



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JANUARY 1999

Barnardo's Training Projects

SUMMARY

Barnardo's specialises in providing training for young people who are disadvantaged. Training in retail, warehousing and lift truck operations is excellent, with high quality in-house sessions and good work placements. In the last year, all trainees on the lift truck NVQ programme got a job. Training in business administration, hospitality, hair and beauty, care and foundation for work is good. Training resources and equipment are of high quality. Trainees receive individual instruction. Some assessment records in business administration are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient supervision of catering trainees in Newcastle. Work placement supervisors are very supportive, but are not fully involved in the learning programmes of trainees on the foundation for work programme. The company strives to ensure that all trainees and staff are treated fairly, but does not monitor employers' commitment to equality of opportunity. Most training projects are well managed. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory, but they are not standardised across the four training projects.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	2
Retailing & customer service	1
Hospitality	2
Hair & beauty	2
Health, care & public services	2
Foundation for work	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ exemplary help and support for trainees with personal and domestic problems
- ◆ high-quality work placements with supportive employers
- ◆ well-planned and competently delivered in-house training sessions
- ◆ good in-house learning resources
- ◆ exceptionally high levels of staff expertise
- ◆ success of trainees on lift truck and foundation programmes in obtaining employment
- ◆ strong staff commitment to treating all trainees fairly

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal monitoring of employers' commitment to equality of opportunity
- ◆ insufficient initial assessment of trainees on some projects
- ◆ poor communication between training projects
- ◆ insufficient use of management information

INTRODUCTION

1. Barnardo's is the UK's largest children's charity, serving 43,000 children, young people and families each year, through 280 projects. Four of the projects provide training for young people, through programmes funded by the four Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) with which Barnardo's has contracts. These are Tyneside, North Yorkshire, Leeds and Merseyside TECs. The training projects for these activities are based at Newcastle upon Tyne, Harrogate, Leeds and Liverpool. The company offers training in six occupational sectors: business administration; retailing and customer service; hospitality; hair and beauty; health, care and public services; and foundation for work. The Leeds project offers hospitality programmes only, and the Harrogate project offers hospitality and business administration, whilst in Liverpool both care and foundation for work training is provided. The Palmersville project in Newcastle offers training in five of the occupational sectors. A small amount of provision in Liverpool and Newcastle is subcontracted to private training organisations. At the time of inspection, there were 219 trainees and 71 staff in the four training centres, of whom 145 and 29, respectively, were involved with the Palmersville project. All projects use casual staff as and when required. Barnardo's specialises in providing training for young people who have additional training needs arising from a range of circumstances, including physical disability, mental illness, communication difficulties, learning disabilities and behavioural problems. Many of the young people come from disadvantaged backgrounds, experience homelessness, and sometimes have complex problems relating to substance misuse.

2. The Palmersville project has existed at its present site, on an industrial estate in North Tyneside, since June 1990. It attracts young people from the surrounding areas, including North and South Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead. Unemployment rates in the region are approximately 3 per cent above the national average. The number of young people aged 16 to 19 in the Tyneside area is increasing, but the numbers entering training are decreasing. Only 16 per cent of school leavers entered training in 1996. This figure fell to 13.4 per cent in 1997, whilst in the same year, 12.1 per cent of school leavers remained unemployed.

3. The Harrogate project attracts young people for its catering programme, mainly from the North Yorkshire region. North Yorkshire has a high level of economic activity and, in December 1998, its unemployment rate was low, at 2.1 per cent. The hotel and service sectors are important for the area, and provide high levels of employment. The Leeds project also offers training in hospitality, within the city's Chapeltown and Harehills districts. The unemployment rate for the locality is high at 19.8 per cent, compared with 6.1 per cent for Leeds, and the national figure of 5.2 per cent. Two projects operate in Merseyside; one is designed for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the other offers training in care for disadvantaged young people. In 1997, the management of both projects was merged, though the projects still operate at different sites in Liverpool. The Merseyside TEC area covers Liverpool city, Knowsley and Sefton boroughs. In July 1998, the unemployment rate in the area was above the national average and stood at 10.5 per cent.

4. The proportion of the population who are from ethnic minority groups varies widely across the four project areas. In Newcastle, Merseyside and Harrogate, the percentages are small. In contrast, the Leeds project is in a locality where 49 per cent of the population are from a wide range of ethnic minority groups. The 1991 census found that 13 per cent of the population were black, 1 per cent black African, 5 per cent black other, 6 per cent Indian, 15 per cent Pakistani, 5 per cent Bangladeshi, 1 per cent Chinese and 2 per cent Asian. The area also has significant Central and Eastern European communities. The proportion of young people leaving school with five general certificate of education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above varies, from 44.5 per cent in north Tyneside to 30.1 per cent in Leeds. More than three-quarters of trainees are endorsed as having additional learning support needs. Comparison of the achievements of Barnardo's trainees with national figures is inappropriate.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The four training projects each completed separate self-assessment reports. These were then amalgamated into one by the project managers, with co-ordination by the assistant divisional director for childcare services. This overall self-assessment report identified strengths, weaknesses and supporting evidence for each occupational sector and generic aspect. Action plans to improve the quality of provision were drawn up, and some action points had been addressed by the time of inspection.

6. A team of seven inspectors, including one trainee, spent a total of 26 days at Barnardo's in January 1999. All six occupational sectors were inspected, and all four projects were visited. Inspectors carried out interviews with 54 trainees, 24 workplace supervisors and 29 staff. They observed 11 learning sessions and six assessments. A wide range of documentary evidence was examined, including trainees' files and portfolios of assessment evidence, reports from awarding bodies, and company management information.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 2

7. Almost all business administration provision is based at the Palmersville project. There is one trainee at the Harrogate centre, who was not included in the inspection sample. The Palmersville project has three young people working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in administration at level 1, and four working towards the award at level 2. The company has recently developed an information technology programme, which has the same number of trainees at the same levels. In-house training takes place in a well-equipped specialist training room. Trainees have work placements in a variety of companies in the Newcastle area. Most assessment takes place at work. Trainees also carry out a small number of simulated work-based tasks in order to provide evidence, for the purposes of NVQ assessment, of skills which they do not have the opportunity to demonstrate in the workplace. Training and assessment are carried out by two staff who have extensive experience in business administration. One is fully qualified, and holds an NVQ assessor award and the second is working towards one. Internal verification is contracted out to a private organisation, while staff are working towards internal verification qualifications. All the trainees in this sector have additional learning support needs. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. One of the weaknesses had been remedied by the time of inspection. Inspectors agreed with the company's self-assessment grade for this sector.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-motivated trainees
- ◆ frequent contact between trainees and assessors
- ◆ regular progress reviews
- ◆ wide variety of good opportunities for gathering evidence for NVQ assessment
- ◆ well-planned and competently delivered in-house training
- ◆ good quality in-house learning resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some incomplete assessment records
- ◆ unsatisfactory internal verification arrangements

8. Trainees are knowledgeable about their learning programmes, and have a clear understanding of the NVQ structure, content and assessment requirements. They are extremely well motivated, and respond well to the high levels of encouragement and support given by staff. Trainees see their assessor each week in the training centre, and are visited in the workplace every month for a formal progress review interview.

9. Work placement providers are extremely supportive and have a high level of involvement in the trainees' development. Placement providers attend progress review meetings and contribute fully in evaluating trainees' performance and in target-setting. Employers readily provide evidence, through witness testimony, of trainees' ability to carry out tasks to the required NVQ standards. Trainees working towards NVQs in administration generate this evidence by performing a wide variety of office tasks such as filing, reception work, document production and copying, faxing, telephone work and use of information technology. For trainees working towards information technology awards, the work placements offer excellent training and assessment opportunities in word-processing, spreadsheets, database and mail-merge work, and the maintenance and operation of information technology equipment.

10. The training centre has a well-stocked library of books and a good range of software covering the main areas of administration and information technology. This includes typing tutors, graphics and newsletter production using clip-art libraries and the Microsoft software suite of Publisher, Access, Word 97 and Excel. For those who choose the graphics or presentation optional units, Microsoft PowerPoint is also provided. The training rooms are well equipped with networked and stand-alone standard and advanced personal computers, with micro-processors ranging from Pentium P75 to 300 megahertz. There is also a 600 dots per inch laser printer, a scanner and a colour ink-jet printer. Access to a photocopier is also provided. Trainees attend off-the-job training sessions and these are well planned. Sessions are evaluated both orally and by using a simple feedback sheet. Trainees learn effectively, retain the knowledge taught and have good opportunities to

practise complex skills. Training in placements is also of good quality, with some level 2 trainees producing complex databases and spreadsheet and stock control analyses of company business, in a mature and competent manner.

11. At the time of inspection, staff in this sector had been experiencing heavy workloads. Some assessment documents were not completed properly and lacked signatures and dates. Until recently, a staff member with knowledge of administrative techniques had internally verified the NVQs in administration. When the information technology programme was introduced, arrangements for internal verification were changed and verifier competence in both administration and information technology was required. While staff are working towards their internal verifier awards, the centre has contracted in internal verifier services. Under this arrangement, there is, however, insufficient contact between the internal verifiers and assessors.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 1

12. Barnardo's offers programmes in retail, distribution and warehousing, and lift truck operations. All provision is at the Palmersville project in Newcastle. There are 11 trainees working towards an NVQ in retail at level 1, and one at level 2. In addition, there is one trainee who is taking a short retail 'taster' course. There are 21 trainees working towards an NVQ at level 1 in distributive operations, three towards an NVQ level 2 in warehousing operations and, again, one trainee on a taster course. Four trainees are working towards an NVQ in lift truck operations at level 2. Staff are all qualified NVQ assessors and internal verifiers, and two of the three staff are qualified lift truck training instructors. Off-the-job training arrangements vary. All trainees may attend the centre for one day each week. Most retail, distribution and warehousing training takes place at work. Suitable work placements are found for trainees who are not employed. Lift truck basic operator certification takes place within the training centre. It is provided by a private company, which leases space for its operations within the Palmersville training centre. Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths identified by the company, but disagreed with two weaknesses including one related to equality of opportunity. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ exceptionally high levels of staff expertise
- ◆ success of trainees on the lift truck programme in gaining employment
- ◆ high-quality work placements
- ◆ good in-house training sessions
- ◆ rigorous assessment methods
- ◆ good rates of progress by individual trainees
- ◆ trainees' success in developing confidence and self-reliance

WEAKNESSES

There were no significant weaknesses

13. Staff are fully qualified to assess and deal with the additional learning support needs of trainees in this occupational area. The way in which staff take trainees from starting points of low confidence and ability to the achievement of competence, acceptance of responsibility, and full-time employment is exemplary. Trainees are helped to gain placements very quickly, and placement supervisors liaise closely with Barnardo's staff so that any problems trainees may have can be dealt with immediately. Workplace managers are very supportive, willingly giving trainees time for NVQ work, progress reviews and in-house training. Some trainees are appropriately selected for high levels of responsibility. For example, they are placed in charge of valuable equipment which demands careful storage owing to its future use in hazardous environments.

14. Trainees working towards retail NVQs are allocated placements in shops and supermarkets, and are made to feel part of the adult team of friendly and supportive colleagues. Those gaining lift truck basic operators certificates may do so on two types of truck, both counterbalance and reach. Trainees working in a carpet warehouse may require a counterbalance truck certificate to operate carpet-boom equipment when removing long carpet or vinyl rolls from high storage racking, whereas those operating with goods on pallets in narrow warehouse racking avenues will use a reach truck. However, some lift truck trainees are given an opportunity to gain both certificates if their warehousing work role requires mixed skills for varying workload types. The company ensures that any change in work role is quickly identified and, if necessary, additional training is given. In 1997-98, 100 per cent of all trainees who started NVQ training and achieved lift truck certificates gained full-time paid employment.

15. To help trainees' understanding, staff simplify the standard methods used to calculate and handle off-centre gravity loads. Trainees are shown how to do the task without using the standard complex formulas. Great care is taken in the workplace to train and assess trainees. A wide variety of training and assessment methods is used, including the use of question banks, one-to-one training, witness testimony from supervisors and managers, in-house staff training courses, shadowing, observation of natural performance, and properly devised simulations. High-quality training and assessment materials are used.

16. Assessors describe the NVQ framework to trainees and they explain complex terms simply and clearly. Trainees have a clear understanding of the NVQ and are able to identify how they can generate evidence for assessment through tasks they carry out in the workplace. They enjoy their work roles and are enthusiastic about being given responsibility. Trainees value being treated as adults by staff. As the trainees progressively acquire skills, so their confidence increases and they are able to attain or exceed the requisite standards of workplace competence for their NVQ award.

Hospitality

Grade 2

17. Hospitality programmes are offered in three training centres, at Leeds, Harrogate and Palmersville. At the time of inspection, there were 57 trainees in total in this occupational area. All trainees work towards NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in catering and hospitality, and take a basic food hygiene award. The company operates a roll-on, roll-off system, so that new trainees can start the programme at any time of the year. The three training centres operate as commercial restaurants open to the public. The awarding bodies recognise these restaurants as realistic work environments which are suitable for assessment purposes. Trainees work in the kitchens preparing hot and cold meals and in front of house serving customers. Catering operations at the Palmersville centre are run by a private catering company. In addition, some trainees are placed with employers for training and assessment opportunities. Staff have considerable experience in the catering industry and hold NVQ assessor and internal verifier awards. The self-assessment report highlighted some strengths which are no more than contractual requirements and normal practice, and failed to identify any weaknesses. Inspectors identified strengths and some weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report and they agreed with the grade given by the organisation.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-equipped training kitchens
- ◆ good range of activities to promote trainees' personal development
- ◆ high-quality practical instruction
- ◆ well-motivated trainees
- ◆ supportive employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' lack of awareness of the extent of their progress
- ◆ insufficient supervision of trainees at Palmersville

18. The three training centres are well equipped and have all the facilities one would expect to find in commercial kitchens. There is plenty of space for trainees to learn their practical skills, away from the main food preparation areas. Trainees receive good individual practical instruction, and develop their skills further through their involvement in a broad range of outside catering duties such as wedding parties, barbecues and business functions. In addition to the occupational training, there are also activities designed to further the trainees' personal development. These include residential courses, exchange visits with trainees from other countries, and participation in catering competitions. These activities help to motivate the trainees and build up their self-confidence. Work placements are

selected carefully to ensure that trainees have supervisors who are supportive and willing to meet their additional learning needs. In the best placements, trainees receive both encouragement and support and they are presented with the challenge of meeting customers' deadlines.

19. Trainees are not always aware of the progress they have made towards completing units of their NVQ. Some trainees think they are further through the programme than they are, and expect to complete it at an unrealistically early date. Staffing levels at the Palmersville project are not sufficiently high to ensure that trainees are supervised closely. For example, on one occasion, staff were fully occupied producing and serving food on time and they failed to notice that five trainees were demonstrating poor hygiene practice by wearing jewellery in the kitchen.

Hair and beauty

Grade 2

20. There are 22 trainees on the hair and beauty programmes at the Palmersville project. Two are working towards NVQs in hairdressing at level 1, and nine are working for level 2; two trainees are working towards NVQs in beauty therapy at level 1, and nine are working for level 2. All trainees attend off-the-job training at the provider's training centre and this covers both theory and practical work. The centre's facilities include purpose-built beauty therapy and hairdressing salons. One trainee is employed, and the remainder are encouraged to attend a work placement in local hairdressing and beauty salons. Attendance arrangements at the training centre are flexible, to meet trainees' individual needs. The salons at the training centre operate commercially. They are open to the public for three days each week and provide in-house work experience for trainees. Most assessments take place in the training centre. Where possible, employers' witness testimonies are used as supplementary evidence of trainees' competence. Barnardo's assessors also carry out some assessment in the trainees' workplace. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They found other strengths and weaknesses which the organisation had not identified and they agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexibly arranged training programme
- ◆ effective target setting
- ◆ good individual instruction
- ◆ high-quality in-house training facilities
- ◆ good assessment practice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient professional updating for staff
- ◆ poor recording of trainees' basic skills needs

21. Training is provided through a rolling programme, which trainees may join at any time. The overall programmes are well planned and clearly structured, and attendance arrangements are flexible to meet individual trainees' requirements. The trainees vary in their ability and aptitude. Whilst trainees are encouraged to undertake work experience in local salons, some lack confidence to do so. They are prepared for real work pressures in the centre's salons, which provide a realistic but sheltered working environment. Those trainees who experience difficulties in coping with their work placement can return to the centre on a full-time basis until they feel ready to go back to the workplace. The small programme team provides a high level of learning support.

22. The training is planned to allow opportunities for ample one-to-one coaching for individual trainees, in both practical skills and theory. Assessments are well planned and trainees are fully aware of their programmes and the NVQ assessment procedures. Trainees are given constructive written feedback on both practical and written assessments. Assessment documents are completed accurately and fully. Trainees who have a work placement are visited regularly by assessors who observe trainees for assessment purposes and obtain witness testimonies of trainees' competence from supervisors. Trainees have monthly individual interviews with their key worker to discuss and review progress. These reviews take place either in the training centre or in the workplace. During reviews, trainees are set demanding targets for personal development and NVQ attainment. Targets are specific and achievable, and motivate trainees to give of their best. Achievement rates vary considerably, according to individual ability and personal circumstances; but all trainees progress well at their own rate. For example, one trainee achieved NVQ level two hairdressing in just 18 months, whilst another undertook the foundation programme and took two years to complete an NVQ at level 1.

23. Staff are well qualified. However, they have not recently attended any training sessions or seminars to update their knowledge of developments in the industry and familiarise themselves with new products and manufacturing methods. The initial assessment process identifies those trainees who need help with their literacy or numeracy skills. Records of help received from the specialist basic skills tutor are not always kept in trainees' files. When planning training, occupational staff are always fully informed of the help that trainees need.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

24. The 'Learning to Care' project provides young people with the opportunity to achieve NVQ level 2 in care over two years. They also undertake training to develop their personal skills, and obtain basic qualifications in first aid, basic food hygiene and safe handling. Training leading to these additional qualifications is subcontracted to external private training providers. All 23 trainees are in work placements, and attend off-the-job training sessions at the training centre for two days each week in the first year, and one day each week in the second year of the programme. All assessment takes place at work, and is carried out by qualified workplace NVQ assessors. Two members of Barnardo's staff co-ordinate the programme and provide the in-house training. Both are experienced and hold appropriate qualifications. The range of workplaces is wide, and includes schools, nurseries, a children's hospital and residential care homes for the elderly. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. They found strengths which the organisation had not identified. They agreed with the one weakness and with the grade given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough induction programme
- ◆ promotion of opportunities for accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ strong teamwork between tutors and placement staff
- ◆ high-quality progress reviews
- ◆ rigorous assessment systems and practices
- ◆ robust evaluation of staff performance
- ◆ good use of library resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' low awareness of appeals procedure
- ◆ insufficient assessment plans
- ◆ failure to keep trainees' progress records in trainees' files

25. The programme is designed to enable trainees to further their personal development and increase their self-confidence whilst working towards the NVQ award. Trainees undertake the short courses in basic food hygiene and first aid at an early stage in the programme. Their success in achieving these certificates builds their self-confidence and motivates them to progress further with their studies. The induction programme is thorough, and places a strong emphasis on punctuality and reliability, preparing trainees well for the standards they have to meet at work. The induction includes trainees' planning and testing out their journey to the work placement, to ensure they can arrive on time. Information on

trainees' previous experience and learning is sought from a variety of sources, including schools, the careers service and trainees themselves. Staff then ascertain whether it is possible to accredit this prior learning towards the NVQ for which the trainees are aiming.

26. Barnardo's staff work hard to maintain strong links with work placement staff. They make regular visits to employers to ensure they are fully involved in the learning programme and in training, and their opportunities for assessing trainees in the workplace are fully exploited. Each trainee has an individual tutorial at least once every six weeks, to review his or her progress and to set targets. If necessary, tutorials may be held more frequently. Tutors regularly observe one another during training sessions. This is a formal process which helps tutors to share ideas and good practice, and evaluate the quality of training. Barnardo's has a comprehensive library resource, and staff are regularly updated about their occupational area by the head office. Project staff use these resources to support the training and to ensure that trainees receive the latest information on the care sector.

27. Trainees are unaware of the appeals procedure in relation to NVQ assessment. Assessment plans are not always completed and placed in the evidence portfolios. Trainees' records relating to progress and placement visits are kept centrally, rather than in the trainees' files. This makes tracking of trainees' progress difficult and unnecessarily time-consuming.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

28. Barnardo's delivers foundation for work training through four programmes in two projects. In Liverpool, the 'A Chance to Work' project provides training for young people with severe learning difficulties and trainees with physical disabilities. Ten trainees attend and work towards the practical skills profile award. At the Palmersville project in Newcastle, there are three foundation for work programmes. Preparatory training currently gives 17 young people who are uncertain of their vocational choice, the opportunity to try work tasters. The bridge training programme provides support and training for 14 young people who are unable to cope with NVQ programmes, or who have failed to keep their training places with other providers. The foundation training programme provides training for 16 young people with basic skills needs and/or learning difficulties. Trainees on the bridge and foundation programmes work towards the foundation award for training and employment accredited by Tyneside TEC. Foundation trainees can also work towards basic qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Inspectors considered that several strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. They found strengths, however, which the organisation had not identified. The weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report were more appropriate to generic areas. Inspectors found two weaknesses which had not been identified through self-assessment and they agreed with the grade given by the organisation.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexibly arranged, high-quality in-house training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ many trainees' success in progressing to employment
- ◆ trainees' good rates of progression to higher level programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ placement supervisors' lack of involvement in learning programmes
- ◆ insufficient sharing of good practice between related programmes

29. Learning programmes are flexibly arranged to meet trainees' needs. Similarly, the pace and style of training and the training content are adapted to suit individual trainees or groups of trainees. Training materials and resources are varied, and include worksheets and materials with a vocational context. Training is given to small groups or individuals, and trainers work hard to engage and sustain trainees' interest. Staff in Liverpool are trained in, and use, 'Training for Systematic Instruction' techniques which provide structured learning approaches for trainees who have learning disabilities. Placements are carefully matched to trainees' needs. Placement matching takes into account trainees' personal development and support needs as well as their learning needs. Many trainees try several placements during their training programme. Staff have frequent contact with employers, maintaining good relations and enabling a quick response to changes in trainees' circumstances or needs. Progression rates into employment and to higher level training programmes are good. In Liverpool, the support arrangements to help trainees to progress work well and trainees receive help from numerous external agencies. Care professionals, voluntary agencies, parents, employers and benefits advisors are consulted over a package of support for trainees in employment. Staff have a good knowledge of their trainees. They work hard to win the trainees' trust and help them to increase their self-confidence.

30. Although placement supervisors are clearly involved in supporting trainees, they lack knowledge of trainees' learning programmes and opportunities are missed to involve supervisors in training and assessment. Within programmes, good communications and team working lead to sharing of good practice. However, there is little cross-programme communication, and expertise, training materials, teaching and assessment techniques developed for one programme, are not shared with colleagues on related programmes.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

31. Barnardo's has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which meets legislative and TEC requirements. The policy is regularly reviewed and updated at a national level. Information is collected about the age, ethnicity, gender and disabilities of those who apply for training. At the time of inspection, 61 per cent of the trainees were male, 39 per cent were female, 4 per cent were from ethnic minority groups and 3 per cent had disabilities. During the induction programme, all new trainees are given a copy of the equal opportunities policy and clear information on the complaints procedure. When making a complaint, trainees may have an advocate to give them support and advice. Within each project, the project manager has responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity, and this is included in the manager's job description. Inspectors mainly agreed with the judgements made by the organisation for this aspect of provision, and with the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong awareness of importance of equal opportunities in the organisation
- ◆ display and promotion of anti-discriminatory images
- ◆ trainees' understanding of their rights and responsibilities
- ◆ regular updating of staff on equal opportunities issues
- ◆ open-door policy

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor access at Liverpool for people with restricted mobility
- ◆ no monitoring of employers' upholding of equality of opportunity

32. The company has a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all. Barnardo's equal opportunities policy is comprehensive, and is fully supported by staff. Staff are regularly updated on equality of opportunity issues through Barnardo's internal staff development programme. In training sessions, trainees are made aware of the importance of equal opportunities whenever possible. Positive messages on equality are reinforced through the display of anti-discriminatory images on posters and materials in all parts of the buildings. Unacceptable trainee behaviour and attitudes are challenged. At induction, trainees are given clear information on their rights and responsibilities, and the formal complaints system. The organisation has an open-door policy and readily accepts all applicants whose needs it can meet.

33. The 'Learning to Care' project in Liverpool takes place in accommodation which is not easily accessible to wheelchair users or people with mobility difficulties. The company highlighted this weakness in its self-assessment report. Although work placement providers agree to abide by Barnardo's equal opportunities policy when they accept a contract, the strength of their commitment to equality is not formally monitored.

Trainee support

Grade 2

34. The majority of trainees on Barnardo's training projects are referred from the careers service, except for those on the 'A Chance to Work' project, who are usually recruited to the programme through social services or directly from special schools in the Merseyside area. At Palmersville, the initial assessment process starts during a one-week induction programme, and can last for up to four weeks. During the first week, trainees are assessed for social and personal support needs and are screened for basic skills needs. Initial assessment at the Leeds centre is fully subcontracted out by the TEC. Once accepted onto the 'Learning to Care' programme in Liverpool, the trainees' basic skills needs are identified during a two-week induction period. Trainees on the 'A Chance to Work' project receive individual induction. Those on the other projects are given one- or two-week induction programmes which cover both the general and occupation aspects of their training. Basic skills support is available at Palmersville, through weekly coaching sessions taken by a volunteer support worker. At other centres, basic skills support is provided by occupational trainers and key workers. At Leeds, this support is provided through the subcontracted initial assessment. At Harrogate, basic skills tuition is delivered by a qualified literacy and numeracy tutor, supported by other qualified staff. Trainees receive help and advice on personal and domestic problems from a member of staff who is qualified in social work. Key workers provide similar support at other projects. All trainees receive progress reviews. Their frequency varies and depends upon the needs of the individual trainees. Trainees receive careers guidance, carry out job-search activities and are given exit interviews. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report but they did not agree with the statement that there were no weaknesses. They found some weaknesses and awarded a grade which was lower than that given by the organisation.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ exemplary support for trainees with personal problems
- ◆ specialist additional support for trainees with learning difficulties and disabilities
- ◆ strong links with external support agencies
- ◆ celebration of trainees' achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to give all trainees an initial assessment
- ◆ insufficient accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ some ineffective progress reviews

35. At all projects, trainees receive a high level of personal support from well-qualified staff. Support services for trainees are well managed and clearly documented. The projects employ qualified support workers who are available to provide guidance and counselling for trainees. All trainees meet the support worker during the induction programme, and are made fully aware of the service offered. The support worker is available to be an advocate for trainees when needed. Details of support provided are recorded and strict confidentiality is maintained. At all projects, trainees are allocated a key worker who provides both pastoral and learning support. Trainees receive individual guidance on portfolio building. The 'A Chance to Work' project employs staff members who provide close support and guidance for trainees with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities by working one-to-one with trainees. Barnardo's has close links with local special schools and takes part in final-year school activities to raise awareness of the provision offered. Two projects provide transport for trainees who are unable to travel independently. All projects have regular contact with the careers services, who are kept informed of new programmes and developments. At Palmersville and Harrogate, careers office staff regularly visit the provider's premises to give careers advice and guidance. In addition to an annual, cross-project awards ceremony, Palmersville has regular presentation events for each vocational area.

36. At Leeds, trainees who are endorsed as having additional learning support needs are given initial assessment which is carried out by a subcontractor employed by the TEC. Non-endorsed trainees at Leeds do not have their basic skills abilities assessed at the beginning of the programme. Some assessment is carried out of trainees' occupational skills, but this is not done systematically and no records are kept. Additional support in literacy and numeracy is offered to all trainees during the induction programme, but is given a lower emphasis than the social support services available. Where there is no specialist basic skills tutor, or when one is not available, literacy and numeracy support is provided by key workers or occupational staff. Accreditation of trainees' prior learning occurs in some occupational areas but not in others. For example, hair and beauty trainees were having to repeat work which they had done before joining the programme. Regular contact is maintained with trainees both in-house and on work placement, and formal progress reviews take place either weekly, monthly or every six weeks, according to the needs of the individual trainee. Some progress reviews are ineffective and do not focus sufficiently on trainees' progress towards NVQ achievement. They concentrate on trainees' welfare. During the reviews, staff fail to set the trainees targets.

Management of training

Grade 2

37. The 29 staff on the Palmersville project are managed by a project leader, who has a deputy with responsibility for financial management and the provision of management information. There are three training co-ordinators, who each manage a number of training supervisors. A cross-modular training supervisor provides cover for absent staff where necessary, and has responsibility for a range of other duties. Each of the other three projects is headed by a project leader who manages a small project team. The numbers of trainees on programmes have remained about the same over the last three years. Barnardo's has recently organised its projects by themes and programmes. All four training projects are now in the same programme, with the aim of facilitating effective communication between them. Inspectors mainly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the company for this aspect of provision, and with the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong commitment to staff development
- ◆ regular 'staff supervision' interviews
- ◆ regular training for staff to enable them to deal with challenging trainees
- ◆ effective internal communications
- ◆ positive and effective management style
- ◆ good management of subcontractors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak communication between training projects
- ◆ insufficient use of data analysis to inform management decisions

38. The organisation has a strong commitment to staff development. The training needs of staff are identified in a range of ways, including the formal annual staff appraisal process. Staff participate in the training events provided by Barnardo's, and those offered by external agencies. Records of staff development are systematically maintained. Staff are well qualified, and have received additional training to help them to deal with trainees who have problems that hinder their learning. In addition to informal support from managers, all staff have 'supervision interviews' every four to six weeks. These provide them with the opportunity for a focused and confidential one-to-one discussion with the line manager about problems, staff development needs and other matters. There is good communication within each of the training centres, and staff meetings are held regularly. Each training centre also enjoys good communications with the regional and head office staff. The company manages its subcontractors well, and monitors the quality of the training and assessment they provide, sometimes by direct observation.

39. Communications within each training project are good. Communications and liaison between projects are poor and the organisation has recognised this weakness. Staff on different projects do not share good practice with one another. They do not maintain sufficient contact with one another and in some instances, they duplicate each other's work unnecessarily. The company collects data on trainees to satisfy TEC requirements. Insufficient use is made of these data to inform project development. In its action plan for the Palmersville centre, the organisation aims to ensure the effective use of the management data analysis which is currently being introduced.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

40. There is no single quality assurance system throughout Barnardo's training projects. Palmersville has achieved ISO 9002 accreditation, Barnardo's North West has achieved Investor in People status, and all areas comply with TEC quality standards and monitoring processes. All four projects have appropriate methods for obtaining and acting upon feedback from trainees and employers. Some of the strengths claimed by the company for this aspect were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the other strengths and with the weaknesses in the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ setting of clear targets and standards, monitoring of and performance against them
- ◆ implementation of regional action plans for improving quality
- ◆ use of self-assessment process to identify improvements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of information on trainees' achievements and destinations
- ◆ fragmented quality assurance arrangements

41. Achievement targets are set for each team and for the project as a whole, and progress towards them is monitored carefully. Necessary remedial action to ensure that targets are met is identified and recorded, and responsibility for carrying it out is clearly allocated to the appropriate staff member. At the Palmersville project, this process of monitoring progress towards achieving targets occurs at monthly NVQ progress meetings, when each staff team meets with the deputy project manager. Staff on the Palmersville project are successful in identifying and supporting those trainees who are considered to be at risk of leaving early. Additional help and guidance are provided for them to keep them on the programme, or to ensure a rapid and smooth transfer to a more suitable

programme. This process is recorded thoroughly and overseen closely by the project manager.

42. Each region of Barnardo's is currently implementing a quality development plan. The plan for each of the four projects focuses clearly on the quality of the training process and outlines ways of improving it. Staff regarded self-assessment as a positive means of identifying ways for the further development and improvement of training. The judgements in the report are well supported by clear evidence. Inspectors agreed with seven of the ten self-assessment grades. The self-assessment process involved all project staff and they took pride in the completed report. The organisation experienced some difficulty in bringing together judgements on the four separate projects, particularly when they related to an occupational area or aspect of provision covered by more than one project. This difficulty was compounded by the diversity of quality assurance practice on the part of staff, in the absence of a quality assurance policy and a single and uniform quality assurance system for the whole organisation. Information about trainees' achievements and destinations is not used to carry out action-planning for improvement. For example, a high number of trainees on the Palmersville project leave the programme early but information about them has not been used to plan ways of improving the trainees' retention rate on the project.