



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT APRIL 2000

# HYA Training Limited

## SUMMARY

HYA Training Limited offers some particularly good training opportunities through its work placements. Training centre and workplace staff give good pastoral support to trainees. Assessment of NVQs is infrequent and trainees make slow progress towards their qualifications. NVQ assessment and internal verification responsibilities are poorly carried out in some cases. The company is beginning to evolve its equal opportunities activities. The initial assessment of most trainees is outside training company control. Managers with new responsibilities are now improving all aspects of training. Quality assurance processes have been recently developed and are inadequate.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	4
Retailing & customer service	4
Health, care & public services	4

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral care for trainees
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ particularly good work placements
- ◆ good key skills training

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inefficient NVQ assessment techniques
- ◆ infrequent assessment of trainees
- ◆ trainees' low retention and achievement rates
- ◆ many trainees' lack of success in obtaining relevant employment
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous internal verification process
- ◆ poor learning resources for theory work
- ◆ lack of understanding of progress reviews and procedures by some staff
- ◆ little evaluation of the training process
- ◆ no well-established quality assurance system
- ◆ no clear action planning for the improvement of training

## INTRODUCTION

1. HYA Training Limited (HYA) has centres on both sides of the River Humber. There is a training centre in the Kingston-upon-Hull docklands area and an administrative centre in Cottingham, both in east Yorkshire. These serve Hull and Beverley. There is a smaller training centre at Barton-upon-Humber in north Lincolnshire which also serves Immingham. Managers have decided that the main training centre in Hull is unsatisfactory. They have made arrangements to merge and move the Hull and Cottingham centres immediately after the inspection. The new location is at Hessle at the Hull end of the Humber bridge. This new building and its resources were also inspected. Humberside Youth Association was formed in the early 1970s as a registered charity to provide for trainees with learning difficulties or additional needs. In April 1999, it was re-formed as a limited company (HYA Training Limited) with a board of trustees. It expanded its services to trainees mainly in the 16 to 18 years age group. Now, it offers a wider range of government-funded training programmes through contracts with Humberside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The company also offers its own programmes on a commercial basis.

2. The chief executive is retiring and is in the process of handing over to two managers, one of whom is also a director. The operations manager is responsible for day-to-day control of training. The business development manager deals with policy matters and expanding links with employers and placement providers in the two areas either side of the Humber bridge. There are 15 full time staff and four part-time staff. There are 164 trainees currently on NVQ programmes. Of these, 137 are in Hull and 27 are at the Barton centre in north Lincolnshire.

3. The government and local agencies have implemented a strategic framework to tackle the many serious problems in the Humberside sub-region. In 1998, the population of this economically deprived region was 883,100. Kingston-upon-Hull has a population of 261,800 and north-east Lincolnshire a population of 156,200 people. The proportion of persons from minority ethnic groups in the area is low. It is recorded in the last survey (1991) and is under 2 per cent in Kingston-upon-Hull, for north-east Lincolnshire and for the Humber sub-region as a whole. The principal industries are manufacturing and construction, wholesale and retail trades, transport and warehousing. Some of these industries, especially manufacturing, are in decline.

4. Five schools in the Hull area have been formally warned about their poor performance by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. Surveys by the Basic Skills Agency and other government-approved organisations in 1997 and 1998 have shown that the Hull area has the highest proportion of persons with poor literacy and numeracy skills in England. In 1999, the proportions of school leavers in North Lincolnshire and Hull achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above were respectively 33.3 per cent and 22.8 per cent, compared with the national average for England of 47.9 percent. In Hull, 13.7 per cent of children leaving school after year 11 become

unemployed. Only 3.2 per cent become modern apprentices. Just over 53 per cent opt to stay on in full-time education. Only 8.7 per cent gain employment. In north-east Lincolnshire 4.4 per cent of children leaving school after year 11 immediately become unemployed. Only 5.4 per cent become modern apprentices. Around 58 per cent opt to stay on in full-time education. Only 10.2 per cent gain employment.

5. The initial assessment of most trainees is outside the control of HYA. Many trainees in the Humberside area have achieved few formal qualifications in the traditional education system prior to recruitment. Some have achieved none. Many have an identified need for additional training in numeracy, literacy and other basic and personal skills. Some trainees have severe or very severe problems generated by the difficulties of their home life, social life, unemployment in families over several generations or lack of educational success. A high number of trainees receive an endorsement category prior to entering HYA. This means that they have undergone a series of initial tests to estimate how much extra help they will need to achieve their qualifications and move into full-time paid employment. This endorsement process brings with it an entitlement to help over and above that normally received by trainees on NVQ programmes. Many trainees need extra help and guidance. They also receive advice on gaining employability skills to enable them to achieve their full potential. Currently there are 100 endorsed trainees, representing 61 per cent of all trainees on training programmes.

6. In the Humberside TEC area, potential trainees have to be tested centrally regardless of their final choice of training provider. Prior to this, there was an unsatisfactory period in which the many careers service offices and training companies were finding difficulty in standardising the approach to endorsement. Humberside TEC then decided to centralise the endorsement process. They consulted the local college of further education and a training organisation which had carried out some research into initial assessment processes. This led to a plan for improvement in endorsement. Initial assessment is carried out by an external organisation.

7. This external organisation offers training programmes to meet trainees' needs in areas such as literacy and numeracy. Trainees also receive work 'tasters' to enable them to find out what type of employment they would prefer. Some trainees go on to receive life skills and literacy and numeracy training at HYA Training Limited paid for through a private contract with an external provider. This training was not inspected. The Humberside TEC endorsement system has special rules, some of which are completely different from those of TECs in the rest of England. Endorsed trainees at HYA may receive very wide-ranging help including extra training courses in addition to their NVQ programme. For example, Humberside TEC has agreed that an endorsement is given to trainees who find difficulty in understanding NVQ terminology.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

8. HYA was included in the series of Training Standards Council pilot inspections in 1998. All staff are included in the self-assessment process. Key staff have attended full-day Humberside TEC workshops to learn how to assist their colleagues in the process. The current self-assessment report is well designed and clearly written. It contains an action plan to build on identified strengths and to redress weaknesses. Inspectors considered some of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice and some of the weaknesses to be of no great significance. They found other weaknesses the company had not identified. Evaluation of assessment and verification practices has not yet been carried out in sufficient depth. The company lacks a clear overview of the quality of its training processes. It does not analyse the training statistics. It gives priority to complying with TEC requirements in respect of quality assurance.

9. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at the training company's premises in April 2000. They looked at a wide range of documentation, including policies and procedures, and trainees' files. Data from a wide range of statistical sources were analysed. Inspectors visited 21 placements and interviewed 33 trainees, 20 per cent of the total. They spoke to many more trainees while observing training sessions. They observed two off-the-job training sessions and one on-the-job training session. They also observed eight progress reviews, four assessments and one induction session. Grades awarded to sessions are shown in the table below. Inspectors held 27 interviews with HYA's staff and senior managers. They interviewed two work-based assessors. They carried out 16 interviews with supervisors or managers of work placements or of workplaces offering full-time employment for trainees. Training resources at workplaces and the training company's existing and new premises were also inspected.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration				3		3
Retailing & customer service			1	1		2
Health, care & public services		1	1	1		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 4

10. HYA Training Limited offers programmes leading to NVQs in administration at levels 1, 2 and 3. There are 71 trainees on these programmes. Twenty-seven have employed status, 35 are on work placements and nine are working in the training centre awaiting allocation to a work placement. Nineteen are modern apprentices and 52 are endorsed youth trainees. Nineteen trainees are working towards NVQs at level 3, 44 are working towards NVQs at level 2 and eight are working towards NVQs at level 1. Training mainly takes place on-the-job and trainees receive monthly visits from HYA's staff for assessment and to help them with portfolio building. There are flexible arrangements for trainees to come into training centres at Hull or Barton for additional help with portfolio building or to improve their key skills, especially in information technology. Two trainers/assessors implement the programmes and a third has a smaller caseload. All are qualified vocational assessors and internal verifiers with relevant occupational experience. HYA is in the process of recruiting an additional trainer/assessor. Inspectors agreed with only three of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report. They considered that three of the weaknesses were not significant. Inspectors found both strengths and weaknesses the company had not identified and they awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ trainees' high esteem for their on-the-job learning
- ◆ high standards of work in portfolios
- ◆ detailed guidance for trainees on portfolio building
- ◆ good relationships between training company staff and employers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ trainees' poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ poor rate of progression into employment for trainees
- ◆ some unmet training needs of trainees
- ◆ insufficient coverage of theory work
- ◆ inefficient assessment techniques

11. Trainees receive good on-the-job coaching from experienced workplace staff. They place great value on this and it builds their confidence in their ability to learn. Workplace supervisors assist in the learning process by giving trainees tasks that enable them to develop and acquire skills progressively. HYA's staff emphasise the

importance of on-the-job learning during their visits to the workplace and work placements. Trainees take pride in producing good work for their portfolios. The portfolios are well presented and the work in them to grammar, layout and spelling. The work is highly individual, reflecting the setting in which the trainee is working.

12. HYA's staff provide step-by-step guidance about collecting evidence and building it into a portfolio. Trainees learn how to match their evidence to the NVQ specifications. Portfolios are well structured and evidence is appropriately cross-referenced to the NVQ units.

13. HYA's staff build good working relationships with local employers. The company has a pool of potential work-placement providers who understand the aims of HYA's programme and the needs of trainees. However, there are not always enough suitable work-placements for all trainees. The regular contact between workplace supervisors and HYA's staff facilitates a free flow of information about the trainee. HYA's staff and employers set trainees a good example through their establishment of productive working relationships with one another.

14. Retention and achievement rates for those on other youth programmes have been consistently poor over the past four years from 1996-97 to 1999-2000 inclusive. Less than two thirds of trainees completed their programmes. Of the 205 trainees who have started the programme in this occupational area since 1996-97, 43 completed it. Of the 162 trainees who have left, only 49 or 30.2 per cent have achieved their main programme aim. Ninety-five trainees or 58.6 left early. Of these, 79 or 48.8 per cent left with no qualifications at all. Of the 52 trainees who started in 1999-2000, 21 have already left early, None of these trainees achieved any qualifications and only three gained a job. Of the 162 trainees who have left the programme in the last four years, only 48, or 29.6 per cent, gained employment after their training programme. No in depth analysis of the reasons for these poor figures has been carried out by managers.

15. Employers identify specific skills gaps such as telephone skills, customer care, and use of a particular computer software application. They do not always have the resource to provide training to fill these gaps themselves. HYA does not provide an off-the-job training programme. HYA's staff and employers often refer in records of progress reviews to the need for trainees to improve their personal effectiveness, increase their motivation, or use more initiative. However, there is no systematic approach to providing learning opportunities which will help trainees meet these needs.

16. The company fails to ensure that trainees cover the requisite theory work properly. Learning resources for theory work are poor. There is one textbook and learning pack in each of the Hull and Barton training centres. Not all trainees visit the training centres, however. Trainees have little access to relevant reference materials in the workplace. They rely on handouts from their trainer/assessor, but these are unsatisfactory. There are no off-the-job sessions to cover theory work for the NVQ.

17. Internal verification documents are well maintained. However, the work of internal verifiers does not go into sufficient depth to ensure that verification is thorough. The planning, and assessment processes and arrangements for giving trainees advice are not well understood or properly used by assessors. Observations of trainees' performance take place but they are not efficiently carried out. The assessors watch the trainee and write long and detailed accounts of what they see the trainee do. These are descriptive rather than evaluative and the trainees do not know what the assessor thinks of their performance. Trainees do not understand how they are assessed. Some view it as a mystery. There is no assessment strategy and evidence gathering is inefficient. For example, trainees are asked to write out long and detailed accounts of what they do at work, sometimes running to many pages. They do this instead of having their work observed by an assessor or gathering the evidence through witness testimony. Trainees' oral accounts and answers to questions are not recorded in full. There are also some missed opportunities for assessment. Trainees in the training centres waiting for work placements often work through tasks from a learning pack. They do not find these motivating. They are not given the opportunity to carry out realistic tasks under simulated work-based conditions.

## Retailing & customer service

## Grade 4

18. HYA offers programmes leading to NVQs in retail, warehousing and customer service at levels 1, 2, and 3. There are 50 trainees in this occupational area. Five are modern apprentices and 45 are trainees on other training programmes for young people who will require additional support to complete their NVQs. In Hull, there are six trainees working towards an NVQ in customer service at level 3. Five of these are modern apprentices. The sixth is a young person requiring additional learning support to complete an NVQ. Some of these modern apprentices have transferred from another training centre. One trainee is male and five are female. Four are employed full time and two are on work placements. There is one trainee on a work placement at the Barton centre working towards an NVQ in retail at level 2. In Hull, there are 11 trainees requiring additional learning support working towards an NVQ in retail at level 2. Of these, six are men and five are women. Three are employed and eight are in work placements. There are five young people requiring additional learning support working towards NVQs in distribution and warehouse operations level 2. Of these, three are men and two are women. Three are employed and two are in work placements. HYA's staff visit the workplace every four weeks to assess the trainees and review their progress. HYA's staff are occupationally qualified. Key skills training and assessment are new to them. The staff are now working towards the key skills trainer award. There is no off-the-job vocational training. There are no work-based assessors although the employers on site provide some additional training. The self-assessment report identified some strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors found weaknesses the company has not identified and they awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.



### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ frequent contact between company staff and trainees
- ◆ employers' strong encouragement of and support for trainees
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ particularly good work placements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ trainees' poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ poor rate of progression into employment for trainees
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor learning resources
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ inconsistent use of documents and record keeping
- ◆ lack of rigour in the internal verification process

19. HYA offers a supportive environment to many trainees who lack confidence or have diverse needs. Trainers visit trainees in the workplace very regularly and more often than required by Humberside TEC. Trainers will drop in to see trainees when they happen to be passing their work placements and particularly those trainees who lack confidence. Trainees appreciate the interest the trainers take in them. Staff are available by telephone and will always fit in extra visits to trainees for pastoral reasons. Trainees were pleased they could have extra help and advice when needed. Staff made an effort to inform employers about the trainees at the end of each visit to them. Employers are given the opportunity to comment on how the training has increased the trainees' motivation and confidence. Several employers commented that they have seen an improvement in trainees' ability to do the job.

20. Employers and HYA's staff work well together. HYA's staff have undertaken additional training for example, on health and safety, safe lifting techniques, and equal opportunities. Some employers give extensive help to trainees. Some employers allow trainees to take part in company training, which sometimes leads to certification. Trainees are allowed time off in the workplace to work on their portfolios. One employer had arranged for a trainee to see a specialist representative to learn more about the company products. Some employers allow trainees access to training resources and materials such as videos, and information on legislation and health and safety. Trainees attend workshops and training sessions on a day-release basis. Some employers have had several trainees on work placements in the past and have given some of them full-time employment.

21. Work placements are particularly good and provide trainees with a supportive environment. HYA's staff and employers work together as a team to identify the most valuable way of helping trainees. They encourage trainees to work well to

achieve their full potential. All employers interviewed had established a good working relationship with HYA's staff. Some less confident trainees are given work placements where they receive help and guidance to increase their employability. Trainees were appreciative of their work placements offering better learning opportunities and of the role employers played as their mentors.

22. Trainees' retention and achievement rates have been consistently poor over the past four years from 1996-97 to 1999-2000 inclusively. Less than two thirds of trainees who began programmes failed to complete them. Of the 305 trainees who began programmes in this occupational area since 1996-97, only 44 remained on them. Eighteen trainees transferred to other programmes. Of the 261 trainees who have left, only 69 or 26.3 per cent have achieved their main programme aim. One hundred and ninety-one trainees or 73.2 per cent left early. Of these, 120 or 46 per cent left with no qualifications at all. Of the 61 trainees who started in 1999-2000, 24, or 39.3 per cent have already left. None of these trainees achieved any qualifications and only three gained a job. Of the 261 trainees who have left the programme in the last four years only 71 or 27.2 per cent gained employment after their training programme. Some trainees are unable to complete work for NVQs and leave to gain employment or move to another work placement. Trainees spoke of missed opportunities for their work to be assessed, long periods during which they were not assessed, and their failure to make significant progress. Some said that they would prefer to find a job to earn a higher income than remain on their training programmes for an extended period with only their training allowance as an income.

23. Assessors visit trainees regularly to review their progress. Assessors rarely involve employers in providing evidence of trainees' acquisition of NVQ competencies. Assessors have not briefed supervisors adequately on how they may provide witness testimonies about trainees' work. Trainees make slow progress towards achievement of their qualifications. They will sometimes be asked by assessors to repeat work for assessment that they have already completed as part of their natural everyday work. Assessors frequently miss assessment opportunities for recording evidence of trainees' competence in naturally occurring situations in the workplace. The NVQ process and the NVQ specifications are not explained to the employers fully. Assessors do not encourage employers to become involved in the assessment process.

24. Many of the training handouts are out of date and of poor quality. Handouts are sometimes given to trainees to help them understand legislation. They are also given to trainees when they are unable to attend the training centre, or are without an assessor for long periods. Trainees left without assessment for long periods of time have no access to training materials. Many of these trainees stated that they become bored and frustrated at their lack of progress. They said they would have liked a reference pack to enable them to work on their own.

25. Staff and trainees were confused by the different styles of documents used. Those used for recording assessments and the outcomes of progress reviews are not standardised. Trainees were not set aims and they were not aware of the extent

of their progress. Staff were using several different forms to record the same information. The records sometimes lack a clear focus, and do not specify dates by which trainees must carry out actions. Some trainees are unaware of future action required of them.

26. Assessment practice is poor. The range of methods for gathering evidence of trainees' competencies is narrow. There are missed opportunities to collect witness testimonies from employers. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their qualification. Some trainees have waited several months to be assessed. There has been a shortage of staff. A new assessor is just beginning work. The assessment process is not standardised across the occupational area. Some trainees said they felt they were left alone for long periods. Others were upset that they were taking so long to achieve their qualification. Many trainees stated that they thought they could have completed work for the NVQ much more quickly if they had been assessed more often.

27. Internal verification is not planned well or carried out systematically. There has been insufficient sampling of trainees' portfolios and insufficient observation of the assessment process. Internal verification methods have not been standardised. Internal verification is not carried out continuously or progressively. The recording of assessment and internal verification is poor.

## Health, care & public services

## Grade 4

28. There are 43 trainees on the programmes. Of these, 41 are women and two are men. Five trainees are modern apprentices, nine are national trainees and 29 are on other training programmes for young people. Eight trainees are working towards NVQs at level 3 and 24 are working towards NVQs at level 2. Eleven trainees are working towards a qualification which is equivalent to an NVQ at level 1. Work for this qualification is being used as preparation prior to commencing training at level 2. Off-the-job training is offered in a number of ways. Small group and individual sessions are held on the company's premises and in the workplace. Training leading to additional qualifications is available to the trainees. All trainees on the other work-based training programmes for young people are offered training and assessment in three key skills. There are 22 employed trainees and 21 trainees in work placements. All unemployed trainees have supervised work placements in nursing homes, residential care homes for the elderly and residential homes for adults with learning difficulties. There are work-based assessors in all the care establishments. The training company's staff consists of two trainers who carry out off-the-job training. They assist work-based assessors. They carry out assessments when and where necessary and act as internal verifiers. Both are occupationally qualified and experienced. They have assessor and internal verifier qualifications. Inspectors agreed with two of the three strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered one to be no more than normal practice. They agreed with the weaknesses but found one of them to be understated. They found both strengths and weaknesses the company had not identified and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ close co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to work towards additional qualifications
- ◆ well-implemented key skills training

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ poor rate of progression into employment for trainees
- ◆ some weak assessment practice
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification process
- ◆ trainees' slow progress towards gaining qualifications

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*This is an example of good practice in meeting the individual needs of trainees. In one residential home for the elderly, the assessor set up a training session in which she and two trainees carried out some simple and suitable mobility exercises with the residents. The assessor ensured that they participated willingly and made sure they were comfortable and relaxed. Clear instructions and explanations about exercises were given to residents. The assessor was an excellent role model to trainees. Evidence gathered was directly relevant to their NVQ requirements*

29. Trainees receive a good introduction to the NVQ programme. This covers the component parts of the award, evidence-gathering techniques and the assessment process. Off-the-job training arrangements are flexible. Trainers hold weekly sessions when trainees can attend for individual training and help them to record evidence and build portfolios. Group training sessions are also held to cover topics relevant to the NVQ. Employers and work-based assessors are also informed of the training sessions. The lessons are well prepared. Trainees are encouraged to express their views. However, too much information is often given without checking that the trainees understand it. If trainees are unable to attend training sessions at the training company's premises, the training staff will see them individually in the workplace. In some work placements where there are several trainees, the training takes place on the employer's premises. There is also good training in the workplace. Clearly written training plans are used to introduce the trainee to the establishment, its policies and procedures and to necessary working practices. Training company staff meet regularly with assessors in the workplace to plan the training and identify who will implement particular aspects of it. Assessors also offer specific training sessions for the trainees.

30. Trainees have the opportunity to work towards additional training qualifications, such as those in basic first aid, manual handling and lifting. In the workplace, trainees attend training sessions given by other professionals such as pharmacists. Training packs have been designed for each unit. These give trainees guidance on the types of evidence to gather and how to record it. The packs also contain handouts and resources which may assist the trainees. Trainees also have access to other current resource materials in the workplace.

31. Key skills training is an integral part of programmes. A number of particularly good assignments and projects have been devised which enable trainees to gather evidence for specific NVQ units and also cover the key skills of application of number and information technology. However, trainers do not make this dual purpose clear to trainees. Assessment plans also identify how evidence can be gathered for the key skill units of communication and working with others.

32. In the other work-based training programmes for young people, retention and achievement have been consistently poor over the past four years from 1996-97 to 1999-2000 inclusively. Less than two thirds of trainees completed their programmes. Of the 242 trainees who have started the programme in this occupational area since 1996-97, 30 remain. Of the 212 trainees who have left, only 38 or 17.9 per cent have achieved their main programme aim. One hundred and seventy-four or 82.1 per cent left early. Of these, 140 or 66 per cent left with no qualifications at all. Of the 35 trainees who started in 1999-2000, 15 have already left early. Only three of these trainees achieved any qualifications and only three gained a job. Of the 212 trainees who have left the programme in the last four years, only 48 or 22.6 per cent gained employment after their training programme.

33. All assessment takes place in the workplace. However, there is some poor assessment practice. Work-based assessors are not always able to give sufficient time and commitment to the trainees and the assessment process because of the pressures of their own jobs. Opportunities are missed to assess trainees in the workplace. The training company identified this as a weakness in its self-assessment report. It has taken steps to improve the situation. HYA's staff are now acting as assessors to carry out the assessment process or to work with and help the work-based assessors. There is little assessment through observation of the trainees at work. Assessment records vary considerably in the amount of detail and some do not clearly identify the range of work covered by trainees. There is also no written advice to trainees following assessment. These weaknesses were identified in recent external verifier reports. The training company has begun to take action to deal with these issues. Assessor workshops are planned to take place in different work placements to give the necessary help to the assessors. One has already taken place.

34. The internal verification process lacks rigour. A good sampling plan has been agreed with the external verifier. On average, 50 per cent of all portfolios are internally verified. Recording of internal verification is clear. However, the process is not continuous. Some internal verification is taking place, incorrectly, only after the trainee has completed all NVQ units. Some assessment practice is inefficient and involves assessors and trainees in large amounts of extra work. Guidelines for assessors have been drawn up which state that trainees should have their work for NVQ units assessed as soon as they have completed it. The company has no document for recording the assessment of NVQ units, and its verification.

**POOR PRACTICE**

*This is an example of poor practice in ensuring trainees make good progress towards achievement of their chosen qualification. Eleven trainees who had been on NVQ programmes for periods varying between 11 and 21 months had not received assessment for NVQ units.*

35. Lack of access to assessment is having an adverse effect on trainees' progress towards the completion of work for NVQs at level 2. Assessment practices are poor and trainees make slow progress towards the achievement of their awards. Some trainees have been in training for well over a year without achieving a single NVQ unit.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

36. HYA has an equal opportunities policy that meets contractual requirements. It is issued to staff, trainees and employers. On some marketing material, HYA identifies itself as an 'equal opportunities employer'. The mission statement includes a reference to 'equal opportunities for all'. In line with TEC and the awarding bodies' requirements, data are collected on trainees' gender, ethnic origin and disabilities. The proportion of men on programmes is 18 per cent, compared with 34 per cent across all youth programmes in the Humberside TEC area. No trainee or member of staff is from a minority ethnic group. In the Humberside area, people from minority ethnic groups make up 1 per cent of the population. There are currently three trainees with disabilities on programmes and they represent 1.8 per cent of total trainees. This proportion is slightly higher than the percentage of trainees with disabilities on all Humberside youth programmes, which stands at 1.5 per cent. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report. They considered one of the strengths to be more relevant to trainee support. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good initiatives to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ good planning to ensure the new premises are accessible to the physically disabled

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic monitoring of promotion of work-placement providers
- ◆ no monitoring of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy

37. HYA has well-established practices to ensure its promotion of equal opportunities meets contractual requirements. Staff and trainees' recruitment procedures are fair and equitable. Staff and trainees have mutual respect. The company is initiating a more active approach to the promotion of equal opportunities. It has established an agenda for action and several good initiatives are underway. Managers have attended training sessions on equal opportunities and have passed information learnt on these on to other staff by running an in-house workshop. A further staff workshop is planned. The equal opportunities policy has been recently reviewed and up-dated, following staff discussions. Marketing materials, staff recruitment material, training materials and evaluation questionnaires have been amended to bring them into line with the organisation's policy. This review of documents is not complete, but a good start has been made. The review form now includes a space to record any comments that trainees may wish to make in relation to equal opportunities issues. The organisation is making efforts to recruit more male staff. HYA is due to move to new premises in North Humberside. The impact of the move on equal opportunities has been carefully considered. The



location and physical layout of the new premises have been chosen with the interests of the physically disabled in mind. The new premises are not only more accessible for people with impaired mobility, but also more conveniently situated for all trainees.

38. The monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace is unsystematic and lacks rigour. HYA's staff visit all prospective work-placement providers to check on their health and safety practices and their promotion of equal opportunities. They record their findings on a special form. Staff have to state whether the work-placement provider is in agreement with HYA's equal opportunities policy and has provision for physically disabled trainees. The form does not, however, allow staff to provide detailed or extensive information on the work-placement providers' attitude towards equal opportunities. Employers are given a copy of HYA's policy at this visit. HYA's contract with work-placement providers mentions only the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* and the *Race Relations Act 1976*. Employers of national trainees or modern apprentices sign a TEC agreement which makes no specific reference to equal opportunities.

39. In order to meet contractual requirements, HYA collects data on sex, ethnic origin and disability. This is passed to Humberside TEC, but is not systematically collated and analysed by the training company.

## Trainee support

## Grade 2

40. Potential trainees are recruited through the careers service or by direct application or by referral from employers. There is a key member of staff who deals with all referrals and interviews. There is an open access policy. The initial assessment of most trainees is outside the control of HYA. The company only carries out initial assessment of the basic skills of direct entrants. If these trainees are subsequently found to require additional learning support then most are referred back to the external body which carried out their evaluation. Those in this category who have commenced work placements undergo a special procedure to ascertain their additional learning requirements. All trainees receive an initial assessment of their key skills. The company carries out accreditation of trainees' prior learning and achievement. Trainees attend a one-day induction. Employed trainees are taken through the same programme on an individual basis in the workplace. Additional assistance is available for trainees with specific learning needs and disabilities. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out more frequently than the TEC contract requires. The self-assessment report identified six strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors considered some strengths to be no more than normal practice. Two additional strengths and one weakness were identified during the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective response to trainees' additional learning needs
- ◆ particularly good pastoral support for trainees

- ◆ celebration of trainees' successes
- ◆ regular and frequent reviews of trainees' progress

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ failure to record some provision of support accurately
- ◆ failure to set trainees clear aims during progress reviews

41. Some trainees are recruited directly by the company and have not undergone the initial assessment that is carried out by an external organisation. If HYA's staff then consider that these trainees need additional learning support, they are referred to the external organisation. Trainees are also given the opportunity to sample occupational areas. The trainees' application form is sent to the training company of their choice. An interview takes place when the trainee transfers to the chosen training company. All recorded initial assessment documents and test results are forwarded to the training company. Written records are kept of all interviews. Following initial assessment, a small number of trainees have been placed on a level 1 NVQ programme but showed themselves to be more suited to a level 2 NVQ. Trainees who are not identified as requiring additional help take basic skills tests during induction at HYA. Arrangements for carrying out initial assessment of trainees' occupational skills are in the early stages of development.

42. The company is using the endorsement system, for establishing the level of additional learning support required, incorrectly in the case of some trainees. These trainees have not been through the process of evaluation for endorsement and have not been properly identified as requiring the additional help that attracts additional funding. The company, however, gives them an endorsement category for administrative convenience.

43. When trainees are recruited directly by HYA they may have some additional needs. These trainees are evaluated externally. There is a special exemption process only for those who have started work placements. In order to provide continuity of work experience, these trainees are evaluated by HYA. Humberside TEC then oversigns the proposed category of endorsement. There is inconsistency in the number of tests used in this process. The initial testing system issued by the external body uses a wide-ranging battery of tests. HYA's system for the endorsement of trainees uses only the basic skills agency test. There is inconsistency in the qualification requirements for staff involved in endorsements. The staff of the TEC and the central endorsement processing centre must be specially qualified to analyse and confirm endorsements. Staff at HYA do not have to be qualified to evaluate the results of an endorsement test. Staff at HYA have a poor understanding of the difference between the normal support given during an NVQ and the additional support requested by the TEC's endorsement.

44. The induction programme is comprehensive and it has been standardised. Trainees are given an information pack and a well-written handbook which summarises the information imparted during the induction process. It includes clear



information on health and safety and equal opportunities. It explains what trainees should do if they are subjected to bullying or harassment at any time during training. Three months after induction, the trainees are questioned on what they have been told during induction. Records show that 96 per cent of trainees understand the information given to them during induction. Eighty-one per cent found it interesting and well presented. Ninety-six per cent understood information on health and safety and a similar percentage were happy with the way induction was carried out.

45. HYA offers a wide range of assistance to trainees. Trainees with identified literacy and numeracy needs are offered the opportunity to improve these skills through structured learning programmes. The training company refers trainees with particular learning problems such as dyslexia to external agencies. Assistance given to trainees is well recorded. Specific learning aids are purchased to assist trainees with hearing impairments. Trainees are encouraged to use audio tapes to record evidence for their portfolios. Trainees have ready access to the training staff for individual assistance. Staff are very helpful to trainees seeking employment. Trainees who are experiencing difficulties in finding a work placement are placed with the centre support worker who provides help and help with job-search skills. Trainees are helped to prepare their curricula vitae, application forms and letters. They are also helped to develop interview skills. Work-placements are carefully chosen for trainees who may require specific help in the workplace. Trainees have the opportunity to work towards additional qualifications to strengthen their employability.

46. Trainees receive particularly good pastoral support. Staff build up excellent relationships with the trainees who feel confident about discussing confidential and personal issues and seeking help. HYA has links with many external agencies to which trainees are referred for counselling and other specific types of assistance. Staff respond to trainees' requests for help outside normal working hours. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out regularly and more frequently than required by the TEC contract. Trainees' success is celebrated at an annual award ceremony. Staff are also presented with certificates for any training they have completed at the same ceremony.

47. The training staff do not fully understand some of the support systems. Individual training plans are not updated to take account of trainees' progress and achievements. Some staff are unclear how to use the learning plan. The type of additional help required by the trainees is identified in some instances, but there is no clear indication of how it will be provided. Many parts of the learning plan are completed to a standard format and the plan does not include individual goals for the completion of specific units of training. Not all aspects of pastoral support are adequately recorded. The rewards of some progress reviews contain little information on action planning and target setting. Details of assistance needed by trainees and the action taken to provide this are inadequately recorded in some reviews.

48. HYA's staff deal with problems in a good-humoured and positive way. There is a high level of sickness and unauthorised absence among trainees. Monitoring

control checks are kept on the length of time trainees are working in the training centre while waiting for a work placement. There are checks on those who fail to attend. Staff follow set procedures in such cases. The names of trainees who do not attend are presented to a staff meeting to determine whether or not to remove them from the register. The number of days of sickness is also recorded. The direct recruitment process takes up a great deal of staff time and is not necessarily productive. Results of a survey show that between September 1999 and March 2000, letters were sent inviting 249 potential trainees to interview at HYA. These potential trainees had first approached their local careers service offices asking for training and had been referred to HYA. Of the 249 trainees who received letters for interviews, only 30 per cent turned up for interview. When the interviews took place, 87 per cent of trainees were given start dates for NVQ programmes. Only 50 per cent of these turned up at HYA begin training. Of the total of 249 who asked to start and received an invitation to interview, only 34 trainees, or 13 per cent started.

## Management of training

## Grade 3

49. HYA is owned by Humberside Youth Association. It has a board of trustees. All policy, strategy and finance matters are dealt with by the managing director. The managing director has decided to retire and hand over progressively to a director who manages training operations and a business development manager. These managers are gradually taking up their responsibilities. They hold regular meetings with staff. They keep in close contact with Humberside TEC. They work from the Hull training site but visit the Barton site regularly. Both these managers are planning the move of the Hull training centre to new premises. The business development manager organises a marketing campaign and keeps in close contact with employers. The training company is a member of the separate local employers network groups for north and south Humber and the National Training Federation. The training company has made a commitment to gain the Investors in People Standard. Inspectors mainly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some strengths were no more than normal practice. They agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ particularly good communication between managers and staff
- ◆ managers' clear strategic vision
- ◆ good additional training programmes for staff
- ◆ strong links between training company and local employers and organisations

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no written business plan
- ◆ insufficiently flexible management information system

- ◆ insufficient and infrequent assessment of trainees
- ◆ some low staffing levels

50. There is particularly good communication between managers and staff. Staff said they enjoyed and looked forward to meetings. The management style is open, fair and managers are supportive of staff. Important programme control meetings are held by each occupational area at which trainees' progress and problems are discussed. Regular minuted meetings are also held to discuss quality assurance matters. These cover a wide range of issues in depth. Examples of recent discussions at these meetings include key skills initial assessment, recruitment progress, interviews for trainees leaving programmes, self-assessment, progress on the gaining of work placements, health and safety, staff courses and work experience matters.

51. Managers are evolving a clear and exciting strategic vision. Plans are in hand to move and merge the Hull and Cottingham centres at the new site in Hessle beginning in June 2000. The two managers now taking up full responsibilities have spent a year analysing the best sites in the Hull area to use for relocation of the training centre. They have identified and obtained a self-contained business unit with two floors, fitted with double glazing and computer points near the Hull end of the Humber Bridge. This site has ample parking and is next to a large industrial estate where trainees are already on work placements. The new premises has been obtained with an initial rent-free period. The new premises have spacious training rooms and offices. The purchase of new computers and Internet access has been evaluated and costed. A new management information system has been identified for purchase. The building has much easier access for those with disabilities than the existing building and there are suitable lavatory facilities for them. The management vision includes ideas on the further improvement of contact between HYA and local employers and organisations on either side of the Humber Bridge and further afield. Managers are enthusiastic about the benefits which they believe will be gained from the move from old dockland premises to the new building.

52. There is a formal appraisal system for staff at which their training needs are identified. Managers make it possible for staff to attend additional training courses. These courses cover topics such as additional learning support for trainees, health and safety, substance misuse, dealing with aggressive behaviour, equal opportunities, first aid, and key skills.

53. Local employers are very helpful to HYA's trainees. Work-placement managers and employers are regularly sent questionnaires asking them about working relationships and most responses to these are positive. The HYA marketing process is well designed. Marketing materials are carefully designed and produced. They include clear leaflets on the NVQ programmes for youth trainees. There are also appropriate leaflets specifically for modern apprentices and national trainees. HYA belongs to the strategic marketing organisation managed by a group of training companies. These adhere to a set of objectives which include producing a charter for excellence, the monitoring of marketing material and the matching of

training to local labour market information. HYA's managers attend these meetings of this marketing organisation. Good practice is shared. A magazine has been produced for all trainees of companies belonging to the organisation. Trainees' achievements are celebrated in this magazine. A survey has been carried out by a research company on all training providers in the area. The survey reveals how well each provider is doing, and findings are confidential. Managers have acted upon findings in respect of HYA.

54. The managing director was on holiday during the inspection and could not be interviewed. The managing director keeps the records concerning TEC contract compliance. The managing director has not produced a written business plan. The two managers taking over from the managing director are still learning how to manage the complex provision. Although the company is small, its responsibilities are complex and it covers a large geographical area. About two thirds of all trainees are endorsed as needing additional help and managers have to ensure they receive good pastoral and additional training support. At present, although the new strategic vision is communicated clearly, it is not set down in writing. There are no written plans which are part of any formal business plan. Many key operational decisions made by managers are not set out in writing, with clear aims and a date by which these must be achieved. Managers say they have to spend a great deal of time on routine day-to-day matters rather than management itself. They are awaiting the appointment of a new company secretary who, they hope, will share some of the routine work they have to carry out at the moment.

55. Managers have identified significant deficiencies in their computer system. While it can generate data to meet the requirements of the TEC contract, it cannot produce clear data on trainees' performance and achievements. The company plans to purchase a new and more flexible computer system.

56. Many trainees have social problems. Some have increased in confidence and have improved their occupational skills. They have benefited from the opportunity to do real work. Many trainees are endorsed as needing additional help and support. The company has, however, breached trainees' confidentiality by putting up lists of trainees, indicating trainees' endorsement categories which describe the level of additional learning support they require, in training rooms. Managers have stated that they will cease this practice immediately. Trainees are not assessed frequently enough. Planning of assessment is inadequate. There is a shortage of assessors. A recruitment drive for new staff is currently in progress.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 4

57. The company's guide to good practice specifies the areas of training that are subject to quality assurance. The views of trainees about the quality of training are gathered through the use of questionnaires. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some of the statements of strengths were descriptive rather than evaluative. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report. Managers have attended quality

assurance and self-assessment training sessions organised by Humberside TEC. Managers use different types of questionnaires to evaluate the quality of induction and training implementation.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clear aims for quality assurance
- ◆ good self assessment process

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no well-established quality assurance system
- ◆ little scope given to internal audit of quality
- ◆ no monitoring of the quality of the training process
- ◆ insufficient analysis of data on trainees' achievements and destinations
- ◆ no written clear action plan to improve the company's performance
- ◆ no action on trainees' responses to questionnaires

58. Managers have made some good progress implementing improvements following self-assessment. The HYA's guide to good practice sets out the main quality assurance procedures. This booklet was produced in January 2000. It explains how often staff should carry out the various quality processes. Managers have set themselves and their staff clear and sensible goals for improvement through their self-assessment action plan. There are six-monthly evaluations of marketing success.

59. The self-assessment process involves all staff. Staff are keen to help managers improve the company. They take part in meetings to discuss improvements in detail. The self-assessment report is well written. Inspectors did not agree with the gradings for some of the areas. The self-assessment report failed to identify weaknesses in the company's evaluation of the training process

60. All managers and staff are keen to try and make things better. Staff work extremely hard and are dedicated to helping all trainees. There is, however, no well-established quality assurance system. Staff do not necessarily follow the instructions on quality assurance given in the guide to good practice. The internal audit process is limited to checking on compliance with the TEC contract. There is little systematic evaluation of the quality of the training and the trainees' learning experience. There is no process whereby training sessions are observed and trainers are given information about the quality of their performance. The company has failed to identify that many of its training materials are poor. There is no written action plan for the continuous improvement of training.

61. The quality assurance system has failed to identify trainees' poor retention and achievement rates on most programmes. Data on trainees' performance is not systematically analysed. On average, less than one quarter of trainees achieve the qualification for which they are aiming. Over half leave with no qualifications at all.

About three-quarters of all trainees do not gain employment after leaving their training programme. The company has not devised any action plan for the improvement of trainees' achievement and retention rates and performance. The company collects the views of trainees on the quality of training through questionnaires. It does not take action, however, to rectify weaknesses in training the trainees identify in their responses. Many trainees say they are bored and that they are disillusioned by their slow rate of progress. Many of them describe their training as a pointless activity. The quality assurance system has not yet led to any significant improvements in the training process or in the trainees' learning experience.