



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1999

Broadland Council Training Services

SUMMARY

Broadland Council Training Services (BCTS) provides excellent training in care, and art and design. The training in care is well planned with excellent resources. The art and design programme has been well designed and is taught by highly experienced trainers. Training in equine studies, business administration, retailing and customer service, and foundation for work is good. Well-trained and occupationally experienced staff deliver good training across all areas. There are effective learning support systems, enabling trainees and clients to achieve their individual targets. BCTS does not take an active approach towards monitoring equality of opportunity for staff and trainees. Management of training is strongly led with excellent systems to ensure that good training is maintained. All aspects of training are well monitored and reviewed. Good quality assurance systems and documents are used across all areas of training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	2
Business administration	2
Retailing & customer service	2
Health, care & public services	1
Media & design	1
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	1
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-integrated on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ effective work with subcontractor for care
- ◆ good, well-established links with employers across all occupational areas
- ◆ effective, well-structured programmes in media and design
- ◆ effectively integrated qualifications and work experience for trainees in foundation for work
- ◆ effective, in-depth reviews
- ◆ excellent communication systems
- ◆ accurate, current and widely used management information
- ◆ robust internal verification systems

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ no analysis of early leavers and destinations

INTRODUCTION

1. Broadland Council Training Services (BCTS) is the training department of Broadland District Council. The company has been involved in delivering government-funded training programmes for young people and unemployed adults since 1983. Training is provided through a contract with Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The company also has contracts with the Employment Service, the district council and The Prince's Trust. These contracts provide the income for BCTS. The company provides training in the whole of the Norfolk and Waveney area. Work placement opportunities are provided in all parts of the region. The company provides training in equine studies, business administration, including information technology and accounting, retailing and customer service, including estate agency, health, care and public services, media and design, and foundation for work. The occupational area of leisure and tourism was not inspected because of the very small number of trainees. The training centre is situated on the outskirts of the city of Norwich, and provides training in all areas except equine studies. Facilities include workshops for instruction in making stained glass windows, art studios, information technology workshops and areas for independent learning. There are 182 trainees covered by the inspection, of whom 98 are modern apprentices, 29 are national trainees, 16 are on other youth training programmes, and 39 are on work-based learning for adults programmes. In addition, there are four leisure and tourism trainees who were not included in the inspection. There are also 20 New Deal clients. There are 29 staff, of whom nine work on a full-time basis, six on a part-time basis, six work on a regular associate or freelance basis, and a further eight are contracted as required.

2. Norwich is a large and growing city, which has changed significantly over the past 10 years, and is predicted to continue to grow into the next decade. Employment trends include an increase in professional and managerial work, a decrease in skilled and semi-skilled work (especially in manufacturing), and an increase in service-sector employment, particularly in retailing. Norwich recently won an award for one of the best places in Britain to shop. There are few large firms in the area, and most employment is in small- and medium-sized businesses. Temporary and agency work are on the increase. Key industries in the region include leisure and tourism, business and professional services, health care, food processing, agriculture and distribution. Women are becoming increasingly involved in employment. In 1998, 67.6 per cent of 16 year olds continued in full-time education. The unemployment figure among young people was 4.1 per cent in 1998, a significant fall from 6.2 per cent in 1997. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 46 per cent compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. As at August 1999, the unemployment figure was 4.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.2 per cent. The number of people from minority ethnic groups in the area is low, at 1.3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. All the staff of BCTS were involved in the self-assessment process. At the introduction of self-assessment, key staff attended training organised by the TECs in the eastern region. Staff meetings then involved sharing the findings to identify strengths and weaknesses within the company. Trainees, employers and subcontractors were consulted in the process. The decision was made to include all programmes in the self-assessment even though, at the time, New Deal had not been contracted for. Since the inception of self-assessment, a process of change to ensure continuous improvement has taken place. Self-assessment is now fully incorporated into the quality assurance systems of the organisation. The self-assessment report is accurate in its findings for equine studies, business administration, retailing and customer service, equal opportunities, and trainee support. Further strengths identified during inspection resulted in a higher grade being awarded for health, care and public services, media and design, foundation for work, management of training, and quality assurance.

4. A team of six inspectors spent a total of 20 days at BCTS in September 1999. They met with 98 trainees and clients, and interviewed 20 members of staff. Inspectors also met with 25 employers, and observed a total of 24 sessions, which included training, reviews, assessment and tutorials. They examined a comprehensive range of documents provided by BCTS, including trainees' portfolios, and awarding body's and company's documents.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		2		1		3
Business administration	1	2	1			4
Retailing & customer service			1			1
Media & design	3	2				5
Foundation for work		3	1			4
Total	4	9	3	1	0	17

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture (equine studies)

Grade 2

5. Training in the occupational area of agriculture is provided in equine studies only. There are 28 trainees, of whom 13 are modern apprentices, seven are national trainees and eight are on other youth training programmes. Trainees are working

towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. All trainees are placed in a wide range of equine establishments throughout the county of Norfolk. These include equine rehabilitation centres, riding schools and livery yards, private competition yards and studs. All off-the-job training is provided at trainees' placements. Where some aspects of the NVQ at level 3 cannot be offered within placements, they are covered by short visits to other establishments. Trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 in horse care, and level 3 in horse care and management. All modern apprentices are working towards level 3 in customer service as their additional qualification required within the modern apprenticeship framework. Key skills are incorporated into the training. The self-assessment report is accurate in its findings for this occupational area, and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-established industrial contacts
- ◆ good access to alternative resources
- ◆ well-structured assessors' handbooks
- ◆ well-integrated on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good-quality training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of awareness of qualification opportunities in the modern apprenticeship framework

6. There is a very wide range of good work placements. Off-the-job trainers are able to provide training at trainees' work placements. Resources, in the form of horses and equipment, are readily made available. Trainees are only placed with work providers which are able and willing to give on-the-job training. In some centres which do not have the horses with the appropriate experience, trainees are moved to other establishments for short periods to enable them to train and be assessed to the standards required. This takes place particularly at NVQ level 3, where trainees are required to ride cross-country and in show-jumping. A handbook, which includes the NVQ standards, resources required for training in specific subjects, comprehensive questions and model answers, is given to all workplace trainers and assessors. This handbook provides a high standard of continuity for the six peripatetic trainers and assessors who visit workplaces to provide the off-the-job training. By receiving off-the-job training at their workplace, trainees do not have to experience any transport difficulties in this large, rural area. There is good integration of on- and off-the-job training; all trainees receive off-the-job training once a week or fortnightly at the centre where they work. The off-the-job trainer produces an action plan of the training which is required on the job in the intervening period. Good, appropriate assignments are set and assessed by the trainers. In a few cases, feedback on some assignments does not include correction

of spelling and grammar. Trainees are able to progress at a rate well suited to their own learning abilities.

7. Through regular contact with the trainees, good quality training, and six-monthly meetings between work-placement providers and assessors, trainers and assessors are relieving the pressure of examinations for trainees. This good practice is helping to change the traditional idea of trainees as helping and working with horses for the love of it, to one of trainees being provided with training and employment through a high standard of effective work-based training. Past trainees in the area now have supervisory positions and are sharing their successful experience of work-based training with their trainees. There has been a significant improvement in the achievement rate of trainees, with 97 per cent achieving qualifications in 1997-98. Retention rates have also been improving, with the average stay over the last three years rising from 37 weeks to 69 weeks.

8. All the modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at level 3 in customer service. Trainees who have successfully completed the award have found the process clearly cross-referenced to the equine industry. It is clear how the evidence generated for customer service is available as evidence for the management units in NVQ level 3. Some trainees now work for a few hours each week in the administration offices of their workplace. The modern apprenticeship framework allows for any additional qualification which is appropriate to trainees' needs. Trainees, however, are not aware of the wider possibilities of such qualifications. Two trainees new to the scheme have previously worked in administrative positions and not enjoyed this work, but they are not being given the opportunity to acquire different qualifications.

Business administration

Grade 2

9. BCTS has 98 trainees in business administration. There are 12 national trainees, 72 modern apprentices, seven trainees on other youth training programmes, and seven trainees on work-based learning for adults. Of the modern apprentices, 15 are working towards NVQs in business administration, one in information technology, and 56 in accounting at levels 2, 3 and 4. The trainees on work-based learning for adults are working towards NVQs in information technology at level 2. All trainees, apart from those on work-based learning for adults programmes, are employed. Off-the-job training for administration and information technology is provided by BCTS at the company's premises. A subcontractor provides all the training for accounting trainees at its own premises. Trainees are working in placements which include large firms of accountants, council offices and firms providing financial services to the public. The self-assessment report is accurate in its findings, and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by BCTS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good integration of key skills into occupational area

- ◆ high-quality off-the-job training
- ◆ good systems for recording of goals and targets, results and accreditation
- ◆ effective personal support for trainees and employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no integration of on- and off-the-job training in accountancy
- ◆ lack of clear communication with subcontractor

10. The training officers have developed good working relationships with employers, and trainees are well informed about their progress at work. Full details are given to employers about how trainees are progressing within the units and how this relates to the completion of their awards. Any issues which impede training are quickly identified and addressed by trainers. Key skills are well integrated into the occupational area. This is achieved through training sessions which are being continually developed and well planned. These sessions are followed through in assessments and are reviewed by training officers. The training officers have taken time to develop how the key skills are integrated with the occupational area. Off-the-job training is of a high standard. There are good systems for trainees' review, and the progress, experience and capabilities of trainees are well recorded. Goals and targets are clearly set. Action plans and the results are recorded and followed up for accreditation. Employers respect the high standards set by the training officers. Achievement and retention rates for trainees, particularly in accounting, are slowly improving, and both are now at about 50 per cent.

11. Off-the-job training in accounting is based on lectures at which large numbers of trainees attend. The training is not designed around individual, on-the-job training programmes. Within trainees' places of employment, there is a lack of recognition and integration of the skills which are being built on. Trainees are unable to relate what they are learning off the job to the work they are undertaking on the job. The subcontractor does not brief the training officers, who visit trainees in the workplace, on trainees' progress. The company has difficulty in extracting information and documents from the subcontractor, particularly relating to trainees' progression.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 2

12. There are four retail trainees, of whom two are national trainees and two are on work-based learning for adults programmes. Trainees are working toward retail operations NVQs at level 2 and in one case, distributive operations at level 1. Customer service NVQs at level 3 are offered to trainees in equine studies, administration and estate agency as an additional qualification within their respective training frameworks; nine trainees are taking this qualification. Three trainees pursuing NVQs at level 2 in customer service are on work-based learning for adults. Trainees work in a variety of office environments, including solicitors,

estate agents, and construction and manufacturing industries. There are also five New Deal clients, each working towards customer service NVQs at level 2, also in a variety of office environments. During 1998-99, 66 per cent of those leaving the programme gained an NVQ and 66.6 per cent gained employment. On the youth programme, 33 per cent of trainees left early, and in work-based learning for adults, 58 per cent left early. There have not yet been any modern apprentices or national trainees leaving or completing programmes. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Excellent work placements
- ◆ good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good, frequent access to staff by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor time management in one-to-one learning sessions
- ◆ little accreditation of prior learning

13. Trainees are in excellent work placements, which enable them to develop their potential and achieve their target qualifications. Trainees are able to attend placements for 'job tasters', which help them to decide about their career path. The placement co-ordinator is highly skilled, and is able to effectively match trainees to highly suitable working environments. Relevant previous experience, skills or qualifications of clients and trainees are used to help make this selection. Workplace supervisors are sensitive to individual trainees' particular pace and individual learning styles. BCTS's staff diligently observe safe working practices, and insist that high standards be maintained in the workplace. All employers are monitored to ensure safe practices are operated and BCTS provides them with information on health and safety in the workplace. Workplace supervisors approach the company's staff for guidance on workplace training, and contribute to progress reviews on trainees' development. Trainees acquire the competence to evaluate their own progress and assessment. They can clearly identify their own learning needs, and gain access to any support that they may identify they need. Employers and placement providers respect the high professional standards of BCTS' staff. Trainees attend good, in-depth, off-the-job training sessions at BCTS' premises at least once a fortnight. This training is integrated with skills development in the workplace. Trainees are able to have one-to-one contact with the company's staff during this off-the-job training. Trainees raise any concerns as they occur, which minimises any disruption to their learning and contributes to continuous progress.

14. Off-the-job training for the customer service NVQ and key skills is well designed; clients and trainees receive individual coaching and are able to generate suitable evidence. Work-based evidence is derived from their actual work environments. The one-to-one coaching sessions incorporate evidence for key skills

from the vocational area, and give guidance in portfolio-building techniques. Starting times are flexible to accommodate people's travel arrangements. Good cross-referencing enables the evidence from a range of environments, including equine establishments and retail locations, to be assessed. The problem with the one-to-one sessions is that trainees often have to wait their turn, working through tasks or worksheets without sufficient guidance while they wait. The time is not always well managed. Prior learning is not fully used as evidence or to adjust the assessment methods on entry to the programme. A proportion of trainees have general certificate of education (GCE) A-level qualifications or have attended higher-education courses, and the subsequent targets agreed on are not sufficiently demanding.

15. Assessment and verification meet the requirements of the awarding body, although the external verification for retailing does not comply with the Common Accord for awarding bodies. Retailing has not been externally verified during the last 12 months. Assessors and internal verifiers are qualified within the distributive and retailing industry. They are competent in training and in verifying the NVQs. The awarding bodies have agreed on individual terms for keeping occupational competence current for NVQ assessment. All assessment and verification activity is well recorded. Assessors and internal verifiers are fully aware of trainees' progress and future action plans, as are trainees themselves.

Health, care & public services (care)

Grade 1

16. The company has 22 care trainees: six modern apprentices in early years care and education, eight national trainees and seven modern apprentices in care, and one on another youth training programme in care. All trainees are employed in private or local authority nursing or residential homes, or day nurseries within the Norwich area. Three of the modern apprentices in care are men. Responsibility for all aspects of training for each of the care training programmes is subcontracted to a training provider in the city of Norwich. The subcontractor's training staff are qualified and experienced in the care sector, and hold appropriate NVQ assessor and internal verifier awards. In addition, staff from the subcontractor hold recognised teacher/trainer qualifications, and several have degrees. In one day nursery and one residential home, there are two work-based assessors and two trainees in each. Both peripatetic and work-based assessors conduct all assessment in the workplace. Trainees have the opportunity to work with their assessors on the same shift at regular intervals. In the day nursery, trainees work on a daily basis with their assessors. Trainees on national traineeships or modern apprenticeships in care attend off-the-job training sessions at the subcontractor every two weeks. Off-the-job training for early years care and education is provided in-house at the subcontractor's premises. Open-learning materials are used to help trainees to develop theoretical knowledge in the early stages of the care programme. Additional training courses are also provided for each programme. Inspectors

identified additional strengths to those indicated in the self-assessment report, and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ Highly effective work with subcontractor
- ◆ good, well-established links with employers
- ◆ comprehensive, realistic assessment plans
- ◆ good integration of key skills
- ◆ good recognition by employers of the requirements of evidence-gathering

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of individualisation of training plans

17. The subcontractor is responsible for the recruitment, selection, training and assessment of all trainees. Links with employers are good and long established, and trainees are placed in high-quality work placements. Trainees are registered with the appropriate awarding body at the start of training. There is a formal written contract between BCTS and the subcontractor. This specifies in detail the terms and conditions for training required of the subcontractor by BCTS. The managers of both organisations formally monitor the contract at three-monthly intervals throughout the year. Results of contract-monitoring meetings are recorded, and action plans are made. This process reflects BCTS' self-assessment requirements. There is frequent contact between the staff of both organisations. BCTS is provided with copies of external verifiers' reports, trainees' individual training plans, and current trainees' review documents. Trainees participate fully in training programmes offered by their employers; expert consultants provide some of this training. Reviews of trainees' progress are undertaken at specified intervals. The number of trainees staying on programmes and their achievement rates are good.

18. All training placements used by the subcontractor are monitored, both in terms of health and safety and to ensure that all requirements of the qualifications can be met. The subcontractor has worked hard to establish effective working relationships with a number of employers over a long period of time, which means that most trainees are referred to the subcontractor through employers for training. Some prospective trainees make direct applications to the subcontractor.

19. Trainees have good access to additional learning resources in the form of textbooks and handouts. These materials are up to date and relevant to trainees' NVQs. Good open-learning materials are used, particularly in the initial stages of training, to help trainees to acquire theoretical knowledge to underpin what they learn on the job.

20. Care trainees attend the subcontractor's premises for off-the-job training sessions every two weeks. Trainees are provided with a timetable for off-the-job

training to indicate which units of the NVQ will be referred to at each session. Trainees attend the training in work time, though this may involve some re-arrangement of their shift patterns. None of the trainees work hours over and above those contracted for, unless it is with their express agreement.

21. Assessment plans are comprehensive and realistic. This applies to assessments conducted by both workplace and peripatetic assessors. Trainees are involved in the assessment-planning process, are aware of the targets to be achieved and are familiar with their assessment documents. Assessment plans are reviewed with each trainee at intervals of three to four weeks. Trainees are clear about the procedure to be followed should they wish to appeal against an assessment decision. Internal verification systems are thorough. All activities relating to internal verification are recorded. Employers are invited to attend meetings where assessment issues are addressed. Results of these meetings are recorded. The subcontractor responds promptly to action points recorded during external verifiers' visits.

22. Formal reviews of trainees' progress are conducted at 12-weekly intervals, and involve the trainee, the employer and the training officer. The results of the review are recorded on standard review documents. Key skills are well integrated into the early years care and education and the care programmes. Trainees are knowledgeable about key skills, and have been well guided in gathering evidence to demonstrate their competence in these areas.

23. Employers are fully involved in the training. They allow time during the working day for trainees to gain evidence for their NVQs. Trainees attend training events as specified in the national traineeship and modern apprenticeship frameworks. They also attend additional training, including statutory training required by local authorities, in work time. Their employers fund this training. Trainees' attendance at all additional training events is monitored, recorded and evaluated.

24. Individual training plans are completed for all trainees, and include details of an initial skills assessment, career aims and details of the NVQ to be achieved. However, these plans are not developed or continuously updated with the specific needs of each trainee in mind. Trainees are aware that they have an individual training plan, but are not sure how it relates to their training programme.

Media & design

Grade 1

25. BCTS offers training in media, and art and design for New Deal clients and trainees on work-based learning for adults. The company offers a pre-foundation course in art and craft, and NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in cultural products and cultural venues. This programme is unique and was specially written and accredited for BCTS. There are six New Deal clients and three trainees on work-based learning for adults taking the pre-foundation art and design course, and five New Deal clients and nine trainees on work-based learning for adults following the cultural

products programme. The cultural venues programme has one adult trainee. All the trainees on work-based learning for adults, from both the cultural venues and cultural products programmes, are currently in work placements. Art and craft trainees attend the company's training centre every day. They have the use of a stained glass workshop and a painting studio, along with visual resources and computer facilities. Trainees on cultural products and venues programmes are based with employers on placements, and attend the training centre once each week. In the last contract year, 50 per cent of adult trainees completed their programme, with an average stay on the programmes of 13 weeks. Inspectors identified further strengths to those indicated in the self-assessment report, and awarded a higher grade than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective, well-structured programmes
- ◆ wide breadth of learning experience both on and off the job
- ◆ outstanding work placements
- ◆ high level of professional practice established in all programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no significant weaknesses identified

26. The company has developed a roll-on, roll-off training programme, which means that clients and trainees can join at any time. Trainees and clients are able to develop a broad range of experience; teaching is stimulating and items produced are creative and original. Assessment is well planned, and is carried out both as trainees are working on a project and when it is completed. Structured feedback is given so that trainees continue to improve their skills. Liaison among the training centre's staff, trainees and workplace supervisors is excellent. Monthly meetings are held with all those involved in the training, which helps to ensure that broad-based, good-quality programmes are maintained. Placements are carefully matched to suit trainees' needs, and structured to guide and support everyone involved. Programmes are well planned. Trainees and clients are able to develop a range of knowledge and skills, and they produce a high quality of work which demonstrates an awareness of and ability to adapt to the constantly changing nature of the media. Clients and trainees are encouraged to exhibit products at the training centre and at local galleries. Small commissions are undertaken in the training centre to provide real work situations. At their review meetings, trainees have the opportunity to make evaluative comments on the programme and their trainers; changes to the programmes are made accordingly. The effectiveness of the trainers and the programmes are reflected in the good achievements of trainees and in their progression. Many trainees secure jobs in the arts or move on to further training courses (such as access to higher education). Trainees and clients have free access to the resources and library at a large local art college.

27. The company has an outstanding network of work-placement providers and employers, which supply on-the-job training in a range of high-quality media and design-related organisations. A work-placement officer works with the workplace trainers to ensure that the placement can provide the experience required for the programme units. The company issues all training providers with an agreement detailing each party's responsibilities regarding training. Placement officers rigorously monitor both trainees and training providers.

28. There is a high level of professional practice at the training centre. The company has access to, and uses the expertise of, many arts organisations and their contacts, including the local arts officer, media people, artists, designers and craftspeople. All trainers are vocationally well qualified, practising artists and craftspeople. They are involved in a range of national and local arts organisation activities, and relate these to the programmes they provide.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

29. BCTS is contracted to run two programmes within the foundation for work area. Basic employability training runs for up to 28 weeks, and is offered as a work-based learning for adults programme. There are 17 trainees on this programme. Trainees attend the centre for a minimum of three days a week, and follow a programme designed to provide them with the skills to progress into further training and/or employment. They work towards individual targets or milestones, which may include a work 'taster' and/or a 28-day work placement. Of the trainees on this programme, 12 are working towards a computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) qualification and key skills at level 1 in information technology. Three are working in the area of media and design, and two in retail.

30. The Prince's Trust Volunteers programme is a 12-week personal-development programme for both employed and unemployed people aged 16 to 25. It is used within the New Deal programme under the full-time education and training and voluntary sector options. There are four clients on the programme on the voluntary sector option. The 12-week programme is a team challenge incorporating team and individual tasks which benefit the community, and is followed by a 14-week individual challenge for voluntary sector clients. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded was higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ individualised and flexible training on basic employability programme
- ◆ well-structured personal development programme for new deal clients
- ◆ effectively integrated work experience and qualification for trainees in foundation for work

- ◆ work-experience placements well matched to trainees' needs
- ◆ organised and informative files on trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor integration of basic skills support
- ◆ weak monitoring of trainees' progress on basic employability programme
- ◆ accommodation not suited to training needs

GOOD PRACTICE

The personal development programme uses the key skills and profile logbook devised by the Princes Trust Volunteers. In the logbook the key skills and profile of achievement competencies are cross-referenced to the activities. It covers each stage of the programme with checklists for each activity, action plans, evidence-generating pages and records of review. Use of the logbook helps clients to achieve awards, and acts as a useful reminder of the programme they have followed.

31. Initial assessment on the basic employability programme is used to identify individual progression milestones for each trainee. These range from personal development targets, such as improvement of timekeeping, to achievement of units within specified awards, such as key skills level 1 and wordpower and numberpower. Most trainees also have work experience arranged for up to two days a week. Trainees' timetables are very flexible to take account of the milestones, work experience and programmes on offer in the training centre. Some trainees are linked to the occupational sections available at the centre, and take part in the off-the-job training taking place there. For example, there is a link with the media and arts workshops, and trainees have related work experience. This flexibility ensures that trainees' individual needs are met.

32. The structure of the personal development programme for New Deal clients follows that of a nationally developed and evaluated programme. Clients take part in group and individual activities, which include a week's residential programme as part of the initial team-building process. The challenge of leaving the local area, taking part in new activities, and living as part of a group of people whom they have only known for one week is an enormous challenge for the clients. But, feedback from previous clients is positive. Clients work towards three key skills units at the level appropriate to them, and also to the national profile of achievement. They use a logbook which has been designed to monitor the activities on the programme, and relate the activities to the awards. After the first 12 weeks, clients follow an individual programme. They complete their portfolios for their awards, and spend time working with a staff member to identify and research possible work placements. The last part of the programme is spent on a work placement to prepare clients for full-time work.

33. The integration of the various components of the awards motivates New Deal clients to achieve. This also happens on the basic employability programme, where the key skills materials prepared for trainees show them how to use evidence and experience from CLAIT to build up their key skills portfolios. Trainees and clients can see how learning is linked to different situations and awards, and are able to discuss this freely. Work-experience placements are selected to meet the needs of each trainee, and employers have excellent links with staff at the training centre. There is good communication among employers, staff and trainees and the experience gained is appropriate and leads to achievement of the targets. Trainees and clients' files are very well organised, with detailed information and records in

them. This ensures that all staff involved with trainees can see what they have been doing, and whether there are any circumstances which might affect their progress.

34. Basic skills support in literacy and numeracy is offered as a separate session with a tutor who is only available half a day each week. Other tutors support trainees where necessary, but do not have the specific experience and skills for this area of work. This means that those trainees who are identified as needing support in basic skills do not have access to a wide range of specialised training techniques to assist them in their overall programme. Some trainees do not attend the basic skills workshop, as they do not want to be seen as needing this special help. Staff keep individual records within their own training area, and there are regular staff meetings to review trainees' progress. There is, however, no overall system to record trainees and clients' progress towards all their milestones, including personal development targets. Trainees know that they are working towards a particular award, but are not fully aware of how much they have achieved, or their progress against their milestones and targets. Their progress is covered in individual review sessions, but trainees do not retain the information, as they have nothing in writing to refer to. The accommodation available for the foundation for work programmes is not suitable for the wide range of activities carried out, or for the numbers of trainees and clients in each group. The rooms are small with no windows, and space is cramped.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

35. BCTS has a specific equal opportunities statement which complements Broadland Council's policies. The statement was written in consultation with employers and staff. All staff, trainees and clients are required to commit formally to incorporate its principles in all their activities. The company implements its equal opportunities procedures, which comply with relevant legislation, and meets TEC contractual requirements. It monitors its staff, clients and trainees' gender, ethnicity and disability. The self-assessment report is accurate in its findings and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by BCTS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good reinforcement of equality of opportunity in induction and review
- ◆ good access to training programmes for disadvantaged trainees and clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ little targeting of under-represented groups

GOOD PRACTICE*The Prince's Trust*

Volunteer trainees had a brainstorming session on the meaning of equal opportunities. They then developed an equal opportunities policy statement and compared it with the company's policy. This activity provoked a breadth of discussion, and drew out issues and concerns which the group will continue to discuss during their programme.

36. Staff and management actively promote a culture of equality and tolerance. At the initial interview, trainees and clients are informed about the rights of everyone to be treated with mutual respect and fairness. The topic is revisited during induction, and later at monthly or quarterly reviews. Trainees and clients have a good awareness of procedures for complaints and the NVQ appeals procedure. They are confident that they have access to fair and reliable assessment. All trainees and clients have training programmes designed to accommodate their own individual needs. The ground floor of the training centre has good facilities for physically disabled people. The company has investigated the possibility of a lift within the building, but this has not proved to be feasible. The company has strong links with the Employment Service's disability advisors, who refer potential clients and trainees. Trainees and clients with different levels of ability and learning styles progress well together at their own pace. There is open access when applying to the training programmes for everyone who is referred.

37. An annual review system for equality of opportunity was initiated in early 1999. Prior to this, trends and anomalies had not been identified. Data on equality of opportunity are collated, and reflect the local community. The company has recently introduced a database which it hopes to use to analyse the results of monitoring the diversity of trainees. The provider has not targeted minority groups or challenged stereotypes. This is exemplified in the occupational area of equine studies, where there is a predominance of women. There has been some recent staff development in the form of equal opportunities workshops and awareness-raising sessions. Topics have included raising sensitivity to discriminatory language, regional bias, unintentional sexual stereotyping, and equal access to assessment. The results of this staff development have not yet been fully implemented across all of BCTS's activities.

Trainee support**Grade 2**

38. Trainees and clients are recruited through BCTS's network of links with external organisations (including the careers service, the Employment Service and employers) and through personal recommendation. Where appropriate, potential trainees and clients are referred to other providers for suitable training schemes. Potential trainees attend an initial interview, where basic skills and occupational understanding are assessed. Additional learning support needs are identified at this time. At this interview, trainees and clients meet their vocational trainer or assessor. They receive a trainees' handbook and candidate pack specific to each vocational training programme. Trainees are allocated a placement co-ordinator who selects their workplace, matched to each person's individual requirements. The self-assessment report is accurate in its findings, and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective in-depth reviews
- ◆ trainees' handbooks specific to occupational areas
- ◆ structured system for support and referral

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ outdated and inappropriate initial assessment

39. There is an effectively managed, comprehensive system of learning support for all participants. The company has good links with external agencies, educational establishments and other training providers. Trainees and clients with specific learning needs are clearly identified, and staff give appropriate support. The company offers excellent pastoral support, training and career guidance. Well-designed handbooks detail fully trainees' rights and the responsibilities of everyone at BCTS. Each vocational area has a good, specific candidate pack. These packs contain information about the programme laid out in a style which is easy for all trainees and clients to understand. Examples of standard documents are included, for example, on health and safety and equal opportunities. Each trainee has a regular review; the frequency depends on the trainee's programme but all are within the contractual limit. These reviews are used to discuss and record trainees and clients' progress within the NVQ units. Action plans are devised with the assistance of the employer where appropriate. Each review investigates any matter regarding equal opportunities. Any problems which might be detrimental to trainees or clients' progress are identified before they become a major issue. Any difficulties which do arise are addressed in a sensitive and appropriate manner. All support given to trainees at initial interview, induction, reviews and during training is clearly recorded. Documents for each occasion are standardised across all programmes. Managerial and staff responsibility is clear to everyone concerned, and systematically carried out.

40. All staff are fully involved in working with the trainees and clients to help them to achieve qualifications and gain employment. All assessors and trainers are working towards the key skills practitioner award. Although key skills are integrated into the vocational areas, there is no systematic method by which trainees and clients' initial level of knowledge and understanding is assessed. Trainees and clients often carry out insufficiently demanding tasks, or repeat work already covered in previous jobs or education. All trainees have an initial assessment of their basic skills, but the structure of this is often trivial and unrelated to modern terminology. For example, potential equine trainees are still asked questions in degrees Fahrenheit and pounds weight.

Management of training

Grade 1

41. The training centre manager reports directly to the chief executive of Broadland District Council, and has weekly meetings with him. The manager meets with the two senior training officers on a regular basis to discuss management issues, which are shared with staff through a series of meetings. Action-planning is carried out at all meetings. The current staff team comprises 29 people, including full-time, part-time and freelance staff. All full-time and part-time staff are employees of Broadland District Council, and are subject to the council's recruitment, appraisal and staff-development systems. All staff are treated the same. Their views are sought on issues relating to the development of the training centre, and they all have access to the same level of staff training and support. All staff have clear job descriptions and reporting lines. All new staff attend the council's main induction as well as the training centre's induction programme. There is an 'open-door' policy, and staff are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their senior training officer and the training centre manager. Broadland District Council is an Investor in People. Staff at all levels liaise with employers and outside agencies. Management information is collated monthly by the administration team, and passed to teams and individuals for meetings and forward planning. Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but did not agree with any of the weaknesses. The grade awarded was higher than that given by BCTS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly effective communication systems
- ◆ good external networking links
- ◆ well-structured appraisal and staff development
- ◆ accurate, current and widely used management information

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no significant weaknesses identified

42. The structure of communication systems starts with the weekly meeting between the training centre manager and the chief executive of Broadland District Council. There is a great deal of interest, support and commitment to the training centre shown by the council's chief executive, council officers, chairman and councillors, and it has a high profile within the council's activities, which ensures that it is part of a highly effective management system. The open style of management ensures that all staff are aware of any new developments, and that the senior management team is aware of any issues. The training centre manager meets regularly with the senior training officers to review targets and developments, and there are separate meetings to work on long-term planning. The senior training

GOOD PRACTICE

Good collaboration is demonstrated in this example.

The senior training officer in media and arts identified a need for the training providers involved in providing media and arts to share good practice.

Quarterly meetings have been established with four colleges in the area, with another about to join. The meetings offer professional support, occupational updating and increasing opportunities for trainees and students. The colleges are now using the training programme devised by the co-ordinator.

officers then meet with their staff teams to disseminate this information. There are also subject-area team meetings. Team co-ordinators meet regularly with their programme team to review trainees' progress and the programme. The administration team provides performance statistics for all these meetings, and individual trainers receive information on the planned targets for their trainees for the next month. This ensures that trainers are fully aware of the progress requirements for each trainee. Any problems in achieving the targets are discussed. Any identified needs are then met in order to enable trainees to achieve, or targets are amended. The company found that full staff meetings were not very useful, and now holds quarterly staff training days at the centre. At these events, all staff are updated and training is held on key issues. For example, the self-assessment process may be on the agenda for one day, and equal opportunities for another. Feedback from staff confirms that these training days are more useful than full staff meetings. There is also a system of sending regular memos to staff to update them on key issues. Notes are kept for all meetings; action plans are produced, and are well monitored. Employers and subcontractors have a handbook stating the organisation's values, policies and procedures; the handbook is constantly referred to. This information is supplemented by regular meetings with staff from the training centre and an annual open day.

43. There are excellent links with outside agencies to support the training and the personal development needs of trainees. A range of support services is available from Broadland District Council. All staff are encouraged to network with external organisations, and there are strong links with employers and vocationally specific groups. The company has set up and manages network meetings with the four colleges which provide media and art training in the area. This has opened up progression routes for trainees, and also acts as a recruitment process for those students at art college who can benefit more from the format of the training programme within the training centre. There is a structured and in-depth appraisal process which is linked to performance-related pay. Staff attend the council's appraiser or appraisee training as appropriate. There is ongoing monitoring of the appraisal process to ensure consistency. Appraisals take place twice a year, and are carried out by the training centre manager and the senior training officers. Any training needs are identified, and training is provided by either the training centre or the council. Part-time and freelance staff are paid for taking part in training. When the senior training officers started to carry out appraisals, some staff identified that they were losing the opportunity for a personal meeting with the manager. One-to-one sessions are now carried out with all staff to allow them a personal, private time with the manager. Feedback shows that this is valued by both staff and the manager. The overall management structure developed by the manager and senior training officers, and supported by the chief executive of Broadland District Council, ensures that all staff are involved in developing strategies and monitoring performance. This leads to an open and effective way of working, which helps trainees to progress.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

44. The company has a fully recorded quality assurance system, which incorporates self-assessment. Where relevant, council policies and procedures with which BCTS must comply have been adapted, or supporting statements annexed, to reflect training requirements accurately. The company meets the quality assurance requirements of the TEC and the awarding bodies. The quality assurance system is internally audited at specified intervals. Internal verification systems across all programmes are thorough. As a result of wide consultation among all staff involved in the training, including the subcontractors, standardised documents are used across all training programmes. The management consistently monitors the delivery of training. Analysis of information about early leavers from training programmes is not available. Inspectors identified additional strengths to those stated in the self-assessment report. The grade awarded was higher than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of standardised documents
- ◆ self-assessment firmly established in quality assurance systems
- ◆ robust internal verification systems
- ◆ good monitoring of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no analysis of early leavers
- ◆ weak monitoring of trainees and clients' destinations

GOOD PRACTICE

One of the training co-ordinators had a bad accident with a horse, necessitating immediate and lengthy time off work. The high-quality of recording and standardised documents used by BCTS meant that other members of staff were able to take over all matters regarding the training co-ordinator's group of trainees within 24 hours.

45. The company's quality assurance system incorporates clearly written policies and procedures which cover all aspects of training. Policies and procedures are well established and are clearly understood by all staff. Within this system are clearly identified procedures for staff appraisal, staff training and development for all those involved in the training process. The quality assurance system is subject to quarterly reviews, is computerised, simple to access and is networked to all staff. On induction, new staff are introduced to the quality assurance system. An up-to-date paper copy of the system is retained, although this is largely for use by the staff member responsible for co-ordination and maintenance of the system. This individual is also responsible for notifying staff of any changes to the quality assurance system. All staff are fully conversant with how the system operates, and those aspects for which they are responsible. Internal audit of the quality assurance system is conducted at specified intervals throughout the year; the results are recorded, and action is planned. Self-assessment is firmly established in the company's processes. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process; this extends to subcontractors, which are required to self-assess their own training in relation to BCTS's requirements. A consequence of this involvement by staff is that

standard documents relating to training have been introduced and are used across all programme areas, including the subcontracted training. This has ensured uniformity of approach in recording training activities. The self-assessment report is comprehensive, and fulfils all the requirements laid out in *Raising the Standard*. Full appendices are given on trainees' achievements across all areas of training, as well as details of placements.

46. An effective internal verification system operates across all programme areas. All assessors and internal verifiers have attained the appropriate assessor and internal verifier qualifications. Internal verification is well planned, and is conducted in line with the requirements of the Common Accord. Verification and sampling are systematic. Records of internal verification activities are clear, detailed and easy to follow. There is frequent formal and informal contact between internal verifiers and assessors to discuss assessment issues. Action planning regarding external verifiers' recommendations takes place immediately, to ensure that all issues raised are addressed. The company also monitors the care subcontractor's internal verification processes to ensure compliance with awarding body requirements.

47. The management monitors all aspects of training, and records are maintained. This is particularly evident within the internal verification system and the associated monitoring of the conduct of assessments. Feedback to assessors by internal verifiers following assessment is clear, formative and ongoing.

48. The company does not analyse information on early leavers. No data are available as to why trainees leave their programme prior to completion. Monitoring of trainees' destinations on completion of training is not consistent. As a result, this source of management information is not used to contribute to programme review and to the continuing improvement of support systems for trainees.