



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT AUGUST 1999

CANTO Limited

SUMMARY

CANTO (Career and New Training Opportunities) Limited offers training in foundation for work. The programme, catering for adults, is focused on helping to introduce or reintroduce trainees to work. It offers a good programme, which is a mixture of education, life skills, career and work-skills training. Trainees are comprehensively supported and are encouraged to develop personal as well as team-building skills. The regularity of trainees' reviews, and subsequent record keeping, is excellent. Training is managed satisfactorily. At the time of the first inspection there was no quality assurance system, but progress has now been made in the development and implementation of a system. However, monitoring and evaluation are not fully effective and some aspects of the company's work are not covered by relevant procedures.

As a result of the reinspection of CANTO, the original published report text for the area which has been reinspected, has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	1
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-motivated and -qualified staff
- ◆ excellent support for trainees
- ◆ excellent teamwork by staff
- ◆ high level of personal counselling for trainees
- ◆ appropriate system devised to obtain trainees' feedback

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor staff development and appraisal
- ◆ written procedures do not cover all aspects of company's work

INTRODUCTION

1. CANTO Limited is a non-profit-making company based in Northampton. The ethos of the company is to help trainees to improve their personal situation and enhance their position in life. The company can provide training facilities for up to 50 adults, aged between 18 and 59, with learning difficulties and disabilities. The company's definition of learning difficulties and disabilities covers trainees with minor physical disabilities, emotional disability, lack of literacy and numeracy skills, lack of confidence and long-term unemployment resulting in individuals' giving up hope of finding work or simply losing the routine of going out to work. The company's aim is for trainees to be introduced or re-introduced to the world of work.

2. The company operates from one site, comprising four workshops, five teaching rooms, a warehouse, a management room and a production office. The company started in 1992, initially with trainees under the Employment Action Programme funded by the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE). Currently, its contract with Northamptonshire CCTE is to recruit 15 trainees for work-based training for adults and 30 for prevocational work-based training for adults. There are 27 trainees on the programme at present.

3. The company offers full-time training in foundation for work, which includes a workshop training programme. The company has contracts with manufacturers to complete packing and light assembly work. It also gives some trainees experience in warehouse operation.

4. CANTO employs two full- and three part-time staff (two of whom work extra hours as volunteers). There are also four volunteers.

5. Unemployment in Northamptonshire, in July 1997, stood at 3.6 per cent. However, when levels of long-term unemployment were analysed, it was noted that the worst problem of long-term unemployment could be seen in Northampton, where a third of those unemployed had been out of work for more than 12 months. It was also noted that there were pockets of high unemployment in certain parts of Northampton, where overall unemployment can reach 16 per cent, with unemployment of men at 22 per cent. CANTO has 13 men and two women on programme. The number of Northamptonshire school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 42.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 53 per cent, for 1997. Minority ethnic groups comprise 3.6 per cent of the local population.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. CANTO Limited produced its first self-assessment report for the original inspection. Self-assessment was carried out according to the Council's framework and the report followed a format supplied by an external consultant. The report identified some strengths which are no more than contractual standard practice and some weaknesses. Following inspection, the company produced an action plan which addressed both the strengths and weaknesses. It also carried out a second annual self-assessment which includes an updated action plan. Overall, the strengths and weaknesses were accurate, as was the grade indicated in the report. However, the weaknesses were lengthy and largely descriptive.

7. During the first inspection a team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at CANTO during September 1998. Inspectors met all the trainees on the programme and interviewed 10 of them. They also interviewed all the full- and part-time staff, two employers and three past trainees. Inspectors observed three training sessions, one trainee's assessment and a trainee's review. Documents examined included trainees' individual participation plans, records of trainees' reviews, minutes of meetings, audit reports and contract documents.

8. Reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors for a total of four days in August 1999. They interviewed four members of staff, one trainer, one trainee and a work supervisor. They examined documents relating to quality assurance, including the procedures manual, training plans, subcontractors' agreements and management-information systems.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Foundation for work

Grade 2

9. CANTO deals solely with adults who require training and extra support before introduction to employment. Trainees are on either the work-based training for adults programme or a prevocational programme. Each trainee is offered a work-skills training programme which tries to mirror a normal working environment. Trainees are able to practise different work skills in a supportive environment. For those who require it, there is an educational programme to help to develop literacy, numeracy and social skills. When it is evident that trainees are ready for work, they progress to a careers programme which helps them to define their preferred work area and to develop the skills needed to secure a job. Where possible, work trials of one or two weeks' duration are arranged, after which trainees return to the centre or, in most cases, are offered full-time employment by the employer. Many trainees are with the company for several months, as they move from one programme to another. Some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were confirmed, and further strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors confirmed the grade proposed.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ carefully chosen work placements
- ◆ individual and team achievement celebrated at weekly meeting
- ◆ realistic working environment
- ◆ good-quality teaching and learning
- ◆ variety of training methods used
- ◆ training planned to meet individuals' needs

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ opportunities to involve trainees in action-planning and target-setting are missed
- ◆ lack of opportunity to achieve nationally accredited qualifications
- ◆ poor teaching and learning resources

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees are encouraged to use artwork as a form of therapy. A group of trainees asked whether it could decorate the activities room walls with a mural depicting a journey through life. It was given permission to do this. This gave the trainees the opportunity to work in a team and to be creative, while developing their artistic talent.

10. CANTO has contracts with several manufacturers to pack goods. The company has worked hard to simulate a realistic working environment, where results have to meet commercial standards. Trainees are grouped into four teams in the workshops and are together long enough to build a team spirit. Trainees who show potential are encouraged to become team leaders or supervisors, and the necessary training in supervision of work, quality and team motivation is given.

11. A register of over 150 work skills is kept, which describes the various production skills. Trainees are assessed at least once a week on the performance of their skills, and records are kept for discussion in reviews. Although the work provided and the set-up of the workshop is realistic, trainees are not expected to work at commercial levels immediately. Account is taken of their disabilities and they are encouraged in a supportive way to gradually improve to the desired level. An employer, sympathetic to the needs of trainees, is used for a work-trial when trainees ready for work.

12. A joint trainee and staff meeting is held weekly. At this meeting, achievement is celebrated through individual trainees being presented with any certificates which they have gained. Once a month, a 'team of the month' certificate is awarded. Trainees find this rewarding and motivating.

13. Trainees' programmes are planned to suit their individual needs, so that they can, if appropriate, follow an educational and careers programme, as well as developing work skills. A review is held in their fourth week to confirm targets. The needs and capabilities of trainees vary a great deal, and trainers tend to lead target-setting, instead of encouraging those trainees, who are able, to take on a more active role in target-setting and reviewing their progress.

14. Training is delivered on an individual basis, in groups and on the job. The quality of training and resultant learning is good. CANTO has designed its own in-house qualifications in numeracy, literacy and workshop supervision, for which trainees are assessed and given certificates. No nationally recognised qualifications are offered in house, although these would be suitable for some trainees. There are limited opportunities for some trainees to take numberpower, wordpower and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) at a local further education college. Two trainees are taking additional qualifications at the college.

15. Resources are well developed and appropriately used by trainers, but some need updating and some are in poor condition and poorly presented. There is a shortage of even the most basic stationery resources, such as trainees' files. There are no computers or specialist materials which could help those with specific learning difficulties. The accommodation is kept tidy and clean, but it is in need of some repair and updating. Many of the rooms are decorated by trainees and clearly show their ownership.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

16. The company has an equal opportunities policy, and staff and trainees are made aware of it during the induction process. Data are collected which detail the gender, ethnicity and information about the disability of all trainees. The company has links with minority ethnic committees in the local area. Staff representatives attend meetings of the South Northants Vocational Development Group, which reviews the training needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors identified more weaknesses than were in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good links with community support organisations
- ◆ specialised course in assertiveness for female trainees
- ◆ strong equal opportunities culture among staff and trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ limited disabled access
- ◆ lack of procedures to support equal opportunities policy
- ◆ no analysis of data on ethnicity, gender or disability

17. The company demonstrates a strong commitment to equal opportunities by sending staff to a variety of committees and meetings run by external agencies. An

example of this is the company's membership of a project set up to find ways of increasing participation in vocational training for people from minority ethnic groups. So far, this has not increased participation from these groups.

GOOD PRACTICE

Achievement is celebrated at a weekly meeting of all trainees and staff. The week is ended by a meeting, at which news and information are exchanged. Trainees who have achieved a certificate are awarded at this meeting. The production-team-of-the-month certificate is also awarded.

18. The company regularly runs assertiveness courses for all trainees. The provision of assertiveness training for women trainees is further evidence of practical action to further the equality of opportunity. In addition, a member of staff recently attended a one-day conference on, and wrote a report for colleagues about, issues related to disability.

19. The company's equal opportunities policy is not supported by formal procedures to ensure its implementation. For example, there are no procedures for staff recruitment and selection or for dealing with harassment or grievance. Nonetheless, instances of racial and sexual harassment, which had occurred in the past, have been dealt with effectively.

20. The company is able to provide comprehensive data on the gender, ethnicity and disabilities of its clients. At present, these data have not been analysed, but this weakness was acknowledged in the self-assessment report, and action to remedy the situation is planned.

21. There is no access to upper floors for trainees with mobility difficulties, and there are no lavatory facilities for those with disabilities.

Trainee support

Grade 1

22. CANTO provides support to trainees at every stage of recruitment and training. This support continues after completion of training, if trainees need advice and guidance. Prospective trainees have an initial interview at which training needs and the company's programmes are explained. Trainees are invited to attend an induction programme, during which they are shown around the premises. They are introduced to staff and other trainees and made aware of health and safety requirements, fire evacuation procedures and the equal opportunities policy. Inspectors found more strengths than were identified in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous assessment procedures
- ◆ weekly reports and three-monthly reviews
- ◆ preparation for work tailored to trainees' needs
- ◆ individual counselling available
- ◆ extra mural activities to develop social and life skills
- ◆ allocation of a key worker to each trainee

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor accreditation of trainees' previous experience
- ◆ no formal system for written feedback after three-monthly review

23. There are high levels of support for trainees on the programme. Trainees are monitored frequently, and thorough records are kept. After an initial interview, an individual participation plan (IPP) is written. During the first two to three weeks' training, three members of staff will carry out independent assessments of trainees' training and development needs. At the end of this period, staff meet to report to one another on the assessment results and trainees' progress so far. Adjustments are made to the IPP at this stage. Staff compile weekly reports in each area of a trainee's programme. Trainees benefit from the allocation of a key worker who is responsible for monitoring their progress. Problems are identified and reports made, on trainees' progress, at weekly management meetings.

24. At three-monthly intervals, trainees have a review of progress, at which they are encouraged to feed back their view of the programme and share any concerns. Following the review, a detailed report is completed which is kept on file, but there is no formal system for feedback to trainees. In preparing trainees for work, the company ensures that trainees enter the careers programme when they are ready.

25. Trainees benefit from the confidential counselling service offered by members of CANTO's staff, three of whom are qualified counsellors. Staff are also committed to developing trainees' social and life skills and provide a wide range of extra mural activities, including visits for groups of trainees to go to the library, theatre and social events, often outside working hours.

26. It was recognised in the self-assessment report that staff have problems identifying and accrediting trainees' previous experience and level of achievement. So, trainees starts a programme with the company, they are subject to a rigorous assessment procedure.

Management of training

Grade 3

27. CANTO has a clear mission statement, understood and owned by staff. Staff have clearly defined roles which reflect their specialist backgrounds and experience. Volunteers are engaged to assist with the educational programme. They are carefully selected and have professional qualifications. Information is shared at formal weekly management meetings which have a set core agenda, but other items can be added as required. Actions are agreed on and followed through. Some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were agreed on by inspectors. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors confirmed the grade awarded in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ weekly management meetings
- ◆ roles and responsibilities clearly understood
- ◆ staff working as a team in a co-operative and effective manner
- ◆ the mission of the company is actively promoted

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic review of staff development and training needs
- ◆ limited use of information and data from external bodies to inform planning
- ◆ poor staff appraisal

28. Staff work well together as a team, for the benefit of the trainees, and support each other. Communication among staff is good, through both formal and informal channels. Information is consolidated in weekly management meetings. Staff are involved in the planning and direction which the company is taking.

29. Each member of staff is responsible for an area of the training programme. They are encouraged to develop their area of work and to discuss, at management meetings, what they are planning. Full use is made of the staff's experience and skills.

30. The company's mission is actively promoted both within the company and with outside organisations. When work-trial placements are being negotiated, the ethos of the company, the type of trainees seeking placements and the amount of support which would be necessary are all made clear to prospective employers. The company will not use employers which are unsympathetic to the needs of the trainee. Employers are invited to visit the company and talk to staff and trainees.

31. There is no systematic review of the staff's training and development needs. Most training is done as and when required. The company has realised that it lacks a fully operational appraisal system – it is in the process of developing one.

32. Management of training is centred on maintaining the status quo. Use is not made of external agencies and other relevant data, which could be helpful in planning the future development of the organisation.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

33. Since the first inspection, the chief executive has carried out a review of the quality assurance arrangements and has devised procedures covering many aspects of the company's work. By the time of the reinspection, considerable improvements had been made, including access through subcontractors to

externally validated qualifications. A formal agreement has been developed and implemented to ensure the quality of these arrangements.

The main weaknesses identified at the first inspection were:

- ◆ no formal quality system in place
- ◆ trainees' outcomes not analysed
- ◆ trainees' views not used to inform the development of training schemes
- ◆ no external qualifications available to trainees

34. Action has now been taken to address these weaknesses. Additional strengths were identified during reinspection, one of the main changes being the involvement of more staff and trainees in quality assurance developments. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the updated self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective consultative group for trainees
- ◆ systematic action-planning process
- ◆ comprehensive recording and analysis of destinations

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete written procedures
- ◆ no systematic monitoring and evaluation of quality assurance procedures

35. Since the first inspection, where it was identified that trainees' views were not sought, a consultative group for trainees has been set up. Trainees' views on their programme are now sought through monthly committee meetings. The chief executive attends the meetings to discuss issues and, where necessary, ensures that prompt action is taken. This method of getting feedback from the trainees is particularly suitable, as many have literacy problems and do not respond to questionnaires. At the first inspection, quality assurance was a regular agenda item for management meetings. CANTO now also has a quality assurance group which meets quarterly. These meetings are minuted and all actions are fed into the company's action plan.

36. After writing an initial action plan to address its strengths and weaknesses, the company has developed the process further and action-planning is now a central feature of its quality assurance work. The action plan is transferred into a diary format, which is permanently on view to all members of staff, is continually updated and reviewed by the management group. At the first inspection, the outcomes of training programmes were not analysed. There is now a comprehensive system showing the progression and final destination of trainees. The percentage of leavers progressing to employment has risen from 39.6 per cent in 1997-98 to 45 per cent in 1998-99.

37. The company has completed its second cycle of self-assessment and regards the whole process as being central to continuous improvement. The compilation of the second report involved more members of staff and drew upon feedback from trainees. The first self-assessment report and the inspection report were used as a basis on which to build.

38. At the time of the first inspection, there was no formal quality assurance system. There has been considerable improvement and the company has developed quality assurance policies and procedures. However, the procedures do not cover all aspects of the company's work. For example, the equal opportunities policy has been updated but it is not supported by comprehensive procedures. The company has not yet established how to systematically monitor and evaluate its systems and how to assess the improvement of its service to trainees.