



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT

MARCH/APRIL 1999

Oxfordshire Ethnic Minority Enterprise Development

SUMMARY

The Oxfordshire Ethnic Minority Enterprise Development provides satisfactory training in the area of foundation for work. It is mainly for those from minority ethnic communities who need English language and basic skills support. Pastoral support is good and trainees are helped to find appropriate work. Equal opportunities within the organisation is well informed. Staff are fluent in trainees' first languages and there are close connections with the local minority ethnic communities. Management within the small community of trainees and staff is informal and lacks adequate record-keeping. Quality assurance is insufficiently focused on improving the quality of programmes and achievement.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good English language training
- ◆ high level of pastoral support for trainees throughout training
- ◆ effective internal and external communication
- ◆ well-informed staff sensitive to cultural context

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of work-based training and assessment
- ◆ weak organisational infrastructure
- ◆ inadequate analysis of performance data

INTRODUCTION

1. The Oxfordshire Ethnic Minority Enterprise Development (OEMED) is a non-profit making organisation set up in 1988 aiming to improve employment opportunities for members of the minority ethnic communities in Oxfordshire. It started its work in 1990 with one outreach worker with funding from a range of sources. Funding is now received from Oxfordshire County Council, the Heart of England Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Employment Service. There are now three members of staff; a manager, information technology tutor and a business development officer who is also the course co-ordinator. As a voluntary organisation, it has a management board comprising representatives from the local authority and Oxfordshire's minority ethnic groups.
2. The OEMED offers six training courses in computing and English language each year. Three courses lead to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1 in information technology and the remaining three lead to NVQs at level 2. Each training course accommodates a maximum of 14 trainees. All training takes place at the OEMED centre in Oxford and is funded through the TEC under their work-based training for adults programme. The SRB provided funds for the establishment of the training centre and associated equipment.
3. Minority ethnic communities make up 9.2 per cent of the population of Oxford City. The unemployment rate among these communities is high while general levels of unemployment are falling in the Oxfordshire region and currently stand at 1.8 per cent, against the national average of 5.2 per cent (Economic Strategy for Oxfordshire 1998-99). There are pockets of unemployment. Twelve wards in Oxford City and Banbury contain 38 per cent of the county's unemployed people, yet only 14 per cent of its working population.
4. The Oxfordshire local economy remains heavily reliant upon the service sector and only an estimated 16.4 per cent of the workforce are employed in manufacturing. However, Oxfordshire retains specialised manufacturing, for example print and publishing, motor-industry-related and high technology manufacturing such as biotechnology. The largest employers in the county are the county council employing 15,000 people, one of the universities with 5,700 people and a major car manufacturer with 4,500. Skill shortages have been identified in the areas of information technology, nursing, management and engineering at high levels.
5. There are approximately 18,000 employer sites within Oxfordshire and 79 per cent employ 10 or fewer employees. Less than 1 per cent employ more than 200 employees. An additional 35,000 individuals are classed as self-employed. Oxfordshire has one of the most highly skilled workforces in the country with 53 per cent being qualified to NVQ level 3 or its equivalent. Thirty-four per cent are qualified to NVQ level 4 or above, however, 17 per cent of the workforce have no



qualifications. Sixty-four per cent of young people aged 21 years or under are qualified to NVQ level 3 or its equivalent (Economic Strategy for Oxfordshire 1996-97).

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. OEMED produced its first self-assessment report in January 1998, which was updated in March 1999 prior to inspection. The report was produced by the manager in consultation with staff and management board members. The report had good background information about the organisation and its development and about the trainees on the programmes. There was information about the way that the training is arranged, and the content of the courses. Strengths and weaknesses were identified, many of which were not thought significant or considered to be no more than normal practice, by inspectors. There was no action plan produced and submitted with the self-assessment report.

7. A team of two inspectors spent a total of seven days at OEMED during March and April 1999. They interviewed 12 trainees and three staff and one management board member. They examined documents relating to the organisation's policies and procedures, awarding body verification reports, evaluations and trainees' portfolios. They observed one training session.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work			1			1
Total	0	0	1	0	0	1

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Foundation for work

Grade 3

8. OEMED provides training for work and prevocational training. There are 13 adult trainees in this occupational area, two trainees in prevocational training and 11 in work-based training for adults. Courses are offered which lead to NVQ levels 1 and 2 and wordpower is offered for trainees who have communication or English language difficulties. These trainees come from a range of communities, including refugee groups, and their ages range from 25 to 60 years old. For many, their major barrier to work is the inability to speak the English language. Some are well qualified in their countries of origin, but have been unsuccessful in securing employment in England. All training takes place at the centre in Oxford. There are no work placement opportunities available for trainees. The course leading to a level 1 NVQ is 12 weeks long, the level 2 course is 16 weeks long. Trainees attend the centre for two days tutoring and half a day when they can work alone or with support from the tutor. All trainees are initially assessed to establish which NVQ level is most appropriate and whether they have any particular language or communication difficulties. Assessment is carried out by assessors on site. Over the past three years, eighty per cent of trainees who complete the programme, achieve their intended qualifications and many trainees return to take further training. The retention rate has averaged at around 60 per cent over the same period. The grade

awarded by inspectors is lower than that given by the organisation in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ relaxed, yet focused approach to training
- ◆ motivated trainees interested in acquiring further skills
- ◆ high-quality learning and personal achievement by trainees
- ◆ trainees work without supervision

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ training programmes are not fully documented
- ◆ trainees' reviews are not comprehensively recorded
- ◆ lack of work-based training and assessment opportunities

9. The excellent working relationships among staff and trainees underpin the work. Trainees are knowledgeable about their training programme and the qualification towards which they are working. Trainees are encouraged to work without supervision, but are well supported should they experience problems or need to ask advice. Trainees are motivated to progress and acquire further skills.

10. Timetables are planned so that trainees know exactly what they are expected to cover during their time on the programme. Trainees have an individual participation plan, which covers the specific training goals they aim to achieve and, although the programmes have a definite length, they are allowed to work at their own pace. Additional support is available for any trainee who is falling behind meeting the programme deadline. Induction lays the foundation for close working relationships between staff and trainees. Staff are enthusiastic and encouraging. Staff are encouraged to celebrate trainees' achievements and photographs displayed in the main office are testimony to the achievements of trainees and the work of the organisation.

11. Trainees are able to acquire basic information technology skills by attending training sessions at the centre in Oxford. The lack of work placements for trainees' prevents them from showing what they can do under real work pressures. Portfolios consist of the work set in the centre to ensure that the requirements of the relevant award are met. Computing and software packages are adequate to meet trainees' needs. Training materials, such as textbooks and guidance notes, are available to support the programmes offered. These do not include aims and objectives or a formal training plan, to ensure consistent delivery.

12. Internal verification does not cover qualifications at all levels and no records are kept. Trainees' progress is reviewed half way through their programme. These reviews may not include everyone who is involved in the trainee's learning. For example, if the trainee receives additional English language support then the review may centre more on this and the information technology tutor may not be involved.

Specific progress, achievement and actions are not comprehensively recorded. Staff are aware by informal methods of communication that some trainees progress to gain employment, but this is not formally monitored. Staff are qualified to the same level of NVQ that they are delivering and there is no scope for higher qualifications to be delivered. Those trainees who express interest in working towards a higher level qualification are referred to external organisations.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

13. OEMED was set up to help trainees from a variety of communities and cultures to improve their employability. They have an equal opportunities policy statement covering appropriate legislation, which has recently been updated. They also have a complaints procedure. The centre has facilities on the ground floor giving access to trainees with mobility problems. Information is collected at recruitment on the gender and ethnicity of applicants, as well as identifying whether they have a disability. Equal opportunity issues are included in induction. At the time of the inspection, two out of the three staff and 11 of the 13 trainees on the programmes were from minority ethnic groups, five of the trainees are men and three had identified themselves as having a physical disability. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given by the organisation in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective links are established with local communities
- ◆ positive images and information from a range of cultures is displayed
- ◆ an ethos of inclusiveness is fostered by the organisation
- ◆ marketing and information materials are effectively used

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no written procedures
- ◆ no written action plan
- ◆ equal opportunities is not managed formally

14. OEMED and its individual staff have strong and effective links with local communities. Outreach work is undertaken to make others aware of the work of OEMED. The nature of the organisation, made explicit in its mission statement, means that equality issues affecting the target communities are well understood. A bi-monthly newsletter is used to communicate information about the work and successes of OEMED to a wide range of companies, organisations and individuals. Trainees are encouraged to make suggestions for inclusion in the newsletter.

15. The training centre affords a warm and welcoming environment to everyone. Staff demonstrate genuine concern for each trainee as an individual. Positive images

and information are displayed around the premises. For example, photographs, paintings, cultural artefacts and fabrics are used to decorate communal areas and notices of cultural events and activities are displayed. These reflect information and items that are of interest to a wide variety of individuals. A notice board makes trainees aware of opportunities available to them for jobs as well as the social and cultural events. This is used by both trainees and visitors to the centre. Trainees work well together and offer encouragement and support to each other irrespective of their varied backgrounds and issues affecting them.

16. Equal opportunities is covered during induction. This is not done in a structured way and is not supported by records or materials. The equal opportunities policy is only available in English, yet there are trainees whose first language is not English who use the centre. The equal opportunities policy is not linked to documented procedures, however, a great deal of work is undertaken with outside organisations and groups representing minority ethnic communities. All staff have responsibility for the implementation of the policy. Data on gender and ethnicity collected at recruitment is used to target under-represented groups and communities. This is undertaken systematically by the member of staff responsible for outreach work, however, there is no documented action plan that reflects the thinking and discussion that has taken place to justify the action. No further analysis of equal opportunities data, such as relating to achievement and progression, takes place.

17. The organisation views equality of opportunity as an inherent part of its work. Special projects and developments that promote equality of opportunity are often developing. However, there is no formal management of equal opportunities issues or documented strategic direction. The organisation's business plan refers to the mission statement which emphasises equal access to training and development for minority ethnic groups. Equal opportunities is seen as a core business by OEMED.

18. There is a complaints and grievance procedure which is shared with trainees during induction. It is presented along with other information about the training programme. Records are kept of all complaints received and action taken to resolve the issues. Where appropriate, this information is used to change the practice of the organisation.

Trainee support

Grade 2

19. OEMED offers a welcoming environment. Applicants are interviewed and the level and nature of any additional support is identified. For basic skills support, a written test is used and other support is identified through questioning. An individual participation plan is drawn up with the trainee and forms the basis of their training. Induction includes issues relating to health and safety, equal opportunities and the complaints and the grievance procedures, in addition to introducing the NVQ training programme and assessment. Trainees are able to use the centre and the information technology facilities out of hours during the week, unsupervised but with access to the tutor. Support to find jobs is available and useful job information is displayed on the notice board. Curricula vitae preparation and interview skills training are also offered. This includes identifying and recording trainees' skills and

experience and offering role-plays to test out possible interview questioning. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given by the organisation.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high level of staff support for trainees throughout training
- ◆ excellent support for trainees with English language difficulties
- ◆ good, thorough careers advice
- ◆ sensitivity shown to cultural issues

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak initial assessment
- ◆ unstructured induction

GOOD PRACTICE

This example shows how local businesses and communities are made aware of the company's work. A monthly newsletter includes articles about the work of the organisation, events and special activities. Trainees' successes and achievements are celebrated. Information about job vacancies and other local advertisements are included. The newsletter is sent to many external organisations as well as to past trainees.

20. Staff demonstrate a genuine concern and interest in trainees' welfare and achievement. Support is offered to trainees who are experiencing family difficulties which impact on their training, such as caring responsibilities that limit their availability for training. Effective links with local communities enable relevant advice and opportunities to be provided for trainees. Staff awareness of cultural issues informs their ability to offer specific guidance. Members of the staff team speak the main community languages fluently. Trainees who speak little English when they start are offered tuition and many of them are able to converse adequately in English by the end of their programme. Support to acquire conversational English skills is highly valued by trainees as it greatly improves their employability.

21. Initial assessment of basic skills is not thorough or vocationally applied. A test requires trainees to read a recipe and write answers to questions about the recipe. The ingredients are not those with which many of the trainees would be familiar and it does not use the kind of language that they would be required to use in office work. Trainees monitor their own achievement of identified goals and are encouraged to talk openly about how they are progressing.

22. Initial assessment is used to agree goals and determine the most appropriate level of training. This is done through an interview and discussion process. Initial assessment materials are not vocationally relevant. There is no structured framework for induction, and so it is not possible to ensure a consistent level of delivery for each new group of trainees.

Management of training

Grade 3

23. OEMED has three full-time members of staff. All staff are adequately qualified for their respective positions and understand their roles and responsibilities. There are clear policies and procedures to support the organisation's overall aims, including a business plan. OEMED achieved the Investors in People Standard in January 1998. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-

assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive operational policies and procedures
- ◆ effective informal, internal and external communication

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no written account of procedures being implemented
- ◆ weak organisational infrastructure

24. OEMED uses the detailed policies and procedures required to be an Investor in People, linked to the organisation's overall aims and objectives to steer its human resource management. The business plan is current and reflects the organisation's position. Plans detailed in this document are being further developed.

25. As a small organisation, staff are able to have regular informal contact with each other and the trainees, enabling effective relationships to develop. Issues of concern are quickly and informally addressed and frequent contact enables any new developments to be communicated as and when they occur. The course co-ordinator has an outreach role and regularly visits organisations and agencies to keep them abreast of forthcoming courses and events being organised by OEMED.

26. Record-keeping is largely informal. There are hand-written notes relating to contacts and specific training events, as well as lists of things to do and minutes of management review meetings. There is no formal account of any evaluation of the training programmes, forward-planning or decision-making. A manager's report is submitted to the management board, which meets on a quarterly basis. This indicates the organisation's current work and proposals for development, but does not necessarily refer to the quality of training.

27. The organisation's infrastructure is not secure. Reliance on informal communication has meant that individual staff are not fully informed of the detail of contracts, funding and development. Knowledge of the organisation's planning and proposed development is not systematically recorded, and tends to be held with the manager. Emergency plans in the case of the manager's absence, result in staff having insufficient information to ensure robust management arrangements.

28. OEMED uses an appropriate management information system to identify numbers of trainees, the courses they undertake and information about individual trainees in terms of race, gender and disability. Trainees' achievements are recorded on the attendance register of each course as they collect their certificates; details of trainees who left the course are also noted. The organisation maintains contact with many past trainees through the newsletter, yet leavers' destinations are not followed up.

29. There are systems to ensure staff are supported, appraised and developed, but

the records relating to this process do not identify any assessment undertaken which relates to their job roles or why particular training has been agreed. A record of training is kept and targets for completion set. Trainees' progression through their NVQ in some areas is very slow, yet there is no record of discussions about the training, or its pace.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

30. The organisation meets TEC and awarding body contractual obligations regarding quality. There is a clear quality assurance framework. OEMED achieved the ISO 9001 standard in 1996. Consistent documentation is used throughout the organisation and many aspects of the organisation's business has procedural guidance. OEMED produced its first self-assessment report in January 1998 and revised this in March 1999. It was produced by the manager, in consultation with the staff and management board. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-documented policies and procedures
- ◆ clear personal commitment to continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' feedback not systematically used to improve training
- ◆ no action-planning

31. OEMED achieved ISO 9001 in 1996 and they were audited in respect of the award in 1997 and then again during the inspection period. The policies and procedures are comprehensive and detailed, however, requirements to ensure compliance with the award had been highlighted as a concern by the quality assurance auditor during the last visit in 1997 and again in 1999. The issues mainly related to updating procedures to take account of changes in practice and ensuring that document control systems are in place.

32. Staff display a clear personal commitment to continuous improvement. They are interested and concerned about the development of the organisation and the quality of training provided. Staff recognise and understand the quality assurance procedures, however, these are not systematically implemented. This is often due to informal discussion being the preferred approach in the organisation.

33. Trainees are invited to complete evaluation forms after each course. The information is collected, but information is not systematically analysed and used to improve the delivery or content of the training provided.

34. Targets are set by the TEC for trainees' achievement and retention on programmes. The organisation is aware of its position in relation to its performance

against these targets, yet there is no record of this analysis having taken place. There is, for example, no analysis of trends or patterns which develop over time.

35. There are no detailed action plans to ensure and improve the quality of training. The quality assurance manual makes reference to the need for action-planning, yet there is no evidence of the procedures being applied. Any shortcomings in the training, management procedures, organisation and administration are not identified. The self-assessment process has helped to highlight some strengths and weaknesses and there is a lot of discussion and understanding by staff of the concerns and possible strategies to overcome them. Staff are able to link the process of self-assessment to their quality assurance systems and their management board reporting arrangements. The organisation has plans to address the issues, but has not recorded these in any detail.