



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT APRIL 2000

BOSCO Centre

SUMMARY

The BOSCO Centre serves some of the most disadvantaged and disengaged young people in the local community. Its pre-vocational and vocational training programme, the Diamond Project, offers good training in business administration and foundation for work. Business administration and information technology trainees receive well-planned training and experience good work placements. The foundation for work programme offers good training in information technology and a highly effective personal development programme but does not have sufficient resources to support basic skills training. The BOSCO Centre consistently promotes equality of opportunity and is effective in targeting and supporting disadvantaged young people. Support for trainees is good, particularly regarding pastoral care. Management of training and quality assurance are satisfactory. The BOSCO Centre has established effective working relationships with work-placement providers but has no operational plan to support long-term planning for future training developments. Quality assurance procedures are still being developed, but continuous improvement in training is apparent.

GRADES

| OCCUPATIONAL AREAS | GRADE |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Business administration | 2 |
| Foundation for work | 2 |

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured administration training
- ◆ good information technology training programmes and resources
- ◆ good retention and progression rates in foundation for work
- ◆ effective personal development programmes
- ◆ effectively targeted recruitment of disadvantaged young people
- ◆ high levels of trainee support
- ◆ excellent counselling and advice
- ◆ good communication with work placement providers
- ◆ systematic evaluation of trainees' feedback

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no mechanisms to track progress and achievement within NVQs
- ◆ insufficient literacy and numeracy resources
- ◆ insufficiently developed complaints procedure
- ◆ insufficient recording of support given
- ◆ no operational plan
- ◆ ineffective deployment of staff
- ◆ no overall framework for quality assurance
- ◆ little systematic target setting

INTRODUCTION

1. The BOSCO Centre is a registered charity established in 1984 to work with disadvantaged young people and their families in east and southeast London. The centre runs a programme of education and leisure activities for children and young people, which includes childcare, after-school clubs and holiday schemes, based at its premises in Rotherhithe in the borough of Southwark. The BOSCO Diamond Project was established as a pilot in November 1996 to provide training for young people in Rotherhithe, focusing on those who have become disengaged from learning and have challenging behaviour. The centre aims to support young people in the development of greater self-confidence, to help them acquire employability skills and to progress towards employment and independence. The Project has been funded by Focus Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) since September 1998.

2. The BOSCO Centre manages and gives work-based training for young people under the age of 25, within the Diamond Project. It contracts with the TEC to provide training through the Learning Gateway and work-based training for young people. Programmes are offered within the occupational areas of business administration, childcare and foundation for work. All off-the-job training is given at the training centre in Rotherhithe, South London. There are 30 young people receiving government-funded work-based training. Of these, nine are following a foundation for work programme, 16 are working towards a business administration or an information technology qualification, four are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in childcare and one is on the Learning Gateway following a foundation for work programme. There were sufficient numbers of trainees to be inspected only in business administration (including information technology) and foundation for work.

3. The BOSCO Diamond Project employs a total of eight paid staff. It is managed by a director and has seven full-time staff, one part-time tutor, a student on a work-placement and two volunteers.

4. Employment forecasts predict that the growth in the number of jobs in the central London area will continue, driven by the continued expansion of the business services sector. Employment in Southwark is dominated by particular sectors of employment. Of all employed Southwark residents, 21 per cent work in the business services sector, 13 per cent are employed in wholesale and retail and 10 per cent work in transport and distribution. Opportunities in lower skilled occupations continue to decline. Unemployment in Southwark is 9 per cent, more than twice that of London as a whole. The rate in Rotherhithe is 11.7 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 24 per cent of the local population.

5. Southwark is ranked eighth in the index of deprivation compiled by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). In spite of some recent improvements, the borough profile continues to show high levels of risk



factors for social exclusion. More than 40 per cent of children grow up in lone-parent families and 42 per cent grow up in homes in which there is no working adult. At least 60 per cent of adults are dependent on benefits.

6. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 29.5 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. The BOSCO Centre completed its self-assessment report in September 1999 and updated it in January 2000. The director and a staff member participated in training on self-assessment offered by the Department for Education and Employment DfEE in Sheffield. All staff members and the management committee contributed to self-assessment. Staff responsible for specific aspects of the training programme completed the self-assessment for that section of the report. Awareness-raising sessions were held with staff and drafts of the report were circulated for comment. In reaching the judgements, a variety of sources were used including: evaluation of trainees' feedback, interviews with staff and trainees; observation of training, and analysis of quantitative data. The inspection team agreed with many of the strengths in the self-assessment report but considered others to be no more than normal practice. Many of the weaknesses identified by the inspection team were not identified in the self-assessment report.

8. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at the BOSCO Centre in April 2000. Inspection covered the management and provision of work-based training for young people in the occupational areas of business administration and foundation for work. All management and administration procedures are carried out at the charity's premises in Rotherhithe, where inspectors viewed documents, including trainees' personal files, achievement and progression data, TEC contracts, audits by external agencies and management information. Visits were made to four work placements. Interviews were held with 24 trainees and 16 trainees' portfolios were reviewed. The inspection team interviewed 10 members of the centre's staff. They observed seven training sessions. The grades awarded for these sessions are given in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

| | GRADE 1 | GRADE 2 | GRADE 3 | GRADE 4 | GRADE 5 | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Business Administration | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 |
| Foundation for work | | 3 | 2 | | | 5 |
| Total | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 7 |

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 2

9. There are 16 trainees on work-based training programmes for young people in this occupational area. Of these trainees, two are following both an NVQ at level 2 in administration and an NVQ at level 2 in using information technology. Of the remaining 14 trainees, eight are following an NVQ at level 2 in administration, four are completing an NVQ at level 1 in using information technology and one is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in using information technology. One trainee

has started work towards an NVQ at level 2 in installing and supporting information technology, although the BOSCO Centre is still awaiting scheme approval from the awarding body. All information technology trainees taking level 1 follow a full-time in-house training programme. All trainees taking level 2 NVQs are on work placements either at the centre or with local employers and attend the training centre one day a week for off-the-job training sessions. Assessments are carried out in the workplace using observation, witness testimonies and documentary evidence. Trainees are encouraged to improve their key skills, and their literacy and numeracy skills to level 2, and their employment or work-placement prospects through the job-search programme. The self-assessment report identified 11 strengths and two weaknesses. The inspectors found that many of these strengths were no more than normal practice while others were more relevant to the generic aspects of the report. Inspectors agreed with three strengths and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the BOSCO Centre's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured and -taught administration training
- ◆ good information technology training resources
- ◆ frequent opportunities for trainees to discuss progress and training
- ◆ good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no timescales set for achievement during assessment
- ◆ no mechanism to track trainees' progress and achievement

POOR PRACTICE

The accommodation used for administration training is not conducive to learning. The room provides access to other classrooms and is also used as a corridor by staff and trainees while training is in progress. Training sessions are subject to frequent interruptions and a high level of background noise.

10. Administration training is well structured and taught in a classroom setting. It is designed in modules around individual learning aims, and trainees can begin at different starting points depending on their previous experience. Individual sessions have clear objectives linked to the units and elements of the NVQ. Training sessions draw on trainees' experience in the workplace, focus on how they can improve their performance and competence in the workplace and examine trends within the occupation. As well as being occupationally relevant, the modules also focus on issues of interest to young people. Sessions incorporate the latest information on health and safety and the data protection act, and give trainees the responsibility to research specific areas. All training is taught in small groups and involves the trainees fully. The sessions are flexible and enable trainees to work at their own pace, taking account of the different levels within the group. There are two tutors, so trainees are able to receive one-to-one support when necessary.

11. The centre has two well-equipped, spacious training rooms for information technology training. All the computers in one training room are networked. The centre has recently invested in new computers which it also plans to network.

Trainees have access to a range of up-to-date software packages in common use within modern office environments, including desktop-publishing packages. Each trainee has access to an individual workstation in an attractive workshop environment. Trainees work on their allocated tasks at their own pace. During these individual training sessions, they have access to two members of staff who provide one-to-one information technology skills coaching. Trainees are well supported and are able to make good progress. Trainers use a range of well-produced handouts, magazines, manuals and CD-ROM packages. These resources are accessible to all trainees and are well used by them.

12. Trainees are encouraged to identify their development needs through devising personal development plans. In consultation with staff, trainees draw up action plans from their development plan and monitor their performance in achieving their goals. They have frequent opportunities to discuss their performance and progress with staff. Trainees regularly seek feedback on work completed and respond positively to trainer's comments on their performance. The trainer provides frequent feedback, during reviews and during training sessions, on their performance and suggestions as to how they can improve. Trainees are given further opportunities to influence their training through informal discussions with the trainer and the director of the centre.

13. On completion of the NVQ in information technology at level 1, trainees choose the NVQ they will pursue at level 2. The provider is supportive and responsive to the views and aspirations of the trainees. For example, trainees have expressed an interest in working towards the NVQ in installing and supporting information technology. The provider has agreed to this request and is now awaiting scheme approval from an awarding body so that the trainees can be accommodated. Trainees are able to transfer between NVQs if they find that their original choice is not the most appropriate to their work placements.

14. The work placements arranged by the centre are of high quality and give trainees access to the most recent occupational trends and work practices. They are flexible and are arranged to suit the needs and abilities of trainees. For instance, some are for two days each week. Work-placement providers offer trainees a range of opportunities to enhance their competence so that they not only succeed in achieving their NVQs but also improve their employability. Some trainees have been offered permanent employment by work-placement providers. Several have employed trainees before they have completed their NVQs and have approached the centre to offer further work-placement opportunities in their companies. Workplace supervisors provide valuable support to their trainees and play an important role in encouraging trainees to improve their performance and achieve competence. Only those trainees on level 2 NVQ programmes have work placements, so there are not many trainees in work placements at any one time.

15. Tasks and targets are agreed following assessment in the workplace or the centre but dates for their achievement are not set as part of this process. Assessments are carried out at the centre through assignments and projects and in the workplace through observation of performance, witness testimonies and

evidence of competence using records of work completed. Trainees are given verbal and written feedback on their performance. However, feedback also fails to set time limits for trainees to work towards in completing the agreed tasks. The opportunity to focus trainees on working towards the next target is missed.

16. There is currently no simple record by which the trainer and the trainees can easily monitor trainees' progress and achievement in the NVQ on an on-going basis. Trainees and assessors discuss the trainee's success in specific tasks but assessors do not specify the progress trainees have made towards completing the NVQ. Trainees have nothing to remind them of exactly where they are in the programme and what they have left to achieve. Trainees are not aware of how much of the qualification has been achieved and which elements remain to be completed. The trainer is also unable to indicate how much of the qualifications individual trainees have achieved.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

17. There are 10 government-funded trainees in this occupational area. Nine are following a work-based youth training programme for 16 to 25 year olds and one is on the Learning Gateway. Training programmes provide training all year round and trainees can join at any time. Trainees usually attend the centre for 30 hours a week for up to 32 weeks. Trainees undertake the Basic Skills Agency assessment in reading, writing and maths during their initial interview. All trainees have been assessed as needing support with literacy and numeracy. Trainees on the work-based training programme work towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications at the level indicated as appropriate from the results of their initial assessment. The trainee on the Learning Gateway receives individual basic skills training consistent with her individual requirements. Most trainees attend the centre full time and undertake a programme which includes daily numeracy, literacy, information technology, sports and personal development sessions. A few trainees undertake work experience towards the end of their programmes but external work placements have proved difficult to arrange for trainees. The self-assessment report identified 19 strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors were unable to verify some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and considered others to be no more than normal practice. The weaknesses were confirmed and additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the BOSCO Centre.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured introduction to information technology programme
- ◆ good retention and progression rates
- ◆ effective personal development programme

WEAKNESSES

- ♦ insufficient literacy and numeracy learning resources
- ♦ little integration across the literacy, numeracy and personal development programmes

GOOD PRACTICE

The foundation programme includes structured sports sessions. These sessions help trainees to get to know their peers, learn tolerance of others and act as a pressure-release valve. One trainee has decided she would like to pursue a career in sport and recreation as a result of these sessions.

18. The basic introduction to information technology skills programme, which has been developed by the BOSCO Centre, provides a clear, structured introduction to word processing. All foundation for work trainees undertake this programme which is modular and well resourced. Trainees work at their own pace through the programme which progresses in small steps, based around identified core components, with regular opportunities for assessment of progress. Training is accessible and comprehensive. Trainees can begin at a point suited to their previous experience and knowledge. Trainees value the flexibility the modular programme offers and the effective support they receive from staff. Trainees can bring in additional work to use within the modules, such as from their wordpower and numberpower projects. The programme's handbook is clear, well presented and comprehensive in its coverage of the elements of the skills it introduces. Trainees achieve a basic level of competence through the programme which enables them to progress to the information technology NVQ at level 1.

19. The Diamond Project for disadvantaged young people has achieved high retention and progression rates, especially given that its target group is young people who have been excluded from school or who have dropped out of education. From the trainees beginning in 1999-2000, 94.7 per cent have completed or remain in training. Progression to other training or into employment is also good. In the 1999-2000 contract year, 80 per cent of trainees leaving the programme secured employment or progressed to other full-time education or training. Most trainees achieve a basic skills qualification in wordpower and/or numberpower. From the trainees beginning in 1999-2000, 62 per cent achieved the qualification within four months of joining the programme, 33 per cent are in the process of completing the qualification and 5 per cent left without achieving a formal qualification.

20. All trainees undertake a wide-ranging and tightly structured personal development programme. The programme is carefully planned and evaluated regularly by staff. It encompasses communication skills, team work, assertiveness and conflict resolution, health and safety, drugs awareness, preparation for work and job-search skills. Trainees gain in confidence as they progress through the programme. They are given encouragement and responsibility through a range of activities designed to promote self-esteem and awareness of others. The programme is valued highly by trainees. It enables them to understand and address patterns of behaviour which have caused problems in their previous education and in their personal lives. The development of social and key skills through the programme helps trainees to complete their in-house training and to succeed in their work placements.

21. There are insufficient resources to support the intensive literacy and numeracy programmes which form part of foundation for work training. The small stock of

worksheets do not adequately meet the needs of trainees who require a sustained programme of literacy and numeracy development. Few resources are available to enable trainees to practice and reinforce their basic skills regularly in a variety of ways, over time, and to apply them in vocationally related contexts. The extensive information technology facilities available in the centre are not fully exploited to support the development of literacy and numeracy.

22. There are missed opportunities to link the personal development, literacy and numeracy elements of the foundation for work programme. Individual activities within the personal development programme, such as studying the induction pack, have been linked to literacy and numeracy activities. Little has been done to identify opportunities to develop joint projects and assessment opportunities through picking out skills learnt in these kinds of activities.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

23. The BOSCO Centre has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and code of practice which comply with current legislation and the TEC's contractual requirements. These are the responsibility of the director and are reviewed annually. The policy is given to staff and trainees at induction and to work-placement providers. It is reviewed and updated regularly. The centre's commitment to equal opportunities features in policy documents and marketing materials, and in its selection of staff and trainees. The centre sets itself gender, minority ethnic and disability targets for recruitment in order to have a staff profile similar to its trainee profile which is representative of the profile of disadvantaged young people in the area. The centre shares its policy with work-placement providers and discusses equal opportunities issues with workplace staff and the trainees during review visits and during the regular contact maintained. This monitoring is not recorded. The training rooms and facilities at the centre are not accessible to staff and trainees with mobility difficulties. Data on age, ethnicity, gender and disability are collected for all trainees who contact the centre. Of the trainees beginning in 1999-2000, 59 per cent were women, 44 per cent have a minority ethnic background and 2 per cent have a disability. The inspectors agreed with many of the strengths in the self-assessment report and identified an additional weakness. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the centre.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective, targeted recruitment of disadvantaged young people
- ◆ regular, detailed analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ effective training in equal opportunities within personal development programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient formal complaints procedure

24. The centre has a good reputation in the local community for training and supporting disadvantaged young people. The Diamond Project targets young people who are socially excluded and face barriers which make it difficult for them to participate in training and gain employment. The centre has strong links with local schools, the youth service, drugs projects and other agencies which work with young people. Staff are well trained in equal opportunities and experienced in working with young people who require considerable support in order to achieve their potential and progress to further training and employment. The Diamond Project has consistently exceeded its target numbers and has been successful in recruiting and retaining trainees.

25. Equal opportunities data are monitored and evaluated regularly and used when setting targets within the business plan. The development of a management information system has allowed the BOSCO Centre to collect and analyse data regarding trainees' achievements and progression according to their gender, ethnicity and disability. Data indicate that the Diamond Project recruits a higher proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups than is found within the local population. Monitoring of staff led to the setting of targets to ensure that the staff profile matched the trainees' profile more closely. These targets have now been achieved.

26. Equal opportunities is addressed effectively within the personal development programme. There is a strong emphasis throughout the programme and in the interaction of staff and trainees on respect for the individual and understanding and respecting the rights of others. Equal opportunities is addressed in depth within a module which examines stereotyping and discrimination. The module covers direct and indirect discrimination and examines examples of discriminatory behaviour which trainees may face when being recruited onto training programmes, during training and when looking for employment. Problem-solving tasks and activities help prepare trainees to address any discrimination they may face in training and employment.

27. The current complaints procedure is not fully developed. There is no mechanism for systematically logging complaints or recording information about the way in which disciplinary matters have been addressed. The procedure does not include a time frame which sets deadlines for different stages of the complaints procedure.

Trainee support

Grade 2

28. Trainees are referred to the BOSCO Centre by a number of agencies including the careers and probation services, local care and drug agencies, and schools. Initial selection consists of standardised literacy and numeracy tests and an interview.

Nearly all trainees enrol on the foundation for work programme. All trainees follow the same induction process which is supported by an induction pack. The pack is also used as the basis of activities in the early stages of the trainees' personal development programme. All trainees have monthly reviews at the centre's premises. Trainees' progress is tracked on an individual basis. Trainees can talk to trained counsellors whenever they feel the need. The Diamond Project holds weekly feedback sessions at which trainees are encouraged to express their views and raise issues of concern. The self-assessment report identified 22 strengths, five of which were found by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. Sixteen formed elements of three strengths identified by inspectors. Inspectors considered one strength identified in the self-assessment report to be a weakness. A further weakness was also identified. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the BOSCO Centre in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ fully involved and dedicated staff
- ◆ high level of support for trainees
- ◆ comprehensive initial assessment
- ◆ excellent ongoing counselling and advice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no action planning in reviews
- ◆ insufficient recording of support

29. All staff at the centre promote the values and objectives of the Diamond Project. A number undertake extra voluntary duties and attend meetings held in the evenings because of lack of time during working hours. Some staff take trainees away for outdoor activity courses, while others are paying to take extra qualifications in their own time. Staff also attend weekend residential staff-development courses.

30. The centre provides an extremely supportive environment for trainees. Ratios of trainees to trainers are low, with a maximum of five trainees to one trainer. This allows trainees, many of whom have experienced difficulties in previous learning environments, to receive the help they need to progress. Trainees are also helped with housing, benefit and other personal issues. There are many examples of staff contacting local housing agencies to help trainees find accommodation. The centre offers support for those who have offended and has close links with the probation service. Trainees' work is displayed in the centre to encourage others and to celebrate high standards. Trainees with special needs receive extra help. For example, a trainee who has been endorsed as requiring additional support to achieve an NVQ at level 1 is given extra tuition in literacy and numeracy every day. This trainee is presently working in the centre's nursery where she is supported by staff.

31. Progression for foundation trainees is good. Two of the current staff are ex-trainees who started on the foundation programme. The BOSCO Centre uses its own facilities to provide supportive work placements for trainees. Childcare trainees are on work placements in the centre's nursery while administration trainees undertake work placements in the centre's office. Many trainees and their families use the charity's other facilities and community resources. Parents are able to call in and talk to staff on a regular and informal basis. This constant interaction helps maintain communication and links with the trainees and their families.

32. Initial assessment and interviewing arrangements are welcoming and informative. Initial induction is conducted on an individual basis to respond promptly to the needs of prospective trainees. Initial assessment standard basic skills tests in literacy and numeracy are supplemented by a series of additional exercises in writing, number and information technology devised by the provider. Tests are followed by individual interviews. The results of these assessments are used to gauge the level of support required and form the basis of an individual training plan. Extra support for those with literacy and numeracy requirements is planned at this stage, with reviews to check progress.

33. Regular weekly counselling sessions are provided by a qualified counsellor and additional sessions are arranged, if necessary, in response to trainees' needs. Two members of staff are also trained counsellors and are able to help trainees if they have had traumatic experiences, or difficulties with their personal lives. The centre has an open-door policy and trainees can approach a member of staff at any time.

34. Individual reviews are undertaken by the centre's director on a monthly basis. Reviews are effective in addressing pastoral and behavioural issues which can influence the effectiveness of training. They are less effective as a means of setting realistic training targets against which staff and trainees can monitor progress. Reviews contain few short-term targets, focusing instead on mid- or long-term goals, many of which do not specify a time frame for achievement. Trainees do not have a clear indication of when agreed action should be completed. Reviews are filed in the centre's office. Although trainers are consulted about progress and possible targets, neither they, nor the trainees, receive a copy of the reviews. Trainees, many of whom have learning difficulties, are not able to refer to the review to remind themselves of the targets and action they have agreed.

35. Discussions and actions agreed during counselling sessions and reviews of progress are not always recorded. The centre has no record of the issues involved or the outcomes agreed by the member of staff and the trainee. Staff have no means of accessing this information should an occasion arise where this knowledge is important.

Management of training

Grade 3

36. The BOSCO Centre is a charity which is governed by a voluntary management committee. Committee members are drawn from a range of local

organisations. The treasurer of the management committee works full time at the centre, on a voluntary basis, as its director. She is also a trainer for the personal development programme and the Diamond Project's only internal verifier. The secretary of the committee has a paid role as personal assistant to the director. Overall management of the centre and its projects lies with the director, who is accountable to the management committee. The administration and information technology trainer has recently been appointed as deputy manager of the Diamond Project. The centre also employs three full-time trainers, a part-time English tutor and two nursery managers who also assess on the early years and education programme. In addition to the paid staff, the project has two volunteers who assist with the literacy and numeracy classes. All staff are supervised by the director and appraised by her every six months. The provider achieved the Investors in People standard in January 2000. The provider identified 14 strengths in the self-assessment report. Eight form elements of three strengths found by the inspectors. The remaining six strengths identified in the self-assessment report have been assigned to the relevant occupational areas or to other generic aspects of the report. The self-assessment report identified two weaknesses. One was not found to be a main weakness, and the other is addressed within foundation for work as it has more relevance to that occupational area. Inspectors identified two further weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open and approachable management
- ◆ comprehensive staff-development and -appraisal system
- ◆ effective communication with employers and work placement providers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no operational plan for the Diamond Project
- ◆ some ineffective deployment of staff

37. Effective leadership in the centre has resulted in strong promotion of the Diamond Project's values, mission statement and strategic aims. These are understood and supported by staff and reinforced through informal daily contact and discussions at staff meetings. The management style is open, with the director remaining accessible to all staff for consultation and guidance. There is a free flow of information, although much of it is informal. The regular weekly staff meetings encourage an open exchange of views, provide an opportunity to discuss trainees' progress and help to ensure that different elements of the training programme are co-ordinated. Weekly meetings of staff and trainees enable trainees, and their representatives, to raise issues of concern and receive information about planned developments within the Diamond Project. Meetings are minuted and actioned.

38. The organisation has a policy of drawing on the skills of people in the local community and recruiting staff from diverse backgrounds. Staff are encouraged to

seek promotion within the organisation and apply for job vacancies. Procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff ensure equality of opportunity. Interested applicants are offered training before they submit application forms or attend interviews. Once employed by the charity, staff are given support and opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge to make them more effective in their job roles. However, induction procedures lack consistency. Some staff have had opportunities to shadow experienced staff, while others have not. However, all new staff are mentored by the director. Staff performance is observed and evaluated by the director through monitoring training sessions, assessment practices and trainees' progress reviews. Staff are given feedback on their performance and the opportunity to discuss how their performance could be improved. Information from these monitoring activities and six-monthly appraisals are used to prepare staff-development plans. Staff are encouraged to take external training courses to increase their skills and effectiveness.

39. Staff promoting the Diamond Project have built effective working relationships with local employers and work-placement providers who now pass on information about the Diamond Project to other companies in the area. During initial contact with potential work-placement providers, providers are informed of the centre's values and policies and the level of support required by its client group. Staff ascertain the work-placement providers' requirements to ensure that appropriate trainees are selected and adequate support is arranged. Existing work-placement providers share the BOSCO Centre's values and provide strong support to trainees to enable them to gain their NVQs and increase their employability. The centre's staff are in regular contact with work placements. This contact includes assessment visits, fortnightly visits by the director and her personal assistant to check trainees' progress and weekly telephone contact. Staff and workplace supervisors discuss trainees' on- and off-the-job performance and ways in which their performance could be improved. However, the only record of communication with the work-placement providers is the trainee-performance sheet which is faxed to the training provider on a weekly basis. This document records the tasks trainees have carried out in the workplace. Other than this, the telephone and other personal contact is not recorded.

40. The BOSCO Centre has a five-year plan which includes targets for staff training and the recruitment of staff and trainees in respect of equal opportunities for the work-based training programmes which constitute the Diamond Project. These targets are set to meet the overall objectives of the centre's business plan. While the Diamond Project has specific values and a mission statement, there is no operational plan to describe how these will be put into action in the form of pre-vocational and vocational training. The lack of a business plan inhibits forward-planning to meet changes in contractual requirements, changes in awarding bodies' requirements, such as the introduction of the new information technology NVQ standards, changes in local labour market trends and the changing needs of the Diamond Project's trainees. Gaps in training are identified in an ad hoc way and managers work creatively and energetically to address these when they occur. However, these strategies are generally unrecorded and are not part of a longer-term planning process with clear timescales and procedures for evaluation.

41. The Diamond Project has grown substantially since it started in September 1996. The centre recognises that the staffing structure has not changed sufficiently to meet the requirements of an expanding programme. The senior management team has recently been strengthened by the appointment of a deputy manager who will share responsibility for the overall management of the Diamond Project with the director. The job description for this position has yet to be prepared. The director is currently responsible for staff and volunteers, marketing, finance, the quality and management of training and the support of trainees through counselling, advice and review of progress. This concentration of functions has resulted in heavy workloads, some duplication of functions and missed opportunities to share responsibilities with other members of staff. The director and the management committee have recognised that the Diamond Project needs additional staff and are currently taking action to recruit staff.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

42. The BOSCO Centre has developed written quality assurance procedures for the Diamond Project which meet the requirements of the TEC and the awarding body with which the Diamond Project works. Overall responsibility for quality assurance within the organisation rests with the centre's director. There is an evaluation programme which is a central part of quality assurance. Observations of training are used systematically as a performance indicator. Trainees' achievement is tracked and monitored using a computerised database. Training is evaluated on a regular basis by staff and discussed at weekly meetings. Inspectors validated eight of the 27 strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They form elements of the current set of strengths. Inspectors considered 14 of the strengths identified by the provider to be no more than normal practice, two were duplicated and three were inappropriately placed in the quality assurance section of the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive quality procedures
- ◆ good use of feedback to inform training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no overarching quality assurance policy
- ◆ little systematic target setting for performance improvement

43. Quality assurance procedures exist for most aspects of training and cover arrangements for recruitment and selection, induction, assessment and verification, tracking the number of trainees, the internal appeals procedure and preparing a workplace for a trainee. For example, the effectiveness of procedures to ensure that trainees are found suitable work placements with adequate support and that the

work-placement provider's needs will also be met has recently been evaluated. An action plan has been drawn up to further improve the process. Staff have access to, and are expected to operate within, the procedures outlined. All staff are familiar with the procedures which are widely used across the organisation. Staff meetings are a regular forum for the discussion of quality assurance issues and provide an opportunity for staff to clarify any queries they may have.

44. Feedback from trainees is collected on a regular basis, by a variety of means. Trainees are asked to complete a questionnaire every six months indicating their level of satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of their training. A termly feedback form is sent to trainees asking them to evaluate their course aims, content and length, and the training itself and its administration. Over 89 per cent of trainees responded to the most recent survey. Analysis showed there was some dissatisfaction with some of the training within foundation for work. Action was taken immediately to address trainees' concerns. Parents are also asked to comment formally on the training programmes through a postal questionnaire which is sent out each term. Response rates for this have been consistently high. A substantial body of evidence is collected from parents and trainees which is used by the provider when making decisions about the form and content of the training. Feedback is not formally collected from employers. The centre does not, therefore, have a systematic procedure for determining work-placement providers' understanding of, and satisfaction with, the training process.

45. The centre has shown a substantial improvement in its audits by the TEC in the two years during which it has received funding from the TEC. The TEC's targets for the number of for both years have been exceeded. During 1999-2000, the Diamond Project set the target of 23 trainees recruited and 46 joined the programme. The TEC also set the target of 107 personal targets for trainees to achieve, and 136 have been achieved.

46. Although quality assurance procedures have been introduced to cover most areas of the centre's operation, they are relatively new and have yet to be fully tested. There are some procedures which are unrecorded. Although there are clear procedures, which are updated regularly, there is no quality assurance policy. There is, therefore, no comprehensive reference document for the organisation bringing together mission statements, procedures and other relevant data which would provide a consistent reference point for staff. Not all training plans and other training documents are complete. There are gaps where there should be dates and signatures, and some training plans are not kept up to date.

47. Action points identified by external verifiers are addressed promptly. There are, however, weaknesses in the internal verification process. There is no formative tracking within the internal verification system. The centre has a robust tracking process for summative internal verification, but no systematic means of tracking progress towards NVQ achievement. The present process of tracking progress by going through each portfolio is time consuming and does not give the internal verifier an overview of the process.

48. Procedures for evaluating the training are extensive and analysis of performance data is undertaken regularly. However, there is little evidence of systematic target setting across all areas. Apart from the equal opportunities, health and safety and annual appraisal systems, there are no targets or performance indicators. Managers are not able to undertake a systematic analysis of the systems and are not able to measure improvements from one period to the next. Decisions about continuous improvement are also difficult to make with any accuracy.

49. All staff have been involved in the self-assessment process, are aware of the report and able to comment on its contents. The document is detailed and contains an introduction and separate sections for each occupational and generic area of training. The introduction places the BOSCO Centre in the context of the local community and provides a profile of the socio-economic circumstances of the area within which it operates. The self-assessment report contains an action plan to address weaknesses, with identified staff responsibilities. Actions do not always identify target dates for implementation or measurable performance indicators. The self-assessment report identified a large number of strengths, many of which were considered to be no more than normal practice. Most of the strengths found by the inspectors were identified by the centre, but many of the weaknesses were not. However, self-assessment has been embraced by the centre as an important component of its quality assurance procedures.