



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT

MAY 1999

Waverley Training Services

SUMMARY

At Waverley Training Services, training in agriculture (small animal care and horticulture) is satisfactory. Work placements for trainees are of high quality. Training in engineering (motor vehicle trades) is good. Trainee retention rates are excellent. The organisation has sound working relationships with employers and subcontracted training providers. Equality of opportunity is given high priority, especially for those trainees with special training needs. Trainee support is satisfactory. Pastoral care is good. The trainee review process is effective. Management of training and quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. A small but dedicated team of staff and the services of the borough council ably support the training manager.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	3
Engineering	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ good working relationships with employers and subcontractors
- ♦ comprehensive guidance and support for trainees
- ♦ effective trainee review arrangements
- ♦ high retention rates
- ♦ purposeful leadership and cohesive staff team
- ♦ strong support from the borough council

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ♦ under-developed workplace assessment arrangements
- ♦ poor access to the training centre for those with physical disabilities
- ♦ failure to make basic skills integral to training programmes
- ♦ few well-established organisational policies and procedures
- ♦ incomplete quality assurance framework

INTRODUCTION

1. Waverley Training Services is an approved training organisation situated in Farnham, in the north east area of Surrey. Farnham is on the Surrey/Hampshire borders, approximately 40 miles south west of London. Waverley Training Services is a non-profit making organisation formed some 17 years ago by the Waverley Borough Council. It still remains within the remit of the borough council under the direction of the chief executives and is maintained through the auspices of the policy and resources committee. The 'prime directive' for Waverley Training Services is to prepare young people for the world of work. Priority is given to those who need the most help, and helping them to secure jobs in the local economy, rather than specifically seeking to close skills gaps that exist in the local economy. However, Waverley Training Services offers training leading to NVQs in occupational areas where there is a shortage of skilled personnel locally, such as clerical work, agriculture/horticulture, retailing and the service industries.

2. Waverley Training Services has a contract to provide work-based training for young people with Surrey Training and Enterprise Council. At the time of inspection, there were 32 male and 12 female trainees registered with the provider. Of these, 66 per cent were endorsed by careers services as having special training needs. There are no trainees from minority ethnic groups. Currently, training is offered in agriculture (horticulture and small animal care), construction, engineering (motor vehicle), business administration, retail and customer service. There are low trainee numbers in all areas except horticulture and motor vehicle studies and these were not inspected. Evidence in this report in relation to generic areas was drawn from all training programmes.

3. Waverley Training Services is accommodated in a former pumping station built in the mid-nineteenth century, which has been redeveloped by the borough council to provide training rooms, staff and administrative spaces and rest rooms. This building is not entirely suitable for trainees with physical disabilities. Within the grounds of the pumping station is a pre-fabricated building where training for horticulture occupations takes place; the grounds of the building are used for planting. Within this environment, the organisation can provide a secure base for those horticulture trainees whose learning needs require particular attention, before they embark upon longer term work-based training placements.

4. In previous years, the training centre was the focal point of training and trainee activity. Now, training and assessment take place mainly in the workplace, supported by off-the-job training in five local further education colleges or, trainees attend the training centre on day-release. The organisation has been successful in helping trainees to obtain employment, especially those identified as having special learning needs.

5. The senior staff of Waverley Training Services comprise the training services manager, deputy training manager/training officer, project supervisor and an

administrative officer. When required, the services of three assessors and internal verifiers are engaged to carry out the formal assessment of trainees.

6. The total population of Surrey is 1,018,000 and that in the Borough of Waverley is 114,600. Persons from minority ethnic groups represent 1.5 per cent of the total population of the borough. Approximately 70 per cent of the Waverley population live in the four main settlements of Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh. The area is relatively prosperous but has pockets of disadvantage. Some 50 per cent of the population in Waverley are economically active, and of these persons, about 58 per cent are employed in professional, managerial and technical occupations, (1991 Census of Employment). The greater proportion is employed in banking, financial and other service industries, such as teaching and public authorities. Those employed in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs represent 11 per cent of workers. There are more males in the professional and skilled manual sectors and more females in the skilled non-manual and semi-skilled sectors.

7. Of the total number of businesses in Waverley, 79 per cent employ fewer than five people and of all businesses, 89 per cent employ fewer than 11. Only one per cent of businesses employs more than 100 people. In January 1999, the unemployment rate in the Waverley Borough was low at 1.3 per cent, compared with the UK average of 4.8 per cent. Overall, Waverley businesses have less hard-to-fill vacancies than their Surrey counterparts, but find it more difficult to recruit technical, craft and clerical staff than operatives, professional, sales and personal service workers.

8. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers in Surrey who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSE) at grade C or above was 53.6 per cent compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. According to information provided by Surrey careers service, in 1998, 78 per cent of school leavers elected to remain in full-time education at school or college. Of others, two per cent entered training programmes, nine per cent gained employment and of these 5.2 per cent were attached to employment training programmes, three per cent were unemployed and a further eight per cent were classified as "destination unknown". This pattern has remained consistent over the past five years with the exception of those entering youth training and employment, where the proportion entering youth training without initially securing employment has dropped from five per cent (1993) to two per cent (1998). By contrast, those entering employment have increased from six per cent (1993) to nine per cent (1998).

INSPECTION FINDINGS

9. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days carrying out an inspection of work-based training at Waverley Training Services in May 1999. An inspection was carried out of training, trainee review and assessment in agriculture (amenity horticulture, commercial horticulture, small animal care) and engineering (motor vehicle trades). Inspectors also reviewed arrangements for the promotion of equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance. Inspectors examined trainees' records, portfolios of evidence for assessment, awarding body documents, teaching and learning materials, organisation policies and procedures documents, other documents and contracts. They also observed and interviewed 22 trainees, inspected four training, review and assessment sessions, held 21 interviews with Training Services staff, subcontractor staff and others, and made visits to seven employers.

10. All staff were involved in preparing the self-assessment report submitted prior to inspection by the Training Standards Council. The self-assessment report and its accompanying action plan formed a valuable basis for planning the inspection.

11. Inspectors agreed with the judgements of Training Services and the self-assessment grades in all aspects of provision except for trainee support where a lower grade was awarded than that given in the self-assessment report.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

12. The organisation provides training in commercial and amenity horticulture, small animal care, floristry and service engineering for 25 young people with a range of special needs. At the time of inspection, trainees were working for the following qualifications:

Qualification	Number of trainees
Commercial horticulture level 1	10
Amenity horticulture level 1	4
Amenity horticulture level 2	
sports turf	3
hard landscape	2
Small animal care level 1	1
Caring for animals level 2	3
Floristry level 2	1
Service engineering (agricultural and groundcare machinery) level 2	1

13. The commercial horticulture programme operates from the Waverley Training Service's training centre which has a range of facilities including raised beds, a small greenhouse, hard standing and nearby allotments. Seven of the trainees have

work experience placements and one is employed. Those in work placements attend the centre one-day a week for off-the-job training. The remaining three trainees attend the centre full time and work on in-house projects until they are ready for work placements. All the amenity horticulture trainees are employed or have a work experience placement. Off-the-job training and assessment are subcontracted to a local college where trainees study one day a week for up to two years. Training for animal care is subcontracted to a specialist college and is provided through a correspondence course. Trainees have work placements and attend the centre one day a week to complete assignments with support from the organisation's staff. Floristry and service engineering (agricultural and groundcare machinery) training are subcontracted to local colleges. Both trainees are employed and off-the-job training, assessment and theory are provided in college, on a day-release basis. Both trainees are employed.

14. The training provider's self-assessment identified a major key weakness but inspectors found additional weaknesses. The strengths of the programme were not clearly identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-quality work placements
- ◆ strong relationships with employers
- ◆ trainees' clear understanding of the training programmes
- ◆ lively and varied theory sessions

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ under-developed assessment practices and portfolios
- ◆ inappropriateness of the commercial horticulture programme for some trainees
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

15. The provider carefully matches trainees to employers who support and are committed to the training programmes. All work placements are initially assessed for suitability and monitored yearly for compliance with health and safety requirements. Employment and work placements offer trainees a wide range of opportunities through which they can develop relevant occupational skills. Trainees work under careful supervision by well-experienced professionals, but they are also encouraged to work on their own where appropriate. Employers appreciate the amount of contact they have with the management and staff of Waverley Training Services. They are confident that, through regular review visits and telephone contact, problems or issues such as trainees' poor attendance can be addressed efficiently. The provider monitors trainees' attendance at college closely and information on trainees' progress and achievements is sent to employers.

16. Employers and supervisors value the opportunity to be more involved in trainees' learning through regular review meetings with Waverley Training Services

staff. With the exception of animal care trainees who have only recently been informed of the requirements for assessment of practical competence in the workplace, all trainees fully understand the requirements of their training programme and the NVQ structure and assessment process. Theory sessions for NVQ level 1 commercial horticulture are properly planned and well taught. One session which aimed to reinforce prior learning in preparation for a practical task later that day, was enjoyable, lively and fun for the trainees. There was excellent rapport between the tutor and trainees and the group had a clear understanding of the aims of the short and purposeful session. The tutor maintained trainees' interest through good questioning and encouraged trainees to use the classroom whiteboard to illustrate, for instance, where they would place soil dug out from a trench. The amenity horticulture subcontractor provides theory sessions through both classroom and practical work. These make full use of the excellent range of species growing in the college grounds, the workshop facilities for hard landscape construction and, the extensive sports grounds.

17. Until recently, training leading to the animal care qualification was provided by a specialist college through a correspondence course. There were no work-based assessments in animal care. All amenity horticulture assessments undertaken by the subcontractor take place in the college. Plans to carry out assessment in the workplace have not been realised. Trainees miss opportunities to gather evidence of their skill attainment in the workplace. Some assessments related to the health and safety units of the NVQ have been carried out in the workplace for commercial horticulture trainees. Ways of carrying out assessment in the workplace for other aspects of the training programme have not been fully explored.

18. In early 1999, the provider recognised that there not enough work-based assessments across this sector, but action has since been taken to address this weakness. An animal care assessor has now made assessment visits to trainees in the workplace. She has also provided trainees and assessors with examples of how trainees can produce evidence of their competence in the workplace and build up their portfolios. Animal care trainees have not yet begun to develop portfolios, and the assessor is showing them how to do so. Amenity and commercial horticulture portfolios are limited to assessors' records of trainees' performance against NVQ criteria and they do not contain evidence from naturally occurring sources. Evidence and supporting knowledge are poorly cross-referenced to the NVQ specifications. A commercial horticulture internal verifier now visits the organisation's in-house project every 12 weeks to observe assessments and is providing a high level of support for the assessor.

19. The majority of commercial horticulture trainees are placed with employers who are predominantly involved in amenity horticulture activities. Their work with these employers offers them little opportunity to gather work-related evidence for their NVQ in commercial horticulture. They can only work, and be assessed, for their commercial horticulture during their off-the-job training and assessment. The skills and knowledge they learn during their off-the-job training are relevant to commercial horticulture but do not necessarily relate to the amenity horticulture activities they carry out at work. Some trainees attending college have a timetable for their day-release studies but employers are not fully aware of the content or

timing of their trainees' programmes. This lack of communication of information from the college makes it difficult for employers to help trainees practise new skills in the workplace. In addition, the college timetables some theory sessions at times of the year and these do not fit with amenity horticulture seasonal activities.

Engineering

Grade 2

20. Waverley Training Services has nine trainees of employed status in this occupational sector. Eight trainees are modern apprentices following a framework that leads to the award of an NVQ level 3 in the maintenance and repair of light vehicle mechanical and electronic systems. The other trainee is endorsed as category B special needs and he is developing portfolio evidence for NVQ level 2 units in vehicle body fitting. A local further education college is subcontracted to provide training leading to NVQs at level 2 and level 3 and to carry out all assessment and verification procedures. All the modern apprentices attend the college on day-release courses for theory work, to develop practical competence in the college's motor vehicle workshops and to receive support and guidance in building their portfolio of work-based evidence. Some assessment of the trainee's competence is undertaken by direct observation of the trainee in the workplace but the majority of portfolio evidence consists of copies of workplace job-cards signed by the supervisor. The special needs trainee does not attend college but he meets with the college assessor at approximately monthly intervals, either in his workplace or at the provider's premises, to receive additional support and guidance.

21. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and with the grade given in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report failed, however, to cover subcontracted provision fully.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working relationships among trainers, college staff, employers and trainees
- ◆ wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ good support for portfolio development
- ◆ significant improvement in retention of trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment
- ◆ delayed introduction of key skills assessment into programmes
- ◆ no verification of assessments by observation of workplace performance

22. The organisation's training review process for motor vehicle trainees is

undertaken in the workplace. The visiting member of staff from the organisation has established a good working relationship with her trainees, their employers and the college staff who assess the work-based evidence. The eight-weekly review processes are sharply focussed on developing an action plan to help the trainee to achieve the NVQ. The organisation's member of staff maintains good informal communication with college assessors and she is well informed on the current progress of each trainee. Employers are not systematically involved with the review process but they are often consulted for their views on the trainees' performance. Employers have total confidence in the provider's management of the training process. The trainees work effectively with their workshop supervisors in obtaining the required number and range of 'job cards' supported by expert witness testimony. Training in the workplace is carefully supervised in order that trainees' needs are met. There is, however, no systematic planning of workplace training to ensure that trainees cover all the elements of the modern apprenticeship framework. All trainees are employed in large garages and have an extensive range of opportunities to develop their skills with the support of experienced technical staff.

23. Trainees have a good understanding of the NVQ process. This understanding has been developed through the well-organised provision at the local college. The primary focus of this provision is the production of a structured portfolio displaying authenticated evidence. The contents of most portfolios are similar, however. They do not reflect the particular attainments and aptitude of individual trainees or contain, for instance, graphical material the trainees have chosen themselves. Trainees do not take full possession of their portfolios throughout the programme. It is not common practice for the portfolio to be available for the workplace review process.

24. Trainees' retention rate on the motor vehicle programme has been as low as 40 per cent in past years. Following the involvement of the provider's new training manager and the move to use a single college for the assessment centre, the retention rate has increased to 100 per cent in the last eighteen months and all current trainees are making good progress towards achieving their qualification. Trainees displayed an obvious enthusiasm for their training.

25. Employers lack understanding of the NVQ process and direct involvement in training and assessing NVQ and key skill competencies. Employers provide trainees with a range of experience in a variety of sections within the workplace, but these opportunities do not necessarily enable the trainees to cover all aspects of a modern apprenticeship framework. In one instance, a workplace supervisor has recently commenced work towards an assessor award. This initiative is fully supported by the provider, college and the supervisor's employer. During the last year, the college assessors have visited the workplace to undertake assessment by direct observation of the trainees' performance. The number of these assessments is limited to two or three per year for each trainee. These assessments are fully appreciated by trainees, employers and the provider. At the present time, the college's internal verification process has not involved any observation of these workplace assessments.

26. Key skills for the apprentices working at level 2 are being introduced and integrated into the programme at an early stage by the college staff. Several other

trainees are close to completing their NVQ level 3 programme, but have only recently had a session on ways of providing evidence of their attainment in key skills. They are now working through existing evidence in their portfolios and attempting to cross-reference it to the requisite key skill specifications.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

27. The equal opportunities policy and procedures for Waverley Training Services were drawn up in March 1999. Previously, the provider had used the policy and procedures of Waverley Borough Council. The revised documentation emphasises the provider's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for trainees during recruitment, selection and training. All staff have received equal opportunities training and they understand and support the policy. Inspectors found both strengths and weaknesses which the organisation had not identified. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ welcome acceptance of applications from those with diverse needs
- ◆ effective action on complaints

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of monitoring of recruitment data
- ◆ no monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- ◆ poor access to training centre for physically disabled persons

28. The provider is particularly concerned to provide training opportunities for those with special needs who fall into endorsement categories, as there is very little alternative provision available to them within the locality. Some applicants, denied access to training elsewhere, have been given a high level of in-house support. In order that they may progress in their employment, they receive help in developing important workplace skills such as teamwork, good timekeeping and working in a safe manner. Some of these trainees succeed well beyond their expectations.

29. A formal complaints procedure is published for trainees. Currently, there are no records of complaints by trainees. On the several occasions when trainees have verbally expressed their concerns regarding possible discrimination, the matter has been dealt with in an efficient and effective manner but no written record has been kept. In the past, the providers' staff have acted effectively in cases of discrimination to change a trainee's employer, college and terms of employment, where necessary.

30. There has been little evaluation of the effectiveness of the organisation's equal opportunities policy and procedures and staff have only recently commenced collecting data on applicants' gender, ethnicity and disabilities. Promotional

literature demonstrates the organisation's commitment to equality of opportunity by including a picture of a blind person using a computer and a female using horticultural machinery. Other promotional literature, however, reinforces the image of motor vehicle engineering as a male-dominated sector and does little to attract applicants from minority ethnic groups.

31. During their induction process the trainees are introduced to the provider's equal opportunities policy. Few checks are made on the trainee's understanding of the policy. The trainee review process does not systematically check on whether the trainee has been subject to possible discrimination or harassment. The provider's staff do not check that equal opportunities are upheld in the trainee's workplace. Some employers do not have an equal opportunities policy or procedures. Recently, employers without an equal opportunities policy have received a copy of the provider's policy and they have been asked to provide written confirmation that they will comply with it.

32. The training centre is not easily accessible to persons with severe mobility difficulties. In particular, the first floor suite of networked computers is only accessible by an ordinary staircase.

Trainee support

Grade 3

33. Sixty-six per cent of Waverley Training Services' trainees are either endorsed as having special training needs or identified as possibly requiring additional support to help them achieve their qualification. Many trainees are recruited from local special or mainstream schools. Others are referred from the careers service or through family contact. Potential trainees undertake initial assessment tests at interview, including the Basic Skills Agency screening test and the Surrey TEC Initial Training Survey.

34. Where trainees do not already have employment, the provider assists in finding them a suitable work experience placement. If trainees are in employment, the provider ensures that the employer is willing and able to support the trainees' learning programme. Currently, trainees attend a two-day induction programme at the provider's premises for an introduction to the organisation and their training programme. Waverley Training Services plans to extend the induction to one week for its next intake of trainees.

35. Commercial horticulture trainees in the in-house project team at the centre are offered basic skills support and the opportunity to work towards Wordpower or Numberpower at entry level. Where trainees attend day release at subcontracted colleges, the learning support facilities at the college are fully available to them. Further initial assessment is carried out at subcontracted colleges. Waverley Training Services' staff review trainees' progress every eight weeks either in the workplace or at the training centre.

36. The provider identified some key strengths and weaknesses in trainee support.

Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective occupational guidance at recruitment
- ◆ high level of pastoral support
- ◆ thorough and effective review process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to take basic skills assessment into account in trainees' individual training plans
- ◆ failure to make basic skills support an integral part of training programmes
- ◆ no exit counselling for trainees

GOOD PRACTICE

The organisation has worked in partnership with a local 'special school' to provide work experience at the centre for pupils in year 11. All pupils were given an introduction to the opportunities available to them through work-based training.

37. Waverley Training Services management has productive links with special and mainstream schools in the area and the careers service and arranges for work experience, either with local employers or with the in-house horticulture project team, for students who are interested in vocational training. These opportunities enable potential trainees to make informed and realistic decisions about a vocational route to follow, and enable the training provider to provide a suitable and appropriate training programme for each individual. Trainees are able to make themselves well aware of the routine and less pleasant aspects of their work, such as having to clean up animal faeces. Employers appreciate the efforts made by the provider to select and match trainees to the job available. The majority of trainees have either underachieved at school or have minor learning difficulties. Building and maintaining trainees' confidence by praising, recognising and encouraging progress is central to the providers' support activities. Individual support with coursework and portfolio building is provided as part of trainees' off-the-job training, or at other times if necessary.

38. Trainees are confident that they can approach training staff for support and advice on both personal and training issues. During the last contract year, Waverley Training Services have increased the frequency of progress review visits to trainees from once every 13 weeks to every eight weeks. Although employers and supervisors are not always present at reviews, they try to be involved in them as much as possible and information from reviews is communicated to them. During reviews, the trainees' progress and achievements are recorded and trainees are given action points to help them improve their work and guide them until the next review. Termly reviews of trainees' progress, achievements and attendance are provided by subcontracted colleges.

39. Initial testing of trainees' basic skills is thorough. There is, however, no clear or detailed recording of action to be taken on trainees' results, methods to be used for improving trainees' basic skills or of arrangements for providing additional learning support. In cases where it is recommended that a trainee receives help with basic skills, the provider does not necessarily ensure that the recommendation is acted upon. It is up to the individual trainee whether he or she accepts learning support. In the majority of cases where trainees attend college on day-release, they

do not attend learning support sessions or use the support facilities available to them. The organisation has not made basic skills support an integral part of occupational training or specifically promoted the long-term benefits of accepting learning support.

40. Waverley Training Services aims is to ensure employment for all trainees before the end of their training programme and has identified the need for trainees to receive more structured exit counselling. A plan and procedure for such counselling has been drafted but has not yet been tested or implemented. Currently, exit guidance is informal and is arranged for individuals who want it.

Management of training

Grade 3

41. Waverley Training Services has undergone three changes of training manager in the past three years. The present manager has been in post for the last twelve months. The management of training is now held in high regard by senior managers in the borough council, schools and careers services, employers, sub-contractors and staff at Waverley Training Services.

42. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses which the organisation had identified in its management of training, but they found both strengths and weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report. Prior to the inspection, the organisation had addressed many of the weaknesses it had identified.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ purposeful leadership
- ◆ cohesive staff team
- ◆ significant developments to improve systems
- ◆ strong support from borough council

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of well-established policies and procedures
- ◆ no clearly defined organisational objectives and management targets
- ◆ no business plan

43. The management of training is now carried in a professional and successful way. The management style is informal and appropriate for an organisation of this size. Through good management, the values of Waverley Training Services are now promoted by word of mouth, specific action and collaboration with other organisations. Links are made with all those within the organisation's catchment area who have an interest in work-based training. Valuable relationships are being built with outside bodies. A small team of staff ably supports the training manager. Each member of the team seeks to help trainees succeed in a training environment

which they find supportive.

44. There is a strong sense of purpose throughout Waverley Training Services. It is, however, only recently that the organisation has begun to review its practices with the aim to ensuring effective management of training in the longer term.

45. The organisation's comprehensive manual of operational policies and procedures has only recently been compiled. It covers such matters as equality of opportunity, grievance and appeals, induction, assessment. Many of these policies are new and due for review within the next nine months. It was therefore too early to ascertain the full effect of these policies and procedures. The policies and procedures have led, however, to more systematic initial assessment and induction of trainees' progress review arrangements, setting of assessment criteria and subcontracting arrangements.

46. The policies and operational procedures are not implemented within the context of a business plan for the organisation. Waverley Training Services does not have clearly defined management targets. Staff are not appraised against targets and staff development needs are not determined in the light of corporate objectives. There are no specific targets for improvements in training

47. Waverley Training Services receives a high level of support from its parent body, the borough council. The council gives assistance with personnel support, expertise, the acquisition of furniture, equipment and building maintenance, financial services, marketing and advertising, staff training and induction, other contracts and services. Through the assistance it gives, the Council has made a direct contribution to supporting training and trainee's welfare. In its publications, the council testifies to the value it places on the work of Waverley Training Services and the organisation's commitment to supporting training for young people.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

48. Quality assurance is incidental rather than planned and occurs because staff are committed to ensuring training is of good quality and that trainees succeed. Individual staff demonstrate initiative by taking action to improve training and trainees' achievements. There are, however, no systematic arrangements whereby staff reflect upon, and evaluate, the training process.

49. Inspectors found strengths upon which the organisation can build a more structured quality assurance system. They agreed with the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. In its self-assessment, however, the organisation did not focus sufficiently on the need to undertake review and evaluation of training more systematically.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ commitment of staff to providing training of quality
- ◆ use of data and trainees' and employers' views in planning improvements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete quality assurance framework
- ◆ no systematic evaluation and review procedures for continuous improvement

GOOD PRACTICE

Training Services staff considered a number of their internal and external verifiers were insufficiently rigorous. The staff replaced these verifiers with others who now provide more critical analysis of trainer/assessor performance and set targets.

50. Waverley Training Services staff carry out regular and thorough reviews of trainees' progress. Through these, they are able to exercise a measure of quality control by checking with the students that subcontractors and workplace supervisors provide them with a training environment in which they feel well supported and confident they can succeed. When problems are raised by the trainees, Waverley Training Services staff take prompt action with the subcontractor or supervisor to resolve them. All parties welcome, and many applaud, this straightforward and effective approach.

51. The organisation has a simple but effective management information system in operation and this maintains an up-to-date record of trainees' achievements. The system is able to keep staff informed of trainees whose progress requires regular and careful monitoring. Data on trainees are readily available. The system is now being used to provide other data which are analysed and taken into account in planning long-term change. Although there is scope for its further development, the system is able to provide valuable information to help the organisation review its effectiveness as a training provider.

52. Waverley Training Services can build on considerable strengths in establishing a systematic quality assurance process. The organisation has recently recognised the need to review the effectiveness of its policies and procedures at regular intervals to ensure that these meet the needs of those whom the organisation serves. There are inadequate arrangements for reviewing the quality of training and assessment undertaken by subcontractors. The organisation recognises that it needs to progress beyond day-to-day satisfaction with its provision and ensure action planning for the continuous and long-term improvement of training.

53. The self-assessment report prepared by Waverley Training Services was useful to the inspectors in their planning of inspection and a valuable aid during the inspection period. It was detailed and informative and contained an introduction to each occupational and generic area. The report identified strengths, weaknesses and the evidence base for the organisation's findings. An accompanying action plan set out the requisite action for improving each area. It specified the timescale for the completion of action, performance indicators and arrangements for monitoring the achievement of the plan. At the time of the inspection, progress in implementing the action plan was being monitored.