



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

Fazakerley & District CWP Agency

SUMMARY

Fazakerley and District CWP Agency offers satisfactory training in most occupational areas. Care training is good. At the first inspection, significant weaknesses were found in the health and safety arrangements. This has improved and manufacturing is now satisfactory, with good-quality teaching but poor recording of activities. At the first inspection, training in agriculture was less than satisfactory. Significant weaknesses were identified in the planning and recording of training and opportunities for assessment were missed. However, training is now well planned, though recording is not systematic. Opportunities are now taken to assess trainees on the job and overall the area is now satisfactory. Equal opportunities arrangements and trainee support are satisfactory, and managers and staff dedicate considerable care to the welfare of trainees. Co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is often weak. Initial assessment is poor and reviews are insufficiently monitored. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory, although assessment and verification practices are not sufficiently rigorous.

As a result of the reinspection of Fazakerley and District CWP Agency, the original published report text for agriculture and manufacturing has been replaced by new text, which make reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original report which have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4
Construction	3
Manufacturing	4
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	3
Health, care & public services	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Agriculture	3
Manufacturing	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ good working relationships among trainers, trainees and placement providers
- ♦ high standard of support
- ♦ good personal counselling
- ♦ staff are effective with trainees with diverse needs and experience
- ♦ strong commitment to equality of opportunity



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' occupational skills not assessed on entry
- ◆ trainees' basic skills and key skills not assessed on entry
- ◆ results of initial assessment not used to prepare individual training plans
- ◆ progress reviews not used to set goals for trainees
- ◆ off-the-job training not co-ordinated with workplace activity in some areas
- ◆ trainee support not fully recorded or reviewed
- ◆ insufficient data to inform management decisions
- ◆ immature quality assurance scheme

INTRODUCTION

1. Fazakerley and District CWP Agency (Faz&DisCWPA) is a charity. Now based in the Walton district of Liverpool, it has provided government-funded training since 1988. Training takes place in seven vocational areas, and leads to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3. There are 47 modern apprentices, 144 youth trainees, 70 unemployed adults, 74 prevocational trainees and 34 New Deal trainees. There are 369 trainees in total, all funded through Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). A further 150 trainees are funded through franchise arrangements with a local college. Franchised trainees are not included in this report. At the time of the reinspection, the number of trainees in agriculture had increased from 30 to 47, while the number in manufacturing had decreased from 25 to 18. There are 48 members of staff, including administration and ancillary staff. Off-the-job training in most of the occupational areas takes place at the training centre, typical industrial premises with workshops, training rooms and offices in each of two buildings.

2. Unemployment in the TEC area in June 1998 was high at 9.3 per cent, compared with 4.6 per cent nationally. In January 1999, unemployment in Liverpool was still higher than the national average at 9.1 per cent, compared with 4.1 per cent. The major employers in the area are Liverpool City Council, Ford Motor Company, hospitals and universities. Twenty per cent of all jobs in the Merseyside conurbation are in Liverpool city centre. In the immediate locality of the training centre, male unemployment is 27 per cent and female unemployment 16 per cent. Forty-eight per cent of all households are without any employed adult. Terraced housing accounts for 75 per cent of all the local accommodation, and only 37 per cent of households own a car.

3. The proportion of school leavers who achieve five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSEs) subjects at grade C or above in the three districts of Merseyside was as follows in 1997: Knowsley, 23 per cent; Liverpool, 30 per cent; Sefton, 45 per cent. The national average was 53 per cent in the same year. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 32.4 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups make up less than 1 per cent of the local population.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Faz&DisCWPA produced its first self-assessment report for the first inspection. Four members of staff and managers attended training provided by the TEC. All staff learnt about self-assessment during a one-day training session. Staff interviewed their colleagues and trainees before writing a satisfactory self-assessment report. Following the first inspection, a detailed action plan was prepared to address the strengths and weaknesses identified in the inspection report. In January 2000, the company produced a self-assessment report for the reinspection. Staff and some trainees within the areas being reinspected contributed to this self-assessment report. The report accurately identified most of the strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed that the training had improved and awarded the same grades as those given.

5. During the original inspection in October 1998 a team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 39 days at Faz&DisCWPA. All aspects of training were inspected including tutorials and trainees' induction and assessment sessions. A range of documents, trainees' records, assessment portfolios, contracts, awarding body reports and company policies were scrutinised. Inspectors interviewed 108 trainees, 35 work-placement providers and 18 of Faz&DisCWPA's staff.

6. A team of two inspectors carried out the reinspection over a total of six days at the beginning of March 2000. Inspectors interviewed 13 members of staff and 27 trainees and visited all the horticultural project sites. Two assessment sessions and four training sessions were observed. A range of documentary evidence, trainees' portfolios, awarding body reports and company policies and procedures were reviewed.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		1	1			2
Construction		1	2			3
Manufacturing		2				2
Retailing & customer service			5	1		6
Hospitality			3			3
Health, care & public services		1				1
Total	0	5	11	1	0	17

Grades awarded to instruction sessions on reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture			3			3
Manufacturing		2	1			3
Total	0	2	4	0	0	6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

Grade 3

7. There are 46 horticulture trainees, of whom 29 are New Deal clients on the environment task force option, 13 are trainees on work-based learning for adults and four are work based training for youth. None of the trainees are in full-time employment or on work placements. All trainees are working towards either units of, or a full, NVQ at level 2 in amenity horticulture. All aspects of the trainees' work, training and assessment are managed by the provider. There are five full-time trainers and the head of the department is the internal verifier. The New Deal clients, adult and youth trainees follow the same programme. They all undertake the full range of work activities. On-the-job training takes place at one of four sites, at which the provider has been awarded the contract for landscape development and maintenance. Off-the-job training takes place either at the main training centre or on the project sites. All assessment work is completed on the job.

At the first inspection, the following main weaknesses were identified:

- ◆ ineffectively planned and poorly documented training
- ◆ ineffective reviews
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ trainees' achievements not recorded
- ◆ lack of reference material for trainees
- ◆ no portfolio-building towards assessment

8. The actions taken by the company following the original inspection have resulted in some of the weaknesses being addressed. Reviews are being done and many more opportunities are being identified for assessment. The system for recording trainees' achievements has been changed, but staff are not yet using it systematically. Some reference material is now available for trainees, but still not enough. Work on building portfolios started just before inspection so it is too early to tell how effective it is. A start has been made on planning training, but it too is at too early a stage to see any impact. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the new self-assessment report, though some were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified new weaknesses and agreed with the grade given.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good industrial work opportunities available
- ◆ well-qualified trainers with high levels of experience and expertise
- ◆ well co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of long-term planning of on-the-job training
- ◆ lack of systematic record keeping
- ◆ low achievement rates

9. Training takes place in high-quality, realistic work environments, at four sites within the Merseyside area. These sites provide a wide range of landscape and ground maintenance activities. The work of maintaining and developing the landscapes is undertaken using good commercial techniques and practices. The trainees have plenty of opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and industrial practices. At two of the sites there are classroom facilities for off-the-job training. This enables the trainers to continue to instruct the trainees when the weather conditions prevent outdoor working. The classrooms on site and at the main training centre provide a pleasant working environment for the trainees.

10. The trainers are well qualified and use their individual experience and expertise to provide training which is comprehensive, practical, stimulating and interesting for the trainees. The trainees and trainers work well together and have shared training and assessment goals. The trainers encourage trainees to work together as members of a team. The trainers provide good health and safety training as part of the on-the-job instruction. All the trainees have suitable industry-standard tools and appropriate personal protective equipment for the tasks they are given. The trainers effectively co-ordinate the programme of off-the-job training with on-the-job training. The theory sessions are followed up with practical sessions and are carried out within days of each other and sometimes on the same day. Trainees are now reviewed on a regular basis. Reference materials have been purchased but some are not appropriate to the NVQ being followed.

11. On-the-job training is planned between four to six weeks in advance at any one time. The provider has well-established and continuing ground maintenance contracts, which last for a year at a time. There are no long-term plans to enable trainees joining the scheme to see what type of training they will receive at specific points in the programme. Trainees are not aware of when they will learn specific skills until a few weeks before they are trained. Since the first inspection, a new system of record keeping has been introduced. However, this record keeping is not systematic and the system is not in line with the company's normal practice and procedure. The company is aware of this issue and is taking steps to bring address it. All current trainees started work on their portfolios in January 2000. The evidence collected so far is of a good standard.

12. Many trainees are given the opportunity to attend extra courses in health and safety and first aid. However, few of them have actually attended the courses because of difficulties in planning their attendance for the days when they are at the centre. Out of the 50 adult trainees who have left the programme since April 1999, 28 achieved NVQs at level 2. Only a third have achieved their additional qualifications. Only 6 per cent of adult trainees leaving the programme find jobs. Three youth trainees have left the programme since April 1999 and none have achieved an NVQ.

Construction

Grade 3

13. There are 91 trainees, of whom 43 are young people and 48 are adults. Of these 91 trainees, 40 are on a painting and decorating programme and 51 are on a wood occupations programme. Eighteen are on work placements. All trainees initially attend the Oakmere Training Centre to acquire basic occupational skills and build up their literacy and numeracy capability if this is lacking. The company has a network of placements and community projects to which trainees are matched. They gain valuable work experience in small or medium-sized firms which specialise in standard or custom joinery, property renovation and maintenance. Staff are occupationally well-qualified. They hold appropriate training and assessment qualifications. Inspectors identified strengths and weaknesses additional to those in the self-assessment report. Some strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong working relationships among trainees, trainers and employers
- ◆ strong motivation for disadvantaged trainees to achieve
- ◆ supportive learning environment
- ◆ modern resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for collecting evidence and for assessment at work
- ◆ off-the-job training not co-ordinated with work
- ◆ trainees' reviews not used to set goals for progress

14. The company's staff show a high level of commitment towards care for their trainees. Some trainees come from severely disadvantaged backgrounds and the supportive environment helps them to gain what is often their first qualification ever. Some trainees who started with no formal qualifications are now working towards a level 3 award. The training centre is well resourced, with qualified staff and up-to-date equipment. It offers a realistic working environment. Training and assessment are well structured. Attendance at the centre is not planned, occurring as a result of

work patterns in trainees' placements, rather than learning needs. One trainee had not attended the centre for three months because of pressure of work. He has not made any significant progress towards a qualification, despite gaining useful experience.

15. Good relationships between the company and managers of companies offering placements have resulted in regular opportunities for work. There are several examples where trainees have been given full-time jobs after training or have switched to a modern apprenticeship after completing NVQ level 2. Representatives of the company make frequent visits to work placements. These visits are used to discuss general issues with the trainees and not to set demanding targets for further achievement. There is no system to ensure that a record is kept of learning and achievement. Opportunities to obtain evidence towards qualifications are missed.

Manufacturing

Grade 3

16. There are 18 trainees on manufacturing programmes, of whom one is a youth trainee, two are New Deal clients and 15 are on work-based learning for adults, eight of whom are on a foundation for work programme. The youth trainee is working towards a level 1 NVQ in furniture production operations. One of the New Deal clients is on the full-time education and training option working towards a level 2 NVQ in assembled furniture production. The other New Deal client is on the subsidised employment option and attends one day a week for training in two units of the level 2 NVQ in assembled furniture production. Five of the adults are working towards a level 2 NVQ in producing hand-crafted furniture, three are working towards a level 2 NVQ in assembled furniture production and the remaining seven are working towards a level 1 NVQ in furniture production operations and towards other targets. All training takes place at the Oakmere Training Centre. There are two full-time trainers/assessors who carry out both on- and off-the-job training. On-the-job training takes place in the workshop on a variety of antiques and reproduction furniture, which are in need of restoration. Activities include stripping, preparation, staining, finishing and polishing. Off-the-job training is conducted either in a classroom or in the workshop. All assessments are carried out in the workshop. During 1998-99 and 1999-2000, 55 per cent of adult trainees left the programme with at least one NVQ and 10 per cent achieved two NVQs. Few trainees gain employment after training and only 4 per cent of adult trainees achieve employment. Only 20 per cent of youth trainees leave with an NVQ.

At the first inspection, the following main weaknesses were identified:

- ◆ trainees are at risk through poor health and safety practice
- ◆ few opportunities for relevant placements or jobs
- ◆ trainees' portfolios are narrow in scope
- ◆ poor internal verification

17. The actions taken by the company following the original inspection have resulted in some of the weaknesses being addressed. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the reinspection self-assessment report though some were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified new weaknesses and agreed with the grade given.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ busy, realistic workshop environment in training centre
- ◆ good range of training resources
- ◆ training well adapted to individual needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal recording of training arrangements
- ◆ no systematic recording of final portfolio verification
- ◆ few opportunities for relevant placements or jobs

18. The workshop in the training centre is set up as a commercial environment. The trainees restore a wide variety of wooden furniture from large desks, pianos and fireplaces to small chairs, mirrors and side tables. A major antique furniture dealer supplies many of the pieces for the workshop. The workshop activities include stripping, preparing and finishing, either by spraying or completely by hand, pieces for customers. The workshop is a busy environment where trainees work together in teams regardless of the programme they are following or stage of training they are at. All work is carried out to a professional standard under the supervision of experienced staff. The wide variety of pieces of furniture ensures that on-the-job training covers all types of methods and techniques for polishing and finishing. Within the workshop there is a separate room with two well-equipped spray booths. Trainees are issued with personal protective equipment to wear during practical sessions in the spray booths and in the workshop. There is a separate classroom for off-the-job training sessions where some theory sessions are taught before on-the-job training. Off-the-job training takes place in small groups or one to one. When groups include trainees at different stages of training, the trainers adapt their approach depending on individuals' needs. The two trainers are highly experienced and pass on their knowledge in a practical and effective manner. Trainers give constructive support to trainees with learning difficulties and repeat training sessions as many times as necessary. Trainees who have problems with writing are questioned by the trainer who then writes down their answers. The trainees then copy out the answers in their own handwriting.

19. Training activities are discussed and planned by the trainers on a daily basis. There is no overall plan to show what training sessions each trainee will attend. There is no outline of the off-the-job training sessions or of what will be covered during each session. Some of the materials used by the trainers are old and the quality of the photocopies is poor. The trainers rely on their own extensive

knowledge and experience to ensure that trainees receive all the training required. There are no records kept of the training each trainee has had. The trainers rely on their memory and assessment records to ensure that all trainees learn the skills required. The individual training plans for foundation for work trainees specify targets or 'milestones' for them to work towards. These trainees receive training in first aid and basic health and safety. The training plans and files in the workshop are not updated to show when training takes place.

20. Trainees are assessed in a structured manner. All assessments are planned with the trainees and each element is observed and the trainees questioned. The trainees also complete a statement relating to each element and write up answers to a set of prepared questions. The assessment methods are satisfactory, although the type of evidence in each portfolio is similar. Some pictures are used to illustrate the work done by trainees, but the relevance and authenticity of these is not clear. There is a grid displayed in the office, which shows which unit trainees are working towards and the dates on which trainees will be assessed. This allows the trainers to effectively manage the progress of the trainees. There is also a matrix showing planned and actual dates when the internal verifier samples the observed assessments for each trainee. The internal verifier completes an internal verification report for every assessment observed and gives feedback to the assessor. However, there are no records to show when the internal verifier checks the written evidence in the portfolios. There are no records kept on the units sampled during the final verification process.

21. There are very few job opportunities in this occupational area though some trainees become self-employed. Five of the seven adult trainees are attending the centre for a second time and working towards a level 2 NVQ in producing hand-crafted furniture, having already achieved a level 2 in assembled furniture production. No use is made of accreditation of prior learning, as it is sometimes several months between the two qualifications and some trainees prefer to repeat parts of their training at this later date to refine their skills.

Business administration

Grade 3

22. There are 42 trainees. Of these, 36 are in administration, including eight adults, 15 young people, seven modern apprentices, two New Deal clients, and four prevocational trainees. Forty-three per cent are men. Six trainees are registered for information technology qualifications, including one adult, three young people and two New Deal clients. All trainees are studying for NVQs at levels 1 to 3. Business administration and information technology operate as one department from the central site at Oakmere. Faz&DisCWPA has an open-door policy. There are three trainers in administration and one trainer in information technology. Additional members of staff deal with placements, marketing, support, verification and assessment. Two trainers were new at the time of inspection. During 1997-98, 10 adult trainees in business were employed, 10 were on work placements and 17 had only off-the-job training at the centre. In information technology, one trainee was

employed and five were limited to off-the-job training. A high percentage of trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. Hospital departments and small businesses are dominant among work placement providers. All trainees on placements have one day's off-the-job training at the centre each week, and there are drop-in and evening-class facilities for employed trainees. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good match of trainees to placements
- ◆ rapid progress through NVQs
- ◆ good assessment and internal verification
- ◆ good working relationships and effective support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak understanding of programmes among trainees
- ◆ minimal connection between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient staff skills and knowledge
- ◆ individual training needs unidentified

23. Faz&DisCWPA has developed extensive employment and placement opportunities, although a substantial proportion of trainees, remain without work experience. There are good working relationships among employers, trainees and assessors. Those trainees who are on placements are well matched to them. Progress through NVQ awards is rapid. Trainees understand the assessment process and what is expected of them. Off-the-job training is adequate, with much use of standard work packages. Twenty-five per cent of trainees take up the option of attendance at additional courses, for example, information technology and assertiveness training. Employers contribute in varying degrees to the quality of on-the-job training, with some encouraging trainees to take vocational awards. Trainees are aware of their progress towards qualifications and staff help to promote achievement. The internal verification system is well documented and rigorous. The content of portfolios and the quality of assessment are carefully checked. Staff work well as a team across the two occupational areas.

24. Staff structure the process of studying towards an NVQ very tightly. Trainees have little influence over their individual learning programmes. Learning materials are standard, and no account is taken of individual's needs. Progression rates are similar among all trainees despite the variation in opportunities for learning and their individual differences. Trainees who have covered an NVQ element at work often duplicate some of it in the training centre because there is no assessment on-the-job. Half of the staff are recent recruits and are newly qualified. They have few training skills, definite wide knowledge of some aspects of the occupational area. Prior learning and needs for key skills development often go unnoticed.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

25. There are 47 trainees working towards an NVQ in retail operations at levels 1 to 3. Forty-three trainees are working towards customer service NVQs at levels 1 to 3, and 37 towards distribution and warehousing operations NVQs at levels 1 or 2. Forty customer service trainees and 20 retail operations trainees are employed. The company's commercial department oversees most of these. All trainees receive visits from assessors to their workplace, and all non-employed trainees return to the company's training centre for day-release study. The self-assessment report identified some strengths which were normal practice and inspectors identified additional strengths. A similar circumstance was found among the weaknesses. The strengths and weaknesses of the commercial and non-commercial departments differed widely. This was not apparent from the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ staff have appropriate skills, knowledge and qualifications
- ◆ good open-learning materials in the non-commercial department
- ◆ creative methods used for collecting assessment evidence in the non-commercial department
- ◆ trainees in the commercial department are precisely aware of their progress
- ◆ new learning goals set and documented in the commercial department
- ◆ trainees in the commercial department understand the assessment process

GOOD PRACTICE

Unusually, in one retail placement, an assessor had linked the trainees' individual training plan and reviews of training with the company's appraisal system and business needs.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding of NVQs by trainees in the non-commercial department
- ◆ trainees lack awareness of progress in the non-commercial department
- ◆ excessively slow progress by some trainees in the non-commercial department
- ◆ inconsistent internal verification in the non-commercial department
- ◆ assessment requirements placed before training's in the commercial department
- ◆ lack of integration between assessment of key skills and occupational competence in the commercial department

26. Staff work well with trainees with diverse needs. They provide a high level of pastoral support. Trainees are at ease with assessors. Assessors have appropriate occupational experience. They connect trainees' experience at work to the NVQ standards carefully.

27. In the non-commercial department, useful open-learning material is available to help trainees reach NVQs at level 1 and 2 in retailing and warehousing. This material consists of case studies, set questions and work assignments. Its link with the NVQ standards is tenuous. Candidates who write with difficulty are given tape

recorders so that they can respond verbally. In the commercial department, trainees are visited at work every two weeks. These review visits comprise assessment, individual tuition, an opportunity to set new work and to agree new targets. Learning includes work question sheets, evidence-gathering and reports. Trainees are well motivated and they progress quickly. The programme is adapted for trainees with heavy workloads or personal problems. Workplace supervisors perceive training separately from the NVQ. They are not involved in trainees' reviews. They are unaware of their progress. Opportunities for assessment at work are missed. Aspects of NVQ assessment such as direct observation, the use of witness statements and evaluation of samples of work are not used effectively.

28. In the non-commercial department, trainees lack a working knowledge of the NVQ standards. They find it hard to relate their training to the NVQ. The building of portfolios of assessment evidence are guided by assessors. Trainees are asked to provide evidence without knowing how it fits the award or other material in the portfolio. Portfolios are usually kept in the training centre so that it is difficult for trainees to work on them when it may be most appropriate to do so. Few trainees have copies of their individual training plans, their current action-plans, or their assessment documents. Progression towards NVQs is not systematically managed. There are no formal systems to track progress or to select new areas for achievement. Trainees based at the centre, including those on day release, have little structure to their off-the-job learning. They selected their own assignments and work alone. Some trainees are bored and uninterested. The company aims to verify 25 per cent of each assessor's work using observation of assessment as the sole method. There is no means to ensure that this sampling level is achieved, nor to guarantee that every portfolio has been checked in some valid way.

29. In the commercial department, assessors provide tuition during their visits. However, they emphasise collection of written evidence for assessment. Half the trainees receive comprehensive off-the-job training from their employers. Procedures to ensure that links are made between this training and individual training plans are inadequate. For other trainees, development of vocational knowledge depends solely on instruction provided by assessors when they visit the workplace. There is no other means, such as open-learning or seminars, to fill the inevitable gaps in trainees' knowledge.

Hospitality

Grade 3

30. The catering department has 31 trainees. Four are adults, 12 are young people, three are modern apprentices, 11 are on prevocational programmes and one is a New Deal client. Trainees work towards an NVQ in food preparation and cooking at level 1 or 2, or in kitchen supervision at level 3. Trainees are placed with appropriately supportive companies, which are monitored by staff who have formed good working relationships with them. All assessors and internal verifiers are qualified to carry out their respective work. There are no work-based assessors. Trainees share their achievements and their concerns honestly with staff.

Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective working relationships
- ◆ wide range of work placements provide good learning opportunities
- ◆ good understanding of NVQs by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ assessments not rigorously recorded
- ◆ poor awareness of criteria for assessment
- ◆ some training material not related to most recent NVQ standards

31. There is a wide range of work placements offering many good learning opportunities. The placement programme meets the learning needs of trainees and the NVQ programmes towards which they are working. Most trainees move to new placements frequently, so that they can gain experience of a wide range of hotels and restaurants. Where trainees find a permanent job, they are not moved. If work placements are unable to meet a particular requirement of the NVQ, Faz&DisCWPA has a well-equipped kitchen operating to commercial standards, which is used to meet those requirements that the workplace cannot provide. Trainees are well motivated. They remember their induction programmes. Staff go out of their way to help trainees with both personal problems and training concerns.

32. Assessors do not record the assessments of trainees against performance criteria and range statements with sufficient care. It is not easy to see how assessors reach appropriate decisions about trainees' competence. Internal verifiers have to reassess trainees' evidence before making a judgement about assessment practice. Trainees have little understanding of performance criteria and their use in assessment. Some trainees progress very slowly through their NVQ. Tutors have not updated some of the training resources since the NVQ standards changed in January 1995.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

33. The care programme has 13 trainees. Five are modern apprentices, seven are in work-based training for adults and one is a client on the New Deal programme. Nine are working towards NVQ level 2 and four towards level 3. They work in residential homes for the elderly, in community services for people with additional needs and in supporting families. Six are in training placements and seven are employed. Even if they are not employed during training, many trainees find jobs when they achieve an NVQ. One modern apprentice, nearing completion of NVQ 3, is working towards an assessor qualification. Adult trainees receive one

afternoon's off-the-job training each week. Modern apprentices have the option of attending drop-in sessions on another afternoon. At all placements there is a work-based assessor who carries out all assessment. A few have more than one assessor and can cater for trainees working on different shifts. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees have a good understanding of the assessment procedure
- ◆ good portfolios
- ◆ rapid achievement of awards
- ◆ high level of support by staff
- ◆ effective working relationship among trainers, work-based supervisors and assessors
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced trainers
- ◆ good success rate for NVQ and employment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ assessors' observations not fully recorded
- ◆ poor logging of portfolio evidence
- ◆ inadequate reviews, with no contribution from trainees or workplace supervisors
- ◆ insufficient understanding of key skills among modern apprentices

34. The care programme takes trainees throughout the year, working through the NVQ units in an order which suits trainees' needs. Off-the-job training sessions are flexible, with trainees working on their own. They use a variety of learning materials at the centre. A trainer gives individual support during these sessions. If issues arise, which are relevant to the whole group, everyone discusses them. Trainees find these sessions very helpful in guiding portfolio-building. There are lectures on the use of Makaton, dementia, safe-lifting and handling techniques and first aid. Trainees receive considerable help at work from their assessors and other members of staff. Trainers from the centre visit often. Assessors find it difficult to attend assessors' meetings because of shift work. They use their visits to stay informed about assessment issues, as well as keeping check on trainees' progress. Trainees are highly motivated and enthusiastic. Adult trainees have only 30 weeks to complete an award and most of them do so. Employers have a high regard for the quality of the training and many trainees are offered employment when they have finished their NVQs. Modern apprentices often find it difficult to attend off-the-job training. The centre has allocated a part-time member of staff in care to help them individually.

35. Assessors' records rely too much on checklists, with little or no description of what has been observed. Portfolio evidence is not logged on assessment records. These shortcomings make internal verification difficult. A new assessment record is beginning to address these problems. Progress reviews are unstructured and

sparse. There is no target-setting and no contribution from trainees or workplace supervisors. Modern apprentices have a little understanding of key skills, which are not integrated with the rest of their NVQ programme.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

36. Faz&DisCWPA has a comprehensive policy for equal opportunities. It is reviewed annually. Staff show their awareness of the importance of securing equality of opportunity for trainees. The company promotes open-door recruitment to all its programmes. The diverse range of trainees reflects a commitment to all sections of the community. Since May 1998, the company has been recognised as being 'positive about disabled people'. It has a rehabilitation and medical guidance programme. There are 13 trainees with disabilities. The company's catchment area contains a few people from minority ethnic groups. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and up-to-date policy
- ◆ trainees recruited into non-traditional areas
- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities at induction
- ◆ good access for trainees with physical disabilities
- ◆ clear commitment to trainees with disabilities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some important policy objectives not implemented
- ◆ placements not always advertised to all trainees
- ◆ data not used effectively to improve performance
- ◆ inadequate plan for implementation of equal opportunities

37. The equal opportunities policy is extensive and up-to-date. It includes specific objectives to achieve continuous improvement of equality of opportunity throughout all aspects of the company's provision. Women are recruited to jobs which they have traditionally not entered, such as painting and decorating. Recruitment of men to care programmes is appreciable. In retailing, business administration and hospitality, there is an even balance of genders. For trainees based at the company's centre, coverage of equal opportunities during induction is effective. Facilities for trainees with physical disabilities are good, allowing them ready access to all training areas. Special arrangements have been made to accommodate trainees' needs in, for example, information technology. The company's literature

advertises its commitment to supporting trainees with disabilities.

38. Not all the objectives in the company's policy are being pursued. Those which are not, include the training and development of staff, checking promotional materials and taking positive action with specific groups. Although the company gathers data on different categories of trainees for contractual reasons, it does not use these to improve its performance in equal opportunities. No analysis is made of the achievements of different types of trainee. The role of the equal opportunities co-ordinator has not been used effectively. The co-ordinator has not been trained or given relevant information to meet the company's policy objectives. The company defines its plan for implementing equal opportunities as a combination of its open-door recruitment procedures, and a recent plan arising from self-assessment. However, the plan does not allot measurable responsibilities, targets or timescales. It is not clear whether the company's approach meets TEC requirements. Placement opportunities are not made available to all trainees; trainees are selected on the basis of tutors' judgements about their suitability.

Trainee support

Grade 3

39. Most trainees are referred to the company by the careers or Employment Services after a brief interview. Trainees have an initial interview with the company. Initial assessment of capabilities and needs is not used methodically to form the basis of an individual training plan. All trainees receive an induction to their work on the company's premises. Trainees are on appropriate programmes, but usually as a result of occupational assessment in the early part of the programme. There is a high level of pastoral support for trainees, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Trainees at work are visited regularly. The individual commitment of staff to trainees is very high. Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ very good personal counselling
- ◆ up-to-date advice on opportunities for employment and progression
- ◆ good additional support for trainees with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ occupational skills, prior achievements and needs not assessed on entry
- ◆ basic and key skills are not systematically assessed on entry
- ◆ initial assessment not used to prepare individual training plans
- ◆ some aspects of trainee support not fully documented or reviewed
- ◆ insufficient discussion with trainees about their progress

40. Trainees understand how to get advice and guidance from the support service

department. It offers a variety of new opportunities, including job search, drop-in and evening classes. Trainees who receive additional support are confident, and enthusiastic about the support materials. Initial assessment includes both general and vocational material, but it is not systematically applied. It does not always influence individual training plans, which are particularly critical for trainees with additional needs. If training is too difficult, these trainees quickly lose interest. Additional assessment materials have been developed as a result of analysing the specific needs of trainees in wood occupations. Personal counselling is given regularly.

41. There is an unhelpful distance between the support services department and occupational tutors. The planning of trainees' work shows a lack of integration. In some occupational areas, achievement is sometimes harmed by a lack of awareness of each trainee's level of ability. Because the department is separate, some trainees refuse to take advantage of additional support. Review documentation dwells only on NVQ progress without dealing sufficiently with pastoral matters.

Grade 3

Management of training

42. Faz&DisCWPA has a straightforward management structure. It is clearly defined and is understood by all staff. All members of the training team are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The company receives strategic direction from its board of directors. The company's mission and values are supported by staff. The current management team is very approachable. An extensive programme of staff development is linked to the outcome of annual staff appraisals. The company is well managed but there are ordinary management tasks which are not being carried out. There is too little focus in some areas of the operation. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ values, policies, and targets understood by all staff
- ◆ co-operative working relationships
- ◆ well documented procedures for staffing matters
- ◆ staff effective with trainees with diverse needs and experience

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate data
- ◆ data not used to inform management decisions
- ◆ some weak co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training

43. The company's values and policies accurately reflect its charitable status. Staff are committed to these values. They have been closely involved in developing the

company's mission and aims. Strongly co-operative working relationships exist between managers and staff. Staffing procedures are well documented. They reflect good, modern practice in staff recruitment. Staff development is readily available. The programme is responsive to individual requests rather than set criteria. Eighteen of the staff hold formal teaching or training qualifications. The introduction of a continuing professional development card has not proved successful. The scheme requires further development.

44. Management data about achievement rates and early leavers are not used to evaluate or improve performance. They primarily inform business decisions, rather than throwing light on the quality of training. There is no effective co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. There is little planning in some occupational areas, including horticulture, business administration and retailing and customer service in the commercial department. Practical training in these areas is isolated from the delivery of theory.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

45. The company has established a key skills and internal verification working party to improve quality assurance in these areas. These initiatives are in their infancy. The recently appointed operations manager has responsibility for quality assurance. Heads of department have subsidiary responsibility. A quality assurance and quality procedures manual has been written. Over the last four months, quality assurance practice has improved considerably. The improvements have not yet had any impact on the quality of training. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ performance measured against standards and targets
- ◆ monitoring of action plans to address weaknesses
- ◆ identifiable improvements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ quality assurance is not understood by all staff
- ◆ little monitoring of achievement and destinations to help improve provision
- ◆ systems new and unproven

46. Financial profiles are set for each occupational area, meeting the TEC contract. While some efforts are made to reduce the number of trainees who leave early, for example, action often addresses problems, which have already become significant. Planning now takes place regularly to anticipate difficulty and improvements are evident. The organisation was accredited for the ISO 9002 quality standard in June 1998. Other recent improvements demonstrate commitment



to continuous quality improvements. The centre is working towards becoming a quality assurance centre for an awarding body and is developing systems to achieve this. Staff do not fully understand the quality assurance procedures and systems used in the departments. Internal verification is inconsistent. In some instances, management information data are gathered, but neither analysed nor used.