



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 2000

Southern Training

SUMMARY

Southern Training offers satisfactory training in care and early years care. Off-the-job training is well structured and taught effectively. However, key skills training is not integrated into NVQ training, and national trainees and modern apprentices are making slow progress with it. The company takes measures to ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace and the training centre. Southern Training has formed effective links with community groups to promote training to those under-represented on its programmes. Equal opportunities data collected for staff and trainees correspond well with those for the local population. Trainee support is well planned and well managed to help demotivated and disadvantaged trainees. Staff work closely together to ensure that training is also well managed. There is good communication among staff, between trainees and staff, and between the company and external organisations. Staff have a wide range of experience and qualifications which they use effectively to help trainees learn. The company is constantly improving the quality of its training, but not all activities are routinely reviewed.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ strong links with community groups
- ◆ good support for trainees with learning difficulties and disabilities
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ effective external and internal communication
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ good systems to evaluate training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor key skills training
- ◆ incomplete quality assurance framework

INTRODUCTION

1. Southern Training is based in Toxteth in Liverpool. It has grown out of the Southern Neighbourhood Council Youth Opportunities Scheme, which was formed in 1977 by a local community group concerned about high levels of young people's unemployment in the area. The scheme aimed to recruit young people who had underachieved in formal education or who were disadvantaged or who had lost interest in learning. In 1988, the company became an independent charity operating as Southern Training and offering government-funded training. In 1990, Southern Training was approved as a training provider by Merseyside training and enterprise council (TEC).

2. Southern Training has contracts with the TEC for foundation modern apprenticeships, advanced modern apprenticeships, other work-based training for young people and lifeskills 1 and 2. Lifeskills 1 is a 13-week prevocational programme offering help, support and guidance to young people who are currently unable to settle into full-time training, or who have particular learning or support needs. Lifeskills 2 is a 10-week occupational selection programme for young people who are undecided about their preferred area of work. The company offers training towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in leisure, care for the elderly and early years care. Southern Training has 50 trainees. Of these, 35 follow care programmes, eight follow leisure programmes and seven follow prevocational lifeskills programmes. Owing to the low number of trainees at the time of the inspection in leisure and prevocational training, these programmes were not reported on separately.

3. Southern Training has premises in Toxteth where staff are based and which are used for off-the-job training. The company has eight full-time and three part-time members of staff. The manager has overall responsibility for strategy and operations. He is the line manager for the training co-ordinator, who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of programmes. The staff team shares many day-to-day activities equally including training, assessment and individual guidance for trainees. One member of the team is responsible for working with employers to arrange work-experience opportunities for trainees. A development officer prepares bids and secures funding to support the work of the organisation. The organisation has a board of directors, and the board meets quarterly. Work placements are offered with 42 local employers. The work placements are spread across Liverpool and include an animal refuge, a care hospice, leisure centres, fitness centres, electricians, construction companies, retailers, a funeral director and children's nurseries. Southern Training uses a subcontractor to provide training in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

4. From its outset, Southern Training has worked to provide opportunities for young people who have additional learning and support needs. In recent years, it has extended its recruitment to include adults for whom appropriate training opportunities have been denied. Trainees come from communities around

Liverpool which are defined as being the most deprived in Merseyside, including Toxteth and Dingle. These areas are classified by the European Union as areas of high deprivation and high unemployment. In these areas the unemployment rate is 17.6 per cent. This is considerably higher than the average unemployment rate for Merseyside, which was 8 per cent in July 2000, and the national average for England, which was 3.5 per cent in July 2000. Many families in these areas have had members unemployed for generations, and unemployment rates among older age groups are higher than the national average for these age groups. The percentage of unemployed people aged between 18 and 24 was 30.4 per cent in England in July 2000. In Merseyside this percentage was 28.3 per cent. In recent years, manual jobs in which men have traditionally been employed have declined in Merseyside. In Merseyside, the largest employment sectors are the service sector, which employs 17 per cent of the workforce, and health and social work, which employ 14 per cent of the workforce. It is predicted that, given the continued expansion of the service sector, by 2010, women will account for 56 per cent of the workforce in Merseyside.

5. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 32.4 per cent in Liverpool, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Nationally, 6 per cent of school leavers achieved no GCSEs, but in Liverpool this figure was 10.7 per cent. Nationally, 57 per cent of 17 year olds are in full-time education, but in Liverpool this figure is 44 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Liverpool is 7.6 per cent. In Merseyside as a whole the proportion is 3.7 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. Southern Training produced its first self-assessment report in April 2000, in preparation for the inspection. The manager and the head of leisure programmes attended training given by the TEC. When the head of leisure programmes left Southern Training, his role in the self-assessment process was taken over by the training co-ordinator. The manager continued to gather and collate information, supported by the training co-ordinator. All staff contributed to assessing the generic areas and to agreeing the grades given in the report. Feedback was gathered from work-placement providers and from trainees through questionnaires and discussion. Other people who work with the organisation, such as external verifiers, were asked for their views on the company.

7. Inspectors spent a total of nine days at Southern Training during September 2000. They interviewed 20 trainees, held 18 staff interviews, visited nine work placements and interviewed four work-placement providers. They observed three training sessions, one progress review, one guidance session, one initial guidance session and one interview of a trainee by staff from the careers service about possible eligibility for funding to support additional learning needs. Inspectors also visited and interviewed the subcontractor. A wide range of documents including trainees' portfolios, assessment records, learning resources, individual training plans and progress-review records were seen. Inspectors also viewed the company's paperwork including internal and external verifiers' reports, employers' handbooks, the company's business plan, employers and trainees' feedback, policies and procedures.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Health, care & public services	2	0	1	0	0	3
Total	2	0	1	0	0	3

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

8. There are currently 35 trainees following programmes in care and early years care. Twenty trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 in early years care. Six are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in care and nine are working towards NVQs at level 3 in care. Of the 20 trainees working towards an NVQ at level 2 in early years care, eight are foundation modern apprentices and 12 are on other work-based training programmes for young people. Of the 15 care trainees, nine are advanced modern apprentices currently working towards NVQs at level 3, two are foundation modern apprentices and four are on other work-based training programmes for young people. Three trainees are men. Twenty trainees are

employed and 14 are on work placements in 19 nurseries, residential homes and nursing homes throughout Merseyside. One trainee is employed in a hospice. Employers and work placements provide on-the-job training. Trainees attend Southern Training's training centre one day each week for theory sessions which are linked to NVQ units. Off-the-job practical training sessions on first aid, health and hygiene techniques and how to take blood pressure are also provided for trainees on care programmes. Certificates are given to trainees for the first aid courses. Sixteen trainees have been identified by the careers service as having particular learning requirements and requiring additional support to achieve their level 2 awards. Southern Training's assessors visit these trainees in their workplaces each week to carry out assessment. Other trainees are visited fortnightly in their workplaces. Six staff members based at Southern Training are responsible for training and assessing trainees across both programme areas. They are occupationally experienced and qualified to assess care and early years care NVQs. Three staff members are qualified internal verifiers. Of 49 trainees who have begun early years programmes since 1997, 16 have achieved NVQs at level 3 and nine have achieved NVQs at level 2. Nineteen trainees left their programmes without qualifications and five are still in training. Of 41 trainees who have begun care programmes since 1997, 13 have achieved NVQs at level 3 and eight have achieved NVQs at level 2. Seventeen trainees have left without qualifications and three are still in training. A total of 45 trainees have completed their individual training plans since 1997.

9. Although inspectors found some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, they identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The impact of the underdevelopment of key skills was not identified by the company. Inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ strong links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ regular contact to support trainees' learning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor key skills training
- ◆ lack of awareness of programme requirements by some trainees
- ◆ poor achievement rates

10. Southern Training offers good off-the-job training in bright, well-maintained rooms at its training centre. Skilled trainers ensure sessions are well structured and presented in interesting ways. A variety of techniques and visual aids including videos, flipcharts, handouts and nursing aids enhance trainees' learning. Training sessions meet the individual learning styles of trainees. Methods of training vary and sessions include regular breaks for trainees with short concentration spans.

Weekly tutorial sessions at the training centre are well planned. Trainees have booklets containing information and tasks which link well to the requirements of their awards. Modern apprentices in care are encouraged to research additional areas linked to their NVQs. They also receive booklets and handouts, which provide information for the theory requirements of their award.

11. Assessors visit trainees in their workplaces on a weekly or fortnightly basis and have a good understanding of what trainees are doing at work. Assessors use opportunities at the training centre to discuss practical skills gained in the workplace with trainees in relation to the NVQ requirements. This positively reinforces and raises trainees' awareness of NVQ requirements. Visiting assessors observe trainees' performance in the workplace. Workplace supervisors are encouraged to provide witness testimonies. Assessors check work and positive feedback is given to trainees to improve their working practices. Portfolios are well structured. Evidence in portfolios clearly reflects the level of trainees' experience at work. A variety of assessment methods is used to judge trainees' competence. These include discussions, observation and questioning. Trainees can use recorded evidence and discussion instead of written evidence if they prefer.

12. There are well-structured additional visits when trainees' progress is slow. Advice and guidance are given to trainees to encourage them to complete work. Assessors ensure that trainees are fully settled into their work placements before starting assessment. Assessors visit trainees with additional learning needs each week in the workplace. Trainees also attend tutorials on a weekly basis at the training centre. Achievement of NVQ units is openly displayed on a whiteboard at the training centre and is used by assessors to encourage trainees' progression.

13. There has been no integration of key skills into NVQ training. There has been some cross-referencing of key skills with the care programme, but this work has not been used. One staff member has gained the key skills practitioner's award. Key skills evidence is not being identified in trainees' portfolios. Workplace evidence is not used as key skills evidence. Target dates for completing key skills have been set but these are unrealistic. Some modern apprentices will be taught key skills at the end of programme and this will involve some repetition of work.

14. Foundation and advanced modern apprentices have no awareness of the requirements for completing the whole of the framework of their awards. Trainees are fully aware of the requirements for their care awards but have received insufficient information about the key skills requirements. Some trainees are confused about what key skills entail. Some advanced modern apprentices do not know that key skills are part of the award. They are unaware that information technology forms part of key skills training.

15. Retention rates for both care and early years care have worsened over the past three years from 70 per cent completing programmes in 1997 to 50 per cent during 1999-2000. Achievement rates during this time have also dropped from 55 per cent of trainees completing their individual training plans in 1997 to 40 per cent during 1999-2000. The average across the two programmes in 1999-2000 is made up from 45 per cent of the trainees completing their individual training plans in care and 36

per cent in early years care. Advanced modern apprenticeships have been offered only since 1999-2000, and so no advanced modern apprentices have had time to complete their frameworks.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

16. Southern Training has an equal opportunities policy which covers all current legislation. The manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented. The policy is reviewed annually and was last revised in January 2000 to include updates in legislation. Southern Training also has a statement which defines bullying, gives examples and explain the procedures for dealing with this problem. Trainees do not receive copies of the equal opportunities policy and bullying statement, but they are displayed clearly on notice boards throughout the organisation. Trainees learn about equal opportunities and complaints and appeals procedures during their induction. Employers and work-placement providers receive a copy of the policy. The self-assessment report identified two strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors found the same strengths and identified an additional strength. Inspectors discovered that the two weaknesses found through self-assessment were being addressed and were no longer significant. Inspectors found an additional weakness. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ strong links with community groups for advancing equal opportunities
- ◆ open access and good support for disadvantaged trainees
- ◆ regular, annual analysis of equal opportunities awareness in the workplace

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no routine analysis of data

GOOD PRACTICE

One former trainee is helping to promote care as a career for men as well as women, and for people from all ethnic groups, and to promote Southern Training's programmes. He is black, has a successful career as a senior officer in a care home, and so acts as a role model for under-represented groups within the care profession.

17. Southern Training states its commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all trainees. The equal opportunities policy and anti-bullying statement are clearly displayed around the building. The policy and statement make it clear that it is the responsibility of employers, staff, trainees and work-placement providers to establish and maintain equality of opportunity in employment. Trainees have a sound understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They know how they should be treated in the workplace and the training centre and know that they must treat others with respect. When a single case of bullying was identified, it was swiftly and effectively dealt with to the satisfaction of the victim, who successfully

completed his programme. Trainees are questioned on how they are being treated in their work placement to ensure that they are being treated fairly. The company has refused to use potential work placements where there was concern that trainees might face discrimination. Trainees understand the complaints procedure and go to the manager with any problems. A new booklet has been designed for trainees which contains the equal opportunities statement and the anti-bullying statement.

18. Southern Training identified through self-assessment that men are under-represented on care programmes and women are under-represented on sport programmes. Advertisements and posters for care programmes encourage men to apply, and advertisements for sport programmes encourage women. During initial guidance sessions, trainees are encouraged to consider non-traditional vocations which they may find interesting. Over the past three years, 16 per cent of care trainees have been men, which is higher than the TEC's average of 12 per cent. The number of men leaving training in care with an NVQ and/or a job also exceeds the TEC's average. The percentage of people with disabilities starting care programmes has been 19 per cent over the past three years, exceeding the TEC's average of 3 per cent. The percentage of people from minority ethnic groups starting programmes has been 8 per cent, which is again higher than the TEC's average of 2 per cent. On leisure programmes over the past three years, 48 per cent of trainees starting programmes have been women, 27 per cent have been people with disabilities and 25 per cent have been people from minority ethnic groups. Although these percentages have been higher than the TEC's averages, achievement of NVQs and progression into jobs for these groups have been similar to the TEC's averages.

19. The company has strong links with many local community groups, including minority ethnic groups, schools, units for children excluded from school or with additional learning needs and the careers service. A member of staff speaks Somali, which is spoken commonly in the local community. There is a prayer room at the training centre, and work placements are found close to the homes of women from minority ethnic groups who prefer not to travel far. These are all successful initiatives and have encouraged individuals to begin training. The training centre is still mentoring one trainee from a minority ethnic group who progressed from the care programme and became a midwife and is now taking a degree. The training centre employs people who live in the community, are representative of the community and have strong links with the community. This gives trainees a sense of community and stability. Two part-time members of staff, one of whom offers secretarial support, and the other of whom is a handyman, have additional learning needs themselves and one member of staff has a disability.

20. Southern Training has a good recruitment policy. Applicants for training programmes are invited to an interview with a member of staff who is trained in fair selection and interviewing techniques for an open discussion about training. Discussions are broad, ensuring, for example, that the trainee has somewhere to live and that other pastoral needs can be addressed through support by Southern Training. Trainees can join any programme. Additional learning needs and disabilities are not seen as a barrier to entry. However, trainees are given the necessary support, advice and guidance to overcome any additional learning needs

they may have. Trainees with many problems have successfully completed training with the company. Trainees who are considered by other providers to be too difficult to help are referred to Southern Training by the TEC and the careers service. Trainees who leave the programme early are welcomed back should they wish to return. Although there is no easy access to Southern Training's premises for people with mobility difficulties, one person who uses a wheelchair chose to do her training with the company and arrangements were made so that she could enter the building. The company identified access to the building as a weakness in its self-assessment report. There are plans, and funding has been agreed, to install a ramp. Doorways, training areas and lavatories are already suitable for those using wheelchairs.

21. The equal opportunities policy is clear that work-placement providers must accept and comply with Southern Training's equal opportunities policy. Work-placement providers are given copies of the policy and sign to agree to abide by its contents. When contracts with work-placement providers are renewed annually, work-placement providers' understanding of the equal opportunities policy is checked and another signature collected. However, if there are changes during the year at the work-placement provider, such as new staff with responsibilities for equal opportunities or for trainees, a new signature to vouch for commitment to the policy is not automatically obtained.

22. Data are not routinely analysed and evaluated to monitor performance in terms of equal opportunities. Although the manager provides the board with reports on trainees currently on programmes on a quarterly basis, this information is not passed on to all staff. The company collects information about trainees' gender, ethnicity, disability and postcode, but this information is not sufficiently analysed by each programme to look for trends in retention and achievement. Data are not compared with other local providers or the TEC's figures. As equal opportunities data are not analysed regularly, the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy is not formally monitored. Data were provided as requested for inspectors, but this was the first time the company had provided data in a format which enabled programmes and groups to be compared.

Trainee support

Grade 2

23. Southern Training recruits trainees through the careers service, personal contact, social services, units for children excluded from school or requiring additional learning support, youth liaison workers, schools, and advertisements in local papers. A small number of trainees are already employed when they begin their training. Potential trainees are invited for an initial interview. Background information about the school they attended, their academic qualifications, previous training, achievements gained, work experience and their aims and aspirations is collected. Information is given to the applicant about Southern Training and the training opportunities available in the organisation. The first element of initial assessment is carried out through conversation and completion of an interview record. If appropriate, information on the applicant is requested from the referring

body, such as the careers service or social services. At this point, potential trainees are asked to provide information, including a letter from their doctor, their national insurance number, and information needed to set up a bank account. These tasks are given to assess trainees' motivation and commitment to starting the programme. Basic tests are used to assess reading, spelling, punctuation and numeracy levels of all trainees other than foundation and advanced modern apprentices. Trainees who would be better helped by another training provider are referred back to the careers service. Sixty per cent of care trainees and 20 per cent of leisure trainees enter training through the lifeskills programme. After 10 weeks on the lifeskills programme, trainees have an induction to the NVQ. At this point trainees who are leaving the programme are interviewed by Southern Training and the careers service. An individual training plan is agreed with the trainee at the beginning of their programme. Trainees have a one-day induction during the first week of the programme. Reviews of training are carried out every 13 weeks. Trainees are helped to apply for jobs, to other training providers and to further and higher education establishments.

24. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and one weakness. Inspectors found that two of the strengths identified by the company were part of the same strength. Inspectors identified two other strengths. The weakness found through self-assessment had also been identified by the company as a weakness in equal opportunities, where it was found by inspectors to be more relevant. Inspectors identified two additional weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good support for trainees with learning difficulties and disabilities
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ good use of local support agencies
- ◆ effective use of supportive work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unsystematic initial assessment for modern apprentices
- ◆ failure to cover all aspects of training in progress reviews

25. Trainees have excellent working relationships with staff, based on trust and respect. Trainee support within the company is well planned and well managed for each individual. Many trainees on Southern Training's programmes are disadvantaged or have become disengaged from the learning process. The team approach to trainee support encourages and assists trainees to stay in training and to complete their programmes. All trainees, apart from those on foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships, have been identified as having additional learning needs. These trainees have action plans and receive extra progress

reviews from the careers service. One-to-one support for basic skills is given to trainees who lack the confidence to attend group sessions. Staff are well trained to give support. Two members of staff are able to use sign language. Five members of staff are qualified to teach basic skills. The company has supported trainees with hearing impairments who had literacy and numeracy learning needs, many trainees with additional learning and support needs, and speakers of languages other than English.

26. Staff are well qualified and experienced to give pastoral support. One member of staff is a qualified youth worker, another is a youth counsellor and another has recently completed training in guidance and counselling. Staff have frequent contact with trainees and work-placement providers. Weekly phone calls are made by staff to the trainees' workplace supervisors, and work-placement providers receive immediate visits from staff if they report any difficulties to Southern Training. Trainees are helped to set up bank accounts, which their training allowances are paid in to. Some trainees were having difficulties setting up bank accounts, and so staff lobbied the local member of parliament to intervene. An agreement was reached with a local bank so that trainees could cash their training allowance cheques there. Trainees from other countries are given effective help securing national insurance numbers so that they can begin work and training.

GOOD PRACTICE

The training co-ordinator has built up a strong working relationship with a local minority ethnic community over many years. Through contact with the community, she is learning their first language. Every time she meets with people from this community, they teach her a new word or phrase, so she is increasing her ability to communicate with the community. This helps her to communicate better when potential trainees from the community come to her for advice and to help the community more effectively. The community has given her a friendly nickname as the people have such respect for her.

27. A wide range of information is available to trainees. Additional training is given to help trainees cope with a wide range of problems and issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse, personal safety, sudden death, pregnancy, health awareness and sign language awareness by local agencies. The walls of training rooms and the canteen are covered with information relating to welfare benefits and health issues, contact numbers of support agencies and information on the TEC's student counsellor. Careers information, including job vacancies, programmes offered by other training providers, and courses at further education and higher education establishments, is clearly displayed.

28. Southern Training has links with work-placement providers in a wide range of vocational areas. Trainees are encouraged to sample working in any area which appeals to them, to help them find the vocational area which is right for them. If Southern Training does not have a work-placement provider offering work in an area which the trainee is interested in, it will find a new work-placement which offers what the trainee wants. The company has links with a wide range of work-placements including in construction, electrical installation, retailing, warehousing, funeral directors and leisure centres. A range of work placements within vocational areas is available. For example, in leisure, trainees can work in a leisure centre, youth centre or outdoor activity centre. Staff in work placements are sympathetic to trainees' needs. Trainees and work placements are matched carefully. A member of staff accompanies trainees to their work placements and to other training providers when they go for interviews. Trainees do not have a sense of failure through being rejected through interview. Southern Training asks trainees to spend four weeks in a work placement to get a real feel for it, but if trainees want to try another vocational area or another work placement or to move to another training provider at the end of that time then they are able to do so.

29. Foundation and advanced modern apprentices do not have key skills initial assessments. Some, but not all, have basic skills assessments. They take a skills scan and staff have a discussion with the employer to find out what level of responsibility the trainees have and what task their job role includes. Starting points for the key skills aspects of their programmes are not identified and training programmes are not adequately modified to take account of the knowledge and skills trainees already have.

30. Reviews are not used to focus effectively on trainees' progress. They focus on pastoral issues. Workplace supervisors are not always present and do not receive copies of completed review forms. Reviews do not focus on skills trainees have learned or set targets for what they are about to learn. Insufficient attention is given to trainees' NVQ progress. Additional progress reviews are held by the careers service for trainees who are identified as having additional support needs, but these also lack depth. Feedback from trainees indicated that they did not find the progress-review visits by the careers service to be particularly valuable. Staff have now negotiated with the careers service to have weekly visits so that trainees are able to build better working relationships with their careers advisors. Reviews for less able trainees who are close to the end of their programmes and unlikely to achieve their qualification aims are not sufficiently specific about what trainees will do next.

Management of training

Grade 2

31. Overall responsibility for programmes lies with the manager, who is supported by eight full-time and three part-time members of staff. All staff have worked for the company for many years and have a wide range of experiences of working with disadvantaged young people. Responsibility for the day-to-day management of programmes rests with the training co-ordinator. However, the staff team shares, on an equal basis, many day-to-day activities including training, assessment and individual guidance for trainees. A development officer is dedicated to researching funding opportunities to support the work of the company. He also prepares bids to secure funding from a range of sources. One member of the team is responsible for working with employers to arrange work-experience opportunities for trainees. The company has a board of directors, which meets quarterly. The manager attends these meetings. The company has a business plan, which sets out targets which reflect its aims. Annual targets are agreed with staff and focus on meeting the contract with the TEC. Team meetings are held weekly and are recorded. Staff appraisals are carried out annually. The manager informally reviews personal targets and objectives with staff on a regular basis. Southern Training uses a subcontractor to provide ESOL training to trainees who need this.

32. The self-assessment report identified an equal number of strengths and weaknesses in this area. Inspectors found mainly different strengths and weaknesses from those in the self-assessment report. Two of the strengths in the self-assessment report did not relate to the management of training, but to other

areas. Inspectors found the same weakness as that in the self-assessment report regarding the use of management data. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective communication between staff
- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ good operational management

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ informal arrangements for subcontracted training
- ◆ insufficient management-information systems

33. The staff team works closely together to ensure that training is well managed. The structure of the company allows for decisions affecting training to be made swiftly. There is much informal communication between team members. Meetings are held frequently between the manager and training manager and are recorded. The training manager speaks with staff and trainees daily. Trainees' opinions about their training are regularly sought by the manager. The company operates an open management style, whereby the manager is always available to staff and trainees if they wish to talk to him. Trainees know all of the staff and freely approach the manager directly if they wish to raise any issues. There is a good team spirit and the staff team works well together. Job roles are clearly defined in job descriptions even though staff often share responsibility for tasks. This enables the team to address trainees' needs quickly and effectively.

34. Assessors and internal verifiers meet regularly to discuss areas relating to NVQ training and assessment. Staff meetings are held each week and allow any changes or information to be communicated to staff. Staff are able to contribute ideas and suggestions which might support the development of the company. Occupational departments hold regular team meetings to discuss programmes in their occupational areas. Frequent informal meetings allow staff to bring any matter to the attention of colleagues and all staff are aware of any specific issues which might affect a particular trainee's training. Regular visits to trainees in the workplace provide opportunities for staff to talk with work-placement providers about any aspect of training. Feedback is gathered informally from employers as part of trainees' reviews. The company has good formal and informal links with many external organisations.

35. Many staff had links with Southern Training before they became employed by the company. Some are former trainees and most of the team started work in different roles to the ones which they now hold. These changes have required staff to acquire new, and to develop existing, skills. Staff have obtained qualifications to reflect the changes in their roles. All staff receive training which is appropriate

to support them in their work. Staff are appraised annually and are encouraged to suggest areas in which they would like to receive training. The appraisal provides an opportunity to discuss and agree development targets formally. These targets are informally monitored by the manager in the months between appraisals. The manager draws together an overall training plan for the organisation from the objectives agreed. Staff have attended courses to raise their awareness in areas which may affect the trainees they work with. These have included courses on awareness of drug and alcohol abuse. Staff training also includes informal development such as work shadowing and mentoring, with hands-on guidance provided for staff by more experienced colleagues. Staff who are newly appointed receive a formal induction into Southern Training.

36. The targets in the business plan are tailored to meet the organisation's aims to help young people from the local community. Annual targets for each department are agreed with staff and based on achieving the targets specified in the contract with the TEC. The board of directors meets quarterly to discuss all aspect of the company's work. The manager presents quarterly reports on work-based training to the board during these meetings. The organisation's administrator produces weekly updates of data. These provide the manager with information about trainees starting training and identify trainees whose progress is to be reviewed during the following week. The report identifies trainees who are about to leave training, which allows staff to prepare these trainees for whatever their next move will be. NVQ information is held by individual departments and used to monitor trainees' progress. Care trainees' achievements are recorded on a whiteboard in the department's office. All staff and trainees know where this information is recorded. Many trainees use this information to keep themselves updated with their own progress. It also motivates trainees. Information is recorded in a different format by each department and discussed as part of departmental and team meetings. Checks are made as to the accuracy of paperwork relating to trainees. Where errors or omissions are noted, these are communicated to staff and addressed. Accurate attendance records are maintained by the administrator and linked to payment of training allowances to trainees. Adjustments are made and trainees informed of the exact amount they will receive the following week. They are given the opportunity to challenge or question the accuracy of the information. Monthly performance meetings are held with the TEC to review the company's performance against its contract.

37. Many trainees who attend the training centre do not speak English as their first language. The training co-ordinator works closely with a local adult education centre to provide English language support for trainees. She keeps a written record of how training has been negotiated and agreed. Records specify meetings with the adult education centre co-ordinator and individual tutors to discuss the general needs of trainees. There is much informal liaison with individual tutors, who work with trainees to establish their progress and patterns of attendance. Trainees are visited regularly at the adult education centre by staff from Southern Training. However, there is no written agreement between Southern Training and the adult education centre which sets out the roles and responsibilities of both organisations. Although there is frequent contact between Southern Training and the adult education centre, there is no formal method of measuring whether training for

trainees meets the requirements of work-based training. Tutors at the adult education centre are not formally made aware of the specific objectives of each trainee or how the activities they carry out at the adult education centre fit in with the rest of the trainee's programme. The arrangements for the current term at the adult education centre are recorded in the training manager's informal log. This does not contain any specific detail about reviewing, monitoring or evaluating the training

38. Electronic management-information systems do not allow the prompt generation of reliable data about trainees' achievements. A computer database is used to produce information on the number of trainees starting and leaving programmes and the present number in training. This information is used to support claims to the TEC for funding. The system is unable to produce information on trainees' achievements, progression and destinations. Each team holds and regularly updates information on the location of trainees and their achievements. This information is recorded by different teams in different ways. The paper-based systems are reliable. However, there is no system to ensure that information is collected systematically and produced in a format which allows for easy analysis. There is no overview in the organisation of rates of achievement or progression. Individual trainees' files contain information for each trainee. However, this is not collated centrally. The need to present data in a variety of forms is placing increased demands on the existing system and is often time consuming and complex. The company is currently exploring options to update its management-information systems to provide broader information relating to trainees.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

39. Overall responsibility for quality assurance at Southern Training lies with the manager. The training co-ordinator works with the staff team to assure quality in the company's day-to-day work. There is a quality assurance manual which contains procedures for key aspects of the training process and explains what paperwork should be completed to support each activity. The company has some policies for some aspects of training. Procedures are not reviewed regularly to ensure that they are effective. Some quality assurance practices are informal. Quality assurance arrangements meet the awarding body and the TEC's requirements. The training co-ordinator has overall responsibility for assessment and internal verification. Assessors and internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and meet regularly. Minutes of meetings are kept and are used to share best practice across the staff team. There are occupational department meetings to discuss the analysis of formal feedback from employers and trainees and to agree action where improvement is needed. Staff meetings are used to discuss trainees' progress and the company's performance. Agreements with employers and work-placement providers are reviewed annually. The self-assessment report identified two strengths and two weaknesses in this area. None of these were found by inspectors. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good systems to evaluate training
- ◆ effective informal quality assurance

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete quality assurance framework
- ◆ inadequate written procedures for internal verification

40. The company has made many improvements to its activities. The decision to provide NVQ training and assessment in house, rather than use subcontractors, has meant developing systems where there were none previously. Systems have been introduced to gather feedback from employers and trainees. Questionnaires are issued twice a year and responses are analysed. Each team meets to discuss the feedback gathered and negotiate actions where improvements are necessary. Changes have been made as a direct result of the comments made by trainees. In response to comments made in an external verifiers' report, an additional member of staff has been recruited to carry out NVQ assessments for trainees working towards care qualifications. This has meant that the workload of assessors has been more appropriately shared and assessments happen more frequently. The company identified that employers were not familiar with the requirements of work-based training or with the links between training carried out at the training centre and the activities trainees are involved in at work. Staff discussed these issues and produced a comprehensive handbook which provides detailed information on NVQ requirements, the role of the assessor and a framework for reviewing the contribution of trainees in the workplace. Handbooks have recently been issued to all employers. A similar handbook is currently being produced for trainees as a way of providing them with the information they require when they start training. The staff team has worked with trainees to encourage employers to become more involved in their NVQs. Assessment documents have been standardised to ensure the consistent recording of decisions. Where NVQ standards have been revised, staff have consulted with other organisations to establish any areas of good practice which they could adopt.

41. The organisation has an effective procedure which sets out the frequency at which key quality assurance activities will take place. This includes audits carried out by the TEC, as well as internal measures to assure quality. All staff are familiar with the procedures and the content of the quality assurance manual. The manager carries out informal monitoring of off-the-job training at the training centre. These observations are not recorded. Informal observation is part of the manager's daily approach to his work. He will often pause to observe training sessions with trainees, or talk with them directly to ask them their views. On one occasion, he observed that the body language of trainees suggested that the session was not engaging them positively. Following the session, he talked with the tutor about how the training techniques might be altered to encourage trainees to participate more freely. Session plans have been introduced to ensure more consistent training. They are not yet sufficiently established for their effectiveness

to have been evaluated. Each week, the manager carries out spot checks on a sample of paperwork contained in trainees' files. The sample is determined by the weekly printout of data which states which trainees are ready to be reviewed the following week. Self-assessment is referred to in the quality assurance procedures. However, it is not yet an integral part of quality assurance.

42. The organisation has some written policies. However, these do not reflect all of the key activities which the company carries out. There are no policy statements to cover the areas of induction, initial assessment or reviews of progress. Overall responsibility for key areas is not clearly defined. There is no formal checking system to ensure that the content of procedures remains current and that procedures are effective. The procedure covering work with subcontractors is inaccurate. There is no formal system for observing training. Although the manager carries out informal observations, these do not systematically take into account all aspects of the training process. Activities such as induction and initial assessment are not routinely reviewed. Formal evaluation centres around the collection of feedback from trainees and employers. There is no clear responsibility within the organisation for evaluation. Where areas for improvement are identified, action plans are produced to record the steps to be taken. These plans do not always identify who will be responsible for which actions. The destinations of trainees who leave the programme are analysed by the manager. However, this information is not used in the quality assurance of training.

43. A system for internal verification has been developed and the recording of verification decisions has developed over time to become more detailed. Current paperwork does not easily identify exactly which assessment decisions are being verified. Although a range of units, assessed by different assessors, is sampled, verification takes place only when units are completed. There is no sampling plan which identifies in advance which units and assessor's work will be verified. The training co-ordinator observes assessors, but this is not routine. Although the training co-ordinator has a checklist itemising what should be looked out for when carrying out observations, this is not used. Assessors and internal verifiers meet frequently and the meetings are recorded. The level of detail of the minutes varies, and it is not always clear if there have been discussions relating to the consistency of assessment decisions.

44. Southern Training's first self-assessment report was carried out in preparation for inspection. The self-assessment report contained detailed background information on the community and area in which the company is based. The occupational and generic areas lacked depth and detail. The action plan addressed only weaknesses and did not show how strengths would be consolidated. Some strengths and weaknesses appeared in several areas of the report. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses in all areas. Inspectors awarded one lower grade and one higher grade than those given in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with all other grades.