



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1999

# Chiltern Training Limited

## SUMMARY

Chiltern Training Limited provides good training in early years care and education. Trainees' achievement is high and they progress to higher qualifications and training. The provision for equal opportunities and trainee support is satisfactory, with every trainee valued as an individual and supported in achieving their qualification. However, equal opportunities is not well integrated with the NVQ, and individual training plans do not reflect the individual trainee's circumstances. Management of training and quality assurance are also satisfactory, with well co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training and good systems to enable effective feedback from employers. However, subcontractors are not well managed and quality assurance procedures do not cover all aspects of the company's business.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good achievement rates
- ◆ good progression
- ◆ value placed on trainees' individuality and experience
- ◆ effective procedures to reduce numbers of early leavers
- ◆ well co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent systems to elicit feedback from employers

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ over-reliance on written evidence in assessment
- ◆ equal opportunities poorly integrated into NVQ
- ◆ little detail on or individualisation of individual training plans
- ◆ no formal contract with some subcontractors
- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance arrangements

## INTRODUCTION

1. Chiltern Training Limited (Chiltern Training) is based in Reading and was established in 1994, primarily to offer work-based training for young people funded through Thames Valley Enterprise. Initially the company subcontracted training and assessment to a local college and an assessment centre registered with an appropriate awarding body. The managing director of Chiltern Training was primarily involved with marketing and recruitment of trainees. Since then the company has grown, and now Chiltern Training has become an independent company providing 80 per cent of the training for the programmes it offers, and all the assessment. The company no longer works with the college. The company has a complement of nine staff involved in the administration, teaching and assessment of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in early years care and education, key skills at level 2 and customer services at levels 2 and 3. All trainees are aged between 16 and 25 years and are mainly recruited from the Reading and Bracknell area of the Thames Valley. Chiltern Training has new offices and training rooms based in the centre of Reading and additional training rooms in Bracknell. They have a contract with Thames Valley Enterprise to provide training and assessment for modern apprentices and other work-based training programmes in early years care and education at NVQ levels 2 and 3. There are currently 89 trainees on other training programmes taking NVQs at level 2, and 52 modern apprentices taking NVQs at level 3 and key skills at level 2, making 141 trainees in total.

2. Currently, Reading has a population of 140,200, of whom 9.5 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The unemployment rate is 1.7 per cent, which is less than half the national average of 5.2 per cent. There are three men unemployed to every one unemployed woman. The service industry accounts for over 70 per cent of employment, which is forecast to rise to over 80 per cent in the next five years. Childcare provision locally has been in great demand as more women are employed. There are 32 nurseries in Reading. The growth in this provision has been very slow over the last few years, resulting in skills shortages. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 42.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent.

3. The Bracknell area has shown a decline in the manufacturing industry and a rise in employment within the service industries. There is a population of 250,000 across the Bracknell and Wokingham areas, with 1.7 per cent of people unemployed. The ratio of unemployment for men and women is the same as in Reading. Minority ethnic groups make up 2.8 per cent of the population. Seventy-two per cent of young people remain in education after the age of 16 and 88 per cent of school leavers achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above (Thames Valley Enterprise Labour Market Information 1998).

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Chiltern Training produced its first self-assessment report in June 1999. Self-assessment had involved all staff and was addressed through regular staff meetings. Key members of staff participated in specific training provided by Thames Valley Enterprise. The self-assessment report was very detailed and gave good background information about the development of the company, the training and work experience. Staff had identified strengths and weaknesses with reference to supporting evidence and included an action plan. The company had addressed some of the weaknesses in advance of the inspection and in two areas a higher grade was awarded than that given in the self-assessment report.

5. A team of two inspectors spent a total of eight days at Chiltern Training. They conducted 37 interviews with trainees, seven with Chiltern Training's staff and 15 with assessors/workplace supervisors and employers. One review was observed and 14 employers' sites were visited. They looked at trainees' records, portfolios, individual training plans, review documents, company policies and procedures, contracts and internal and external verification reports. They observed and graded three training sessions in health, care and public services and awarded two a grade 2 and one a grade 1.

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### **Health, care & public services**

#### **Grade 2**

6. Chiltern Training has a total of 141 trainees working towards early years care and education NVQs at levels 2 and 3. All trainees are between the ages of 16 and 25 years, with 89 on other work-based training programmes at NVQ level 2 and 52 modern apprentices undertaking NVQ level 3 and key skills at level 2. All trainees are employed. Placements for trainees are within a wide range of children's day care and education provision. All except the schools are registered with the local social services department under the *Children Act, 1989*, and many are registered with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) to receive funding for the education of four-year-olds. This gives an additional level of external scrutiny by making the workplaces open to inspection by other bodies. Chiltern Training is approved by an appropriate awarding body to deliver NVQs at levels 2 and 3, key skills at level 2 and customer services at levels 2 and 3. It also provides additional qualifications and training in first aid, food hygiene and basic health and safety. Assessment is largely carried out in the workplace by roving assessors and a few work-based assessors. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good achievement rates
- ◆ good progression
- ◆ excellent work placements
- ◆ excellent resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ flexible approach to off-the-job training

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ over-reliance on written evidence in assessment
- ◆ lack of work-based assessors
- ◆ poor integration of underlying principles of NVQ into assessment

7. Realistic targets which meet individual needs and aspirations are set with trainees when they join the programme. All trainees are encouraged to achieve their own potential. The achievement rate for 1998-99 was 78 per cent. On completion of the NVQ level 2, trainees are offered the opportunity to progress to level 3. Some do this immediately; others may take time out to gain more experience. This happens for all trainees except those with a special training need, then their circumstances are discussed and other options explored. During the programme, trainees are given advice and guidance about careers in childcare and further and higher education opportunities. Significant proportions of level 3 achievers, five in the last month, are now deputy managers.

8. Work placements are of good quality, provide a range of learning opportunities, and have good employment practices. They provide a full range of experiences for trainees. Trainees are given responsibility for organising events and activities, working as part of the staff team. They are often additional to the staff to child ratios required by the *Children Act, 1989*. Employers show real commitment to training of young people, and are aware of the NVQ requirements and the on- and off-the-job training links. Trainees gain a full experience of different age ranges, facilities and family structures.

9. The buildings at Reading and Bracknell are well laid out and decorated. The physical resources are of a high quality and provide a good learning environment for trainees. Group exercises, over head projectors, videos, white boards and flip charts are used throughout the programme, giving variety to the training sessions and covering a range of learning styles. Training materials and exercises are used in imaginative ways by training officers, fully involving the trainees and linking the theory to work activities. There is a good supply of books and videos for trainees to use as references in their written work. In addition to this, the trainers are occupationally experienced, so use this experience to set the training in context to help trainees make the links between what they do during off-the-job training and work.

10. The needs of individual trainees and workplaces are taken into consideration when planning their off-the-job training sessions. A range of options are available, including day release, Saturday mornings, evening sessions, distance learning and one-to-one support. Four groups of nurseries have appointed their own training managers to provide off-the-job training and assessment within the workplace. This decision was made after consultation with trainees within the nurseries. The managers are experienced practitioners, have assessor qualifications and some have internal verification qualifications. These arrangements are supported and monitored by the managing director of Chiltern Training.

11. Trainees are satisfied with the options available to them and are able to move between the options if their needs and preferences are not being met. One trainee was not satisfied with her training arrangements and her employer was not prepared to be flexible, so Chiltern Training's staff found her an alternative work placement and negotiated her preferred off-the-job training arrangements.

12. Trainees' portfolios contain far more written evidence than is required to ensure that the performance criteria, range and knowledge of the NVQ are covered. Methods of assessment include regular observation in the workplace by assessors, and reflective accounts produced by trainees with oral and written questioning from assessors recorded. Trainees are also required to undertake a number of written assignments for each NVQ unit. In addition to this, they are expected to produce evidence of workplace activities on a specific number of occasions. For example, in the unit concerned with observing children, trainees are expected to produce a written account of 10 observations at level 2 and an additional 35 at level 3. These procedures were approved by the external verifier of the previous awarding body. During the approval visit, the external verifier of the new awarding body commented about the amount of written evidence and suggested that this would need to change. Trainees commented that they could understand the importance of written work, but having to produce so much evidence is time consuming and is often difficult to do in the workplace. The expectation of a large amount of written evidence has an impact on the way off-the-job training is taught as sessions have to be structured to meet the requirements of the written work.

13. Most work-based assessment is undertaken by peripatetic assessors employed by the company. There are a number of active work-based assessors who are responsible for approximately 10 per cent of assessment. A number of work-based assessors have been trained to the NVQ requirements but they are not currently active. This is usually because of time pressures at work. The lack of assessors means that a large number of opportunities for assessing naturally occurring activities are missed.

14. The early years NVQs have a well defined set of basic principles which include confidentiality, welfare of the child, equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. It is clearly stated within the NVQ documents that these must be incorporated into the trainees' work practice throughout the assessment process. Each unit has an explanation of how it links with the underlying

principles. The portfolios sampled did not incorporate the principles into the evidence, particularly the equality of opportunity and child protection issues. Some evidence was contrary to good practice in relation to the principles. For example, in the communication unit at level 3, questions were asked about how to work with children with different needs, from a different ethnic background or with a speech impairment. The questions were answered in a basic way, without evidence of understanding of equality and diversity issues. There was no cross-referencing to the underlying principles or other NVQ units. The trainees had given adequate responses, but had not been pushed to consider any wider issues which might impact on their work. This has been recognised as a weakness by Chiltern Training, and now that training and assessment are carried out by its own staff instead of those of the subcontractor, this is being addressed.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

15. Chiltern Training has an equal opportunities policy and procedures, and a complaints procedure that meet legislative and contractual requirements and which are shared with trainees and employers. Careful monitoring of employers is carried out to ensure compliance with the policy. Both training sites provide access for people with mobility problems. Information on trainees' ethnic backgrounds, gender and whether they have a disability is collected using the MAYTAS management-information system, which is a computer software system provided by Thames Valley Enterprise. There is a designated member of staff responsible for equal opportunities. There are currently five trainees with additional learning needs and two men on programmes. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ value placed on trainees' individuality and experience
- ◆ good resources available for learning about equal opportunities

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no targeting in recruitment of under-represented groups
- ◆ equal opportunities poorly integrated into NVQ

16. Trainees are selected on the basis of a wish to work with children and individual ability, irrespective of gender, ethnic background or disability. The ability to work with children without putting the child or the trainee at risk is an important factor taken into consideration during the selection process. Once on the programme, trainees are treated as individuals and work placements are found regardless of any additional learning need, physical disability or personal difficulty. Employers are consulted about the suitability of a trainee, and great efforts are made to match the trainee to the placement. Support arrangements are

tailored to individual needs. For example, childcare has been arranged for a single parent, one-to-one help for a trainee with a learning disability and cultural differences are taken into consideration.

17. Throughout the programme, trainees' individual differences are valued and they are positively encouraged to participate in the most appropriate way for them. Also, the contribution they can make to the overall learning of other trainees on the programme is acknowledged. For example, one trainee is currently translating the company's mission statement and the trainees' handbook into Urdu to be used in recruitment specifically targeting that community.

18. At both training centres, a range of resources are available to help trainees develop their understanding of equality issues. For example, there are books available about equality in childcare, religious festivals and cultural needs. Individual arrangements are made for trainees who have a specific need or desire to develop their knowledge in particular subject areas.

19. The gender mix on the programme is predominantly female, with only two men and there are low numbers of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. To date, Chiltern Training has carried out no specific marketing to attract under represented groups from the community and has set no targets for this. This has been identified as a weakness by the company, and an action plan to address it has been introduced. However, this has not yet been put into action.

20. The basic principles of the early years NVQ are not well integrated into assessment. Equality of opportunity is a significant aspect of childcare provision, hence the requirement to integrate it into all aspects of the NVQ. There is little evidence of the trainees being encouraged to consider equal opportunities issues during their daily work. For example, if they are asked a question about nutrition for children, there is no exploration of suitable diet taking cultural differences into account. Off-the-job training sessions observed missed the opportunity to discuss equal opportunities issues, particularly with reference to people from different ethnic groups. For example, when discussing hormonal changes during pregnancy and the changes that can occur to skin colour, no reference was made to black people. Observations sampled in portfolios have little information about equal opportunities issues, and written work lacks the depth of understanding that is required by the NVQ standards.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

21. All staff are involved in supporting trainees during their time on the programme. The overall responsibility for trainee support rests with the managing director. Some trainees are referred to Chiltern Training by the careers service. They are interviewed and given a two-day practical assessment within a nursery. They may undertake this assessment at up to three nurseries before an appropriate one is found. Trainees are employed by the selected nursery. For some trainees, they join Chiltern Training after they have secured a job and then subsequently



join an appropriate NVQ programme. All trainees are given the opportunity to become familiar with the work placements before beginning the NVQ and an induction course is held which includes health and safety, equal opportunities, responsibilities, rights and an overview of the NVQ. A notice board has details of job vacancies in the area and a careers file is held in the Reading office with details of careers and further training available. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good one-to-one support from tutors, assessors and employers
- ◆ opportunities to gain other qualifications
- ◆ good guidance on progression
- ◆ effective procedures to reduce numbers of early leavers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little detail on, or individualisation of, individual training plans
- ◆ no recording of support arrangements for basic skills
- ◆ little initial assessment of basic and key skills

22. Support is given to trainees from their tutors, assessors, work colleagues and workplace supervisors. There are many opportunities for trainees to discuss their learning needs: during initial assessment, informally on an ongoing basis during work time and during off-the-job training. Formal reviews are held every 13 weeks when the work supervisor, tutor and trainee all have the opportunity to discuss and comment on progress. Reviews are recorded in writing and a copy is placed in the trainees' personal files. Trainees can look at their personal files at any time; however, a copy of the review document is not given to the work supervisor. In addition to reviews, trainees have the opportunity to speak to Chiltern Training's staff at any time by telephone or can make arrangements to meet them. Work and personal problems are discussed, although only work issues are recorded. If a trainee has a personal problem which the member of staff feels unqualified to deal with, the trainee is referred to local specialist counselling agencies. Tutors are clear about what problems fall within their remit and abilities.

23. Support arrangements for trainees with specific learning needs are discussed during the initial stages of their programme. A range of methods are in place to provide this support. For example, trainees with dyslexia have the opportunity to have a reader, a trainee with a learning disability is supported by a tutor on a one-to-one basis and a learning group was set up for trainees with basic skill needs with the help of specialist teaching. Trainees are given support to change their off-the-job training arrangements from day release to distance learning, or vice versa,

depending on their needs. Where this is not agreed on by the employer, trainees have been supported to find new work placements.

24. All trainees are given the opportunity to achieve a range of qualifications relevant to their work experience in addition to their NVQ. A certificated basic food hygiene course, paediatric first aid and customer service NVQs are available. The customer service NVQ is cross-referenced to the early years units and trainees do not need to produce any additional evidence. Trainees gain confidence, as well as more practical skills to be used at work, through the additional qualification offered.

25. Trainees are given advice and guidance by tutors about opportunities for progression from NVQ level 2 to 3, into employment and to further education. This is done on a one-to-one basis, focusing on the trainee's needs. A large proportion of trainees achieve both NVQ level 2 and 3 during their time on the programme, changing work placements, if necessary, to gain additional experience. Ninety-nine per cent of trainees are employed by the time they complete the programme. Trainees who wish to move on to further or higher education are given advice about routes to take, referred to appropriate agencies and supported to complete application forms. Two trainees are progressing to degree courses, with others exploring the possibility of a nursing career.

26. The company is actively identifying potential early leavers and working with them to devise action plans to either encourage them to stay on the programme or to find alternative training. The provider is involved in a pilot project with Thames Valley Enterprise to support early leavers in the most effective way. This involves referral to a person who acts as a central point of contact and who will interview the trainee at their employer's premises. Objective advice and guidance is given to the trainee about options available. Planned movement into new training or a different work placement can take place. This has led to more successful outcomes both for trainees, who would have otherwise dropped out of the programme, and for the employers who can then plan for a new trainee. In addition to this, Chiltern Training has its own arrangements to support early leavers. In the past, trainees have frequently left the programme early without discussing their problems or circumstances with anyone. Employers are now encouraged to contact the company if a trainee hands in their notice so that discussions can take place about options available. During reviews, any problems the trainee has are discussed, and throughout the programme trainees are encouraged to discuss any difficulties they are having with a tutor or reviewer. There are a number of examples of trainees being helped to find alternative work placements which are better suited to their specific needs.

27. All trainees have an individual training plan, which is a TEC requirement. However, these do not contain any information about arrangements for off-the-job training, NVQ unit target dates, additional qualification opportunities or any other information specific to the trainee. The document used is standard, so without the individual information, every training plan looks the same. There is little information about previous experience and achievements or any specific support

information. Where initial assessment information is recorded, it is very basic and gives no real indication of a trainee's abilities. Progress and achievements are not updated regularly.

28. The individual training plan has a section in which trainee support needs can be recorded. In the trainees' files sampled, this was not filled in, even though detailed support mechanisms have been put in place for a number of trainees. Arrangements for additional one-to-one training, extra tuition, a reader and other support are not recorded.

29. The initial assessment procedure was formalised in June 1999. Prior to this, assessment of basic and key skills was undertaken by the recruiting officer without an agreed system. Prospective trainees were simply interviewed by the recruiting officer, who would make a judgement on the candidate's level of ability in basic and key skills. This was subjective and based only on verbal evidence. A diagnostic tool is now used for literacy and numeracy skills, but this is used without any marking or assessment criteria, so the interpretation of the results is at the discretion of the recruiting office. Other key skills are assessed during the interview process, again without any specific criteria.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

30. Chiltern Training has policies and procedures relating to many aspects of their work. An annual business plan is produced. Staff development relates to the company's aims and links to the company's business plan. Staff roles and responsibilities are clear and lines of accountability are written up and explained to all staff, employers and trainees. There are individual job descriptions. Training staff are appropriately qualified, and assessors in both the workplace and those employed by Chiltern Training are occupationally qualified and experienced. The company makes use of the MAYTAS computer system provided by Thames Valley Enterprise to record trainees' details, including ethnicity, disability status and gender. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given through self-assessment.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ open, consultative management arrangements
- ◆ excellent co-operative relationships with external agencies
- ◆ well co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some unrecorded procedures
- ◆ no formal contract with some subcontractors

31. Staff and trainees have lots of opportunities to discuss concerns or raise issues with both the managing director and other senior staff. Staff are confident in their

roles and about their responsibilities and talk positively about new initiatives and developments. The offices are in a central location, and trainees are encouraged to visit to meet tutors and other staff, to make suggestions for change and to use the resources available. Discussion about company developments is open, and trainees and employers are kept informed and invited to comment. The company responds rapidly to concerns raised.

32. There is a lot of co-operative work with employers and external agencies. The company makes great efforts to enable trainees to get maximum support, and liaises closely with social services departments, counselling services and the benefits agency. It is involved in initiatives that impact on childcare provision locally and have good professional contacts. Information is shared through its regular contact with employers and between trainees and company staff during weekly off-the-job training sessions and through visits to the workplace.

33. There is well co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training. The NVQ units are closely linked to work experience, and trainees and employers are aware of the theory behind their everyday practice working with young children. Where trainees are in nurseries in which they are unlikely to get experience required for their NVQ, the company makes alternative arrangements for the necessary period of time to enable a broad learning experience. An example of this was the case of one trainee who was based in a primary school but who wanted to achieve the unit covering the care of babies. She was placed in a full-day-care nursery during the school summer holidays, working in the baby unit. Her assessment was arranged during this period, and she went back to her regular job when the holidays were over and the NVQ assessment completed. Trainees are excited and enthusiastic about their training. Employers are aware of the value of off-the-job training, the added interest that is generated at work by trainees and the influence this has on all their staff as a team.

34. Chiltern Training has many written policies and procedures, but there are gaps in the recording of all the company's activities. The flexible and well-tailored training arrangements are not written down and this can lead to inconsistencies in practice. Potential work placements and trainees are not necessarily made aware of the alternative models for the delivery of training and assessment, and so are not given the opportunity to choose what may work best for them.

35. Chiltern Training's original arrangement for training and assessment to be provided by a subcontractor had no formal contract. Chiltern Training's management of this contract led to a breakdown in relationships in July 1998 and subsequent concerns over the delivery of off-the-job training and assessment. Certificates were held up for trainees in December 1998 subject to an investigation of the subcontractor and not released until the following Spring. Chiltern Training made great efforts to ensure that trainees were not adversely affected by the problems, and recruited their own tutors and assessors to enable trainees to achieve. Many of the trainees caught up in this change of training practice have now achieved their NVQs and progressed to a higher level and/or full employment. Chiltern Training now has no subcontracted provision and delivers the assessment

and training itself. It is establishing its own assessment centre with an appropriate awarding body and has so far achieved scheme approval, awaiting full registration.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

36. Chiltern Training has some quality assurance arrangements and these cover many aspects of the company's work. It is developing an auditing procedure which is already being used for many administrative systems. It complies with the requirements of Thames Valley Enterprise and is audited on a regular basis. Self-assessment has been used as a quality assurance tool and has resulted in reviews of the company's procedures. Data on performance are collected. Actions to improve training are discussed both formally and informally with employers and trainees and agreed on at staff meetings. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ commitment to continuous improvement
- ◆ excellent systems to elicit feedback from employers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ internal verification and assessment procedures not fully implemented

37. All staff have recently attended training on quality assurance and are contributing to the company's improvement plans. Recent changes in the company's training and assessment arrangements have been made as a direct result of concerns about training given by subcontractors. The tutors and assessors have been working together to develop new systems and approaches to training and the whole staff team are excited and enthusiastic about the proposals for change. Being a small company, there is a lot of informal contact and discussion about the work, and the staff are actively involved in gathering information from employers and trainees and incorporating their views into new arrangements.

38. The company has developed arrangements for systematic feedback from employers about Chiltern Training's role and responsibilities, and the off-the-job training and assessment arrangements provided. There is a document for employers to fill in at the same time as trainees have their review, every 13 weeks, in which the employer is invited to comment on the management aspect of the training. Changes to procedures have been made as a result of this information. Also, the company has regular meetings with employers, which are often combined with social events to encourage participation. These are very well attended and result in good communication and networking. Open debate is encouraged, and concerns and successes are discussed and programmes amended as required. Employers are kept well informed of any changes, particularly so when Chiltern Training was moving away from using a subcontractor, and

employers contributed to the debate on Chiltern Training's future. Employers attend events collectively to celebrate trainees' successes, and a real sense of closeness and belonging has developed. The database developed to track trainees who have completed their training has detailed information about destinations and outcomes for trainees. Reunions are organised to encourage trainees to maintain contact with the company and to market additional training. Chiltern Training asks trainees to evaluate training sessions. Records are kept of the trainees' responses and the comments are collated and analysed. Improvements are discussed by the staff and changes are made accordingly. These details are recorded at staff meetings.

39. The quality assurance arrangements are not yet fully developed and there are some areas where different approaches developed by tutors/assessors lead to inconsistencies. For example, the tracking of NVQ achievement is organised differently by each tutor/assessor. A new system has just been developed and is being implemented by a few staff. The company has recently severed links with a subcontracted training provider and is undertaking all training itself. The procedures for delivering training have yet to be put in writing although there are quality assurance arrangements in place.

40. The previously used assessment centre had had its certification suspended on two occasions. The investigation into poor assessment and internal verification practice was lengthy, and certification was held up for six months. This resulted in the new assessment centre being established and the company has received scheme approval from the awarding body. The procedures being used are appropriate and meet the awarding body's requirements. As a new centre, standardisation meetings for assessors have yet to take place and no internal verification has yet been completed. The systems are there, but have not been tested.

41. Self-assessment was taken very seriously by Chiltern Training as a quality assurance measure, and the company was already well ahead in addressing its action plan by the time of inspection. This meant that inspectors were able to award higher grades for both health, care and public services and for quality assurance as improvements were already evident. The self-assessment report was found to be accurate for all other areas.