible for providing any necessary additional vocational support. There are procedures and materials in the candidate guidance booklet to support preparation for employment. The self-assessment report identified many strengths and some weaknesses. Inspectors were unable to find all of the strengths claimed and identified additional weaknesses. The grade awarded was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ access to mentoring service
- ◆ additional support for dyslexic trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no induction for some trainees
- ◆ failure to individualise training plans
- ◆ insufficient recognition of prior learning or achievements
- ◆ insufficient initial assessment
- ◆ no management co-ordination of additional support
- ◆ ineffective reviews
- ◆ insufficient guidance for those finishing their training
- ◆ poor retention of trainees

72. There is a high level of pastoral support available to trainees, and departmental staff give help and advice to trainees when it is needed. For example, in business administration, one trainee gained the confidence to remain on the training programme following timely support from the occupational tutor. A full-time mentor is available to respond to referrals from both staff and trainees for guidance, advice and additional support. The mentor has established a wide range of links to external support agencies. The mentor also monitors trainees' attendance and, in cases of unauthorised absence, contacts trainees to offer support. These interventions have helped to prevent some trainees from leaving training programmes or assisted them to transfer to more appropriate training. The mentoring facility is highly praised by trainees who have used it and most trainees are aware that it is available.

73. Additional support is arranged for any staff or trainees identified as dyslexic. Shape works in conjunction with the dyslexia institute and a local college. Trainees

are currently working on spelling and letter writing. Additional staff input is also arranged to ensure that trainees do not fall behind. One member of staff working in the construction area has also been well supported to overcome this difficulty. Although this process of support is effective when applied, not all trainees needing it get the help they require.

74. Most trainees have a good recollection of the health and safety aspects of their three-day induction. The induction sessions provide a comprehensive introduction to the organisation. However, trainees who are employed before starting customer service or administration programmes do not receive any induction to Shape.

75. Throughout the organisation, individual training plans do not identify individual needs or adequately record arrangements for additional support. Target qualifications are recorded but the training plans do not specify timescales for achievement of units, or additional qualifications. Individual training plans are not updated to reflect trainees' progress or changes to their programmes. With the exception of some individual examples in construction, trainees' prior learning or achievements are not systematically explored or accredited. Except in care, initial assessment is limited to tests for literacy and numeracy. Key skills are not assessed on entry. Where literacy and numeracy testing does occur, trainees are not always told the results of the test. There is no assessment of occupational suitability or preferred styles of learning, and initial interviews rarely contribute to the initial assessment of trainees' needs. Initial assessments sometimes fail to ascertain even basic information about trainees. For instance, the first formal reviews for two vocational access trainees recorded basic information on personal circumstances, none of which had been established at the start of their programmes.

76. Arrangements for providing additional learning support are poorly managed and lack co-ordination. There are customer service trainees whose assessor is unaware that they have additional learning needs and whose additional learning needs are not being met. There are no written arrangements to support a dyslexic trainee on an information technology programme. Literacy and numeracy support arrangements are unco-ordinated and do not complement each other.

77. Reviews of trainees' progress focus primarily on recording what trainees have done over the previous three-month period. Reviews in customer service are particularly ineffective, as individual review sheets contain little more than a reference to the previous review sheets. There is a minimum of target-setting during reviews and additional learning needs and support arrangements are not fully explored or recorded. Employers rarely have any direct involvement in reviews, although employers and supervisors do have an opportunity to talk to the visiting reviewer. Health and safety issues are not systematically monitored during review visits.

78. The candidates' guidance booklet, which is given to all trainees at induction, contains comprehensive procedures and documents to help trainees with their search for jobs, the preparation of curricula vitae, and job applications and

interviews. However, some trainees do not recall receiving the booklet and few have used it to prepare for employment. It is the responsibility of individual departments to introduce careers guidance but there is no structure or systematic planning within trainees' programmes to address this effectively. There is no job-search support for horticulture trainees and some information technology trainees have progressed to a second level 2 qualification simply because a level 3 NVQ in information technology is not offered. Although Shape's TEC contract makes provision, at the discretion of the TEC, for the training of those 18 and over, some of Shape's trainees are forced to leave training when they reach their 18th birthday.

79. There is a TEC-led initiative to address the problem of early leavers. However, this has not had any noticeable impact. Throughout the organisation, retention rates are low and support activities do not prevent trainees from leaving programmes early. The ineffectiveness of the initial assessment process leads to many trainees being recruited onto the wrong programme, which contributes to the problem of early leavers.

Management of training

Grade 5

POOR PRACTICE

A letter to a newly recruited employer providing a work placement for one of Shape's trainees contains a sentence advising the employer that, in addition to there being no charge for the trainee, they, the employer, do not have to be involved in the training programme in any way.

80. A chief executive and a non-executive board oversee Shape's work, but operational responsibility lies with the general manager. Day-to-day management of each of the occupational areas is the responsibility of departmental managers. Departmental managers attend fortnightly meetings with the general manager. Information from these meetings is then passed on to trainers and assessors through departmental team meetings. The company achieved the Investors in People award in 1998. Shape's staff visit placement providers and carry out health and safety checks. Placement providers are also required to sign a contract in which they confirm their commitment to releasing trainees for training. In early years care and education, Shape's staff also leave a checklist for workplace supervisors to complete to say whether or not their workplace can provide opportunities for trainees to gather evidence towards the relevant NVQ standards. In the last year, Shape has had staff changes in four of the six occupational areas. There have also been staff shortages caused by illness and absence. The self-assessment report acknowledges that this has had a bad effect on trainees' progress in some areas. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ some good opportunities for staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to respond effectively to identified problems
- ◆ unclear job roles and management responsibilities
- ◆ insufficient implementation of company policies

- ◆ failure to communicate employers' responsibilities
- ◆ insufficient resources
- ◆ insufficient use of data as a basis for management decisions

81. Staff training needs are identified through annual appraisals and are recorded on a training plan. Training is not solely restricted to organisational requirements, however. Some funding is also available for training which reflects personal needs and interests. For example, if a member of staff wishes to take a course judged to be of marginal value to the organisation, such as a degree in teaching, the company funds up to 50 per cent of the costs. The company is paying the full costs for a tutor who is undertaking a further education teacher's certificate, to meet a need identified during annual appraisal.

82. Overall management of the training programmes lacks direction. There is no standardisation of the operating practices of the different departments and little sharing of good practice. Managers are isolated and ideas are not acted upon. Several of the weaknesses identified by inspectors, such as the need to introduce properly co-ordinated key skills training and assessment, were first noted by members of Shape's staff. Copies of meeting minutes and memoranda indicate that they raised some of these matters verbally and in writing, but no actions were taken to implement their suggestions or to tackle the problems which they had pointed out. Management meetings are held every two weeks and departmental heads hold their own team meetings, to pass on information. Extra meetings are sometimes called at short notice and staff are expected to cancel appointments with trainees to attend. In most cases, management targets are driven by funding issues, not training needs. For example, a number of trainees are required to achieve their qualifications by February in order to claim their certificates and associated funding before the end of the financial year. However, several of the trainees concerned have far too little evidence in their portfolios to meet such deadlines.

83. There are no clear lines of responsibility for some key areas of work. For example, nobody co-ordinates trainee support across the company. One member of staff has responsibility for ensuring that health and safety is satisfactory in work placements, but nobody has the task of managing other important aspects of Shape's links with employers. Although job descriptions are being introduced, they are generalised and not specific to the occupational areas.

84. Company policies are not well known by staff and are not a regular part of discussions with work placement providers. Performance targets relate to specific contractual requirements and do not reflect company objectives. Most employers are aware of their contractual obligations in relation to health and safety but few can recall having seen Shape's equal opportunities policy or being asked to subscribe to it. Several versions of an equal opportunities statement exist. Staff are unsure which is the latest version. Trainees have poorly photocopied, undated copies of the equal opportunities statement included in their portfolios.

85. Shape is speedy in responding to requests for trainees from employers. However, Shape's staff fail to give employers a clear and effective explanation of exactly what their responsibilities are towards their trainees, and employers have little understanding of their obligations in this regard. Employed trainees in some areas do not have access to off-the-job training and have only irregular contact with employers. Employers do not understand NVQs and frequently are unaware of the programme or qualification followed by their trainees. Trainees' reviews are not a three-way process involving employer, trainee and assessor. Workplace supervisors are not involved in assessment planning and believe this to be solely the job of the assessor. They do, however, provide statements for trainees confirming performance in the workplace. They also ensure trainees get additional work experience if it is required for the qualification. Shape is accredited to train assessors but it has not encouraged workplace supervisors to become qualified as assessors. Consequently, workplace assessment opportunities are missed.

86. Most departments are under-resourced. There is a high turnover of personnel, and this has contributed to problems of low staffing levels in some occupational areas. Trainees cannot always see an assessor if their tutor is ill and their progress is slowed as a result. In business administration and care, those recently recruited as assessors are working towards assessor qualifications. This puts a strain on the few qualified assessors available and, in turn, the internal verifiers. Training rooms need decoration and some contain old or inadequate equipment. Staff requests to management for improvements have been rejected.

87. The introduction of key skills has not advanced significantly in the last three or four years and management has not taken responsibility for ensuring that the introduction of key skills is given the priority it deserves. In most programmes, there is no training in or assessment of key skills. A significant number of trainees cannot complete their programmes because they have a key skills requirement.

88. Shape's management information system is limited in its capacity to provide reliable data which can be used as a basis for management decisions. There is no systematic approach to analysing data and evaluating performance beyond that which is required to ensure that the terms of the TEC contract are met.

Quality assurance

Grade 5

89. Shape has a quality systems manual containing a range of policies, procedures and work instructions. Responsibility for quality assurance lies with the quality manager, who reports to the general manager. Each occupational area has a programme manager. They also report directly to the general manager and have full responsibility for the delivery, management and quality assurance of training in their departments. Occupationally competent members of staff carry out internal verification within each sector. Some feedback is collected from trainees both during and at the end of their training. The self-assessment report claimed no

strengths and several weaknesses for this aspect of Shape's work. Inspectors agreed with these weaknesses and identified others. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ no significant strengths identified

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ out-of-date quality assurance system
- ◆ failure to focus quality assurance arrangements on improvement, rather than compliance
- ◆ unsystematic approach to quality assurance
- ◆ poor internal verification practices
- ◆ poor self-assessment process

90. Shape has a quality assurance system, supported by a manual which contains policies, procedures and work instructions. However, the manual and the system it represents are out of date, having not been revised since their introduction. The system does not reflect the current needs of the organisation. Some procedures and work instructions are in the process of being rewritten but this process is incomplete. Regular auditing of the system to assess its effectiveness throughout the organisation has not taken place for a period of 18 months.

91. Shape's quality assurance arrangements focus on compliance with contracts and procedures. They do not promote improvements in training and the learning experience. Some staff do not properly understand the concept of quality assurance and continuous improvement. There is a fragmented, unsystematic approach to quality assurance in the organisation. Each departmental manager is responsible for the quality of training within his or her sections, and most work in isolation despite regular meetings with colleagues. The existing quality assurance system is not controlled centrally or applied evenly across the organisation, and arrangements do not ensure that training is of a high standard across all occupational areas. There are instances in, for example, equal opportunities, where Shape's actions, or inaction, place it in breach of contract or make it legally vulnerable.

92. Internal verification practices are not wholly effective and, in some cases, are inadequate. In administration and retailing there are no assessment sampling plans. There is no systematic control of the internal verification process across the organisation and some portfolios are not signed by the internal verifier. The internal verification process is, in most cases, confined to checking portfolios. Assessors'

performance is not observed. Some internal verifiers do not meet the requirements of the awarding body in terms of occupational competence and/or the level and currency of their qualifications.

93. Shape monitors the effectiveness of the training it provides through feedback from trainees, sought on an annual basis. The information is collected and analysed, but the current system has only recently been introduced and its effectiveness cannot be measured. Feedback from employers is not sought. Shape's management recognises the problem of early leavers as a significant cause for concern. Data are collected and analysed closely in an attempt to address the situation. Some occupational areas, such as early years care, perform significantly better than others, where early leavers account, on average, for over 40 per cent of all trainees who start on programmes. Targets have been set to reduce the number of trainees leaving without completing their training programmes. However, there has been little overall impact on the problem and in some cases the situation has worsened.

94. Shape carried out self-assessment for the first time in January 1999. A self-assessment report was not produced detailing the strengths and weaknesses identified, although an action plan was drawn up. The general manager initially led preparations for inspection, using a quality monitoring system provided by the TEC as a guide, but the process and ultimate production of the report were delayed significantly because of the general manager's illness. The quality manager took over production of the report less than a month before inspection was due to commence. Staff had little previous involvement in the self-assessment process, but the quality manager and department heads completed the process and produced a report only two weeks before the start of inspection. The self-assessment report is self-critical in places. Many of the strengths claimed throughout the self-assessment report represent no more than normal practice. Although Shape's staff recognised some weakness, they overlooked a significant number of critical weaknesses. Although inspectors agree with some of the grading judgements made by Shape, in most cases the grades proposed were inaccurate and not supported by evidence.