



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 1999

REINSPECTION MAY/JUNE 2000

N&B Training Company Limited

SUMMARY

The N&B Training Company provides good training in early years care and education and care of the elderly. Supportive employers provide good work-placement opportunities for trainees. N&B Training Company staff carry out assessment in the work placement. The company's management of training is good and staff work well together to help the company achieve its targets. The arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity and to provide trainee support are satisfactory. At the time of the first inspection, the quality assurance measures were not satisfactory and had not been fully documented. The N&B Training Company was reinspected 10 months after the publication of the first report. The company has improved the quality assurance arrangements, which are now satisfactory. There is good use of target setting and improved assessment planning, although the arrangements are not yet fully established.

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of the reinspection of the N&B Training Company Limited, the original published report text for quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ frequent and regular contact between assessors and trainees
- ◆ thorough and rigorous assessment planning
- ◆ designated staff responsible for equal opportunities and trainee support
- ◆ good opportunities for staff to communicate their ideas
- ◆ effective evaluation provided by review process



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ no initial assessment of some trainees
- ◆ failure to tailor individual training plans to trainees' individual needs
- ◆ inaccessibility of off-the-job training for some trainees

INTRODUCTION

1. The N&B Training Company Limited (N&B Training), based in Walton-on-Thames, was established in March 1998 to provide work-based training for young people in the Surrey Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) area. The main focus of the company's training is in care of the elderly and early years care and education. As part of its planned development, the company recently secured a contract with West London TEC to provide training leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care, early years education and care, and playwork at levels 2 and 3, and football coaching at level 2. The company also provides assessor training leading to qualification. It contracts with Surrey and West London TECs to provide training under the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship schemes to eligible trainees. The training centre at Walton has a large seminar room with appropriate facilities for off-the-job training. In addition, there are offices accommodating seven N&B Training's staff. There are currently 68 trainees who are TEC-funded. At the time of reinspection there were 73 modern apprentices, 33 national trainees and eight trainees on other training for young people and 11 trainees undertaking life skills training. There were 91 trainees in early years care and education, 10 in care, two in playwork and 11 in football coaching.

2. In 1998, the unemployment rate in Surrey was 1.5 per cent, compared with the national rate of 5.2 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of unemployed persons in Surrey are women and 80 per cent are over 25. By June 2000, the unemployment figures were 0.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 53.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of those registered as unemployed in the county have no NVQ or equivalent qualification and 75 per cent of these persons have not undertaken training. Achievement rates for five plus GCSEs at grade C and above by June 2000 were 56.6 per cent compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

3. The main employment growth areas in Surrey are in computing and business support and more than 40 per cent of companies expect to take on additional staff this year. There are about 40,000 businesses in Surrey, of which 80 per cent are in the service sector. Most local firms employ fewer than 20 staff. Women hold 42 per cent of the local jobs and 16 per cent of these are part time. The proportion of persons in the local population from minority ethnic groups is 2.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. Three per cent of the company's trainees are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of persons in the local population with a disability is 11.5 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. N&B Training submitted its first self-assessment report in February 1999, after the inspection planning meeting had taken place. This had been a second submission, as the original document did not meet format requirements. Just two members of staff had developed the first submission and they were the only staff employed by the company at the time. The self-assessment report did not give a clear picture of the organisation of the company or of the way training is provided. Inspectors agreed with some of the weaknesses identified by the company, but they considered that some of the strengths were no more than normal practice. They found additional strengths in some areas as well as additional weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the company's grades for care, management of training and equal opportunities, but awarded lower grades for trainee support and quality assurance. N&B Training's second self-assessment report was submitted just prior to reinspection in April 2000. The report gave an overview of the company and progress made since the last inspection. It also included the company's submission to achieve the Investors in People award and a TEC audit report, outlining the arrangements for training. It highlighted strengths which were considered better placed in the generic area of management of training. The self-assessment report did not clearly describe achievements in improving quality assurance arrangements.

5. At the first inspection, a team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at N&B Training during May 1999. They inspected training in the occupational area of care, which incorporates care of the elderly and early years care and education. The playwork and football coaching training had not yet been developed. They interviewed 28 trainees and 11 workplace supervisors and employers. They conducted 13 interviews with work-based assessors and training organisation staff, including managers, and visited 14 sites. One telephone interview was held with an external verifier. Trainees were interviewed in their work placements and no formal off-the-job training was observed, although a total of eight assessment sessions were observed and graded. Documentary evidence was examined, including trainees' files and portfolios, individual training plans, review documents, training session plans and evaluations, contract details, awarding body reports, staff records, minutes of meetings and the company's policies and procedures.

6. At the time of the reinspection, a team of two inspectors spent a total of four days with the N&B Training. They interviewed 11 trainees, visited four work placements and interviewed three employers. They conducted two formal interviews with training staff and three informal discussions. They looked at trainees' portfolios, individual training plans, progress reviews and assessment and internal verification records. They viewed the company's policies and procedures, evaluation reports, minutes of meetings and performance data.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Health, care & public services		2	3	3		8
Total	0	2	3	3	0	8

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

7. N&B Training provides training and assessment services to Surrey and west London. The company has 58 early years care and education trainees, of whom nine are on national traineeships and 49 are modern apprentices. There are 10 care of the elderly, modern apprentice trainees. All modern apprentices are employed. Training is largely undertaken on the job in settings such as private day nurseries, and private residential care and nursing homes. There are 31 placements currently in use and at six there are work-based assessors. Some placements provide off-the-job training and some training is also provided by N&B, either at the training centre or in the workplace. The company also provides training on video for assessors and organises meetings to update and inform them of assessment requirements. At this new company, of 18 trainees who began the care programme, five have obtained an NVQ level 2, and of 78 trainees, who started the childcare programme, 10 have obtained an NVQ level 3 and one has obtained an NVQ level 2. To date, the trainee retention rate stands at 61.2 per cent in care and 68 per cent in childcare. The company's self-assessment report identified strengths that were found by inspectors to be normal practice. Inspectors found additional strengths and agreed with the identified weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

In one chain of private nurseries, each trainee is allocated a mentor in addition to the appointed assessor and room supervisor. The mentor always works alongside the trainee, giving them advice and practical support, so that they can model their behaviour on positive examples of good practice.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough and rigorous assessment planning
- ◆ frequent and regular visits by assessors to trainees
- ◆ high-quality placements
- ◆ good mentor system for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to tailor individual training plans to trainees' individual needs
- ◆ late introduction of key skills into the training programme

8. Assessors visit trainees in their placements every two to four weeks. They set clear targets for trainees through discussion and agreement of future work. The planning and assessment of learning are thorough and rigorous. Assessors and trainees agree action plans which detail how evidence will be presented and

assessed. This ensures that trainees, employers and assessors know what will happen next. Copies of action plans are kept by trainees. Trainees and assessors work well together and relationships between them are good.

9. The company uses a variety of high-quality placements where staff are committed to vocational training and provide effective support, some assessments, and off-the-job training. The quality of the work placements and their staff is such that trainees are able to model their behaviour on examples of good practice.

10. Staff introduce trainees to key skills briefly during induction to their programmes. Assignments are set to help candidates develop numeracy and literacy skills. Few trainees have access to computers in their working environments and the company has some difficulties in enabling trainees to make progress in developing information technology skills. Key skills are not an integral part of their work roles. Staff judge when to develop trainees' awareness of key skills on an individual basis. In general, however, during the first year of the programme, the trainees' understanding and awareness of skills are poor. They are unable to take advantage of opportunities to demonstrate, develop and record progress in key skills from the beginning of their training.

11. Individual training plans are routinely completed for all trainees. However, some trainees are not aware that they have training plans. They have little sense of ownership of the plans. Plans do not show sufficiently how training is adapted to suit individual needs. Changes made to the plans to help trainees who develop at a faster or slower pace are not recorded clearly enough.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

12. N&B Training meets TEC contract requirements in relation to equal opportunities. It has an equal opportunities policy statement which it has developed for trainees, an additional equal opportunities policy is used for staff recruitment purposes and one which is shared with placement providers and employers. Each of these documents is tailored to meet the needs of the audience for which it is written. The documentation for placement providers and employers refers to race relations and sex discrimination legislation, but does not refer to the *Disability Discrimination Act*. The documentation for trainees has recently been reviewed and updated, but it does not refer to relevant legislation. The company collects data regarding trainees' ethnic background, gender and whether or not they have a disability. An action plan has been produced which lists the action N&B Training will be taking to address weaknesses in relation to equality issues and areas for development and this is part of the document produced for trainees. There is a complaints and grievance procedure and details of this are given to employers, and to trainees as part of their trainee agreement. The company's self-assessment report identified a strength which inspectors considered to be no more

than normal practice and one weakness which was not considered significant. Inspectors found strengths and weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report, and they awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ designated equal opportunities officer
- ◆ flexible approach to gathering and recording evidence for assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no reference to current disability legislation in policies
- ◆ inaccessibility of off-the-job training for some trainees

13. An equal opportunities officer has responsibility for monitoring and promoting equality of opportunity. There is a harassment statement in the staff handbook which relates to the grievance and disciplinary procedures. All staff are aware of their responsibilities to uphold and promote equality of opportunity. There is a complaints procedure which is clearly explained during induction, and all trainees and employers receive a copy of it. An equal opportunities policy has been produced and is given to trainees, but it makes no reference to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

14. Trainees are not fully aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities, although they are aware of equality issues in their practical work within their occupational area. After the trainees' induction period, staff make little attempt to further trainees' learning and understanding of equality of opportunity. For example, a male trainee in a childcare setting was unable to change babies' nappies. Under the terms of the employer's policy, male trainees are, in any case, forbidden from changing nappies, in order that they might not lay themselves open to allegations of child abuse. This particular trainee, however, had to demonstrate his ability to change nappies in order to obtain his NVQ. The manager made it possible for the trainee to provide evidence of this particular skill by allowing him access to the infants in his own family. The manager and the training provider did not use this situation to explore issues related to gender stereotyping and discrimination with the trainees.

15. The training centre has good publicity material displayed relating to learning difficulties. In accordance with requirements, there is a substantial component in the occupational training programme linked to equality issues and anti-discriminatory practice. This is referred to in many question and answer and practical sessions that aim to assess whether the trainees have the requisite level of knowledge to achieve the NVQ. The off-the-job training is provided at the main training offices in Walton and also at five of the nursery providers' premises. Trainees who are living, or have placements a long way away from these settings, are unable to access this training. The extent of the off-the-job training provided

by employers depends on the availability of staff and time. There is no guarantee that all trainees will receive the same level of background knowledge to assist them in their practical work on the job.

16. Assessors allow trainees to present their evidence for assessment in a variety of ways and have responded to the individual needs of trainees. One trainee, who is deaf, is given clearly written tasks and has more time from the assessor to ensure she understands the action plan and how she will gather her evidence. Another trainee, who has difficulty with written work, is able to use a Dictaphone and photographs to record her evidence for presentation.

Trainee support

Grade 3

17. All potential trainees for the youth programmes are referred by the careers service and are interviewed by a training advisor at the company. They are then given a diagnostic test on their basic skills. Trainees who are recruited while in employment are invited for interview but do not undertake any further initial assessment. A placement officer matches those trainees referred by the careers service to appropriate employment. N&B Training has no trainees with special learning needs who require basic literacy or numeracy training. All trainees receive specific information relating to their programme during induction and sign a training agreement document. A job-search facility is available for those trainees requiring it. This includes training in interview skills and CV preparation. A service to enable trainees to up-date CVs is also on offer. To date, no trainees have required any help with job search. Inspectors found some of the aspects identified in the self-assessment report as strengths to be normal practice. They also identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ designated member of staff with responsibility for trainee support
- ◆ 24-hour help line for trainees
- ◆ celebration of trainees' success in a variety of ways

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial assessment of some trainees
- ◆ failure of training plans to reflect accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ inadequate and unsatisfactory induction programme

18. N&B Training has a member of staff who is responsible for trainee support.

This role mainly focuses on the pastoral care of trainees and ensures that issues which are sensitive or require referral to outside agencies are handled discreetly and with care. Responsibility for interview, initial assessment, and the ongoing support for trainees, rests with individual training advisors/assessors.

19. Initial assessment is not systematically applied to all trainees and is only given to those applicants referred by the careers service. This means that applicants who are employed and who have specific learning needs do not have these identified until they have started the programme. For these trainees, discussion takes place between the employer and the training adviser and an interview is held. Records of the interview are kept and a judgement is made about the applicant's suitability to the programme and this covers their appearance, personality, communication skills and motivation. Trainees referred by the careers service are diagnostically tested. Some of these applicants hold a degree or other qualifications yet undertake a basic skills test. They also attend interview. No attempt is made to target these assessment methods on those from either referral route who particularly need additional resources and support.

20. Accreditation of prior learning is not available for all trainees. Individual training plans are devised when applicants sign up for their training programme. Although their plans usually contain details of the qualifications the trainees hold, they do not take account of the competencies which trainees with general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in health and social care and certificates for key skills units at level 2, already possess. Many trainees are unaware of the requirement to complete key skills as part of their modern apprenticeship programme and are unaware that they could have previous qualifications in this area accredited. There are no training staff employed who have the appropriate qualification to assess prior learning, although two have recently registered to start the course leading to it.

21. The induction into the modern apprentice programme is brief. It often takes place while trainees are completing many other enrolment tasks, and information given to them is not systematically reinforced throughout the training period. Trainees do not play an active role in the induction process and do not have opportunities for discussion and exploration of the issues being highlighted. Some trainees are unaware of the qualifications they are taking and of their rights and responsibilities. Many trainees are unsure of the importance of their training plans and other documentary information they received during the induction session. Assessors and visiting training advisers do not make systematic or recorded reference to induction topics other than health and safety regulations and procedures, which are gone over again with the trainees every three months.

22. The company provides a 24-hour telephone help line. This is used by all those concerned with the training programmes, including employers, placement providers and the careers service. Trainees have access to help, advice and information, and company staff respond to their needs promptly. Trainees are positive about this help and advice service which enables their concerns to be addressed quickly and facilitates trainees' achievement and progression.

23. N&B Training is a recently formed organisation and as yet, not many trainees have completed their qualifications. Nevertheless, the company celebrates trainees' achievements in many ways. It has a newsletter, which is sent to trainees and external agencies including employers. This includes articles highlighting trainees' successes. Certificates are presented to trainees in their workplace in the presence of work colleagues and other trainees, and a major award event is being planned for the summer.

Management of training

Grade 2

24. N&B Training was established in March 1998. All staff recruited to the company so far have been known to the directors and their posts were not openly advertised. Most objectives set in the original business plan have been met. The company has moved into new premises, employs four members of staff, has gained contracts with Surrey TEC and West London TEC, is registered with the awarding body as an assessment centre, and offers training leading to several NVQs as well as short courses in associated vocational areas. Inspectors identified strengths and one weakness additional to those listed in the company's self-assessment report. The grade awarded is the same as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good opportunities for staff to communicate their ideas
- ◆ strong commitment of all staff to furthering the company's success
- ◆ full involvement of staff in target-setting

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ staff's insufficient occupational experience in care of the elderly

25. The two directors of N&B Training and their consultant meet every month to agree on business policy and company development, and to discuss the company's performance. General staff meetings are held every four weeks and are minuted. Staff contribute to debate and identify keenly with company progress. One of the directors is attending a business development course and used course materials to involve staff in formulating the mission statement. Staff are regularly involved in setting assessment completion targets for trainees and their own development targets. Staff take part in very open, six-monthly appraisals, which are based on initial self-assessments. Staff performance, attitudes and competencies are evaluated and agreed upon, and relevant training is offered to those who need it.

26. The company has developed good working relationships with a variety of private nurseries and residential care homes. It supports two private nursery groups which undertake all the assessment and training of trainees, individually, or in

small groups, in the workplace. Additional information, relevant to the trainees' achievement of their qualification, is provided during evening workshops. Periodic newsletters are sent to all trainees, workplace and company staff, to keep them informed of new training courses, trainees' achievements and company developments. This sharing of information contributes effectively to the strong partnership that exists between provider and workplace staff. All parties are committed to working together successfully to help trainees take full advantage of opportunities to advance their understanding of their job roles and achieve their qualifications.

27. A sophisticated management database is used to process information about trainees, employers, staff, and company performance. Staff have trained and qualified as assessors. Two staff are qualified as internal verifiers and two are working towards qualifications in the accreditation of skills and learning trainees have already achieved. Some staff have training and experience in working with people with special learning needs. Staff have relevant qualifications and experience in childcare, but they have insufficient occupational experience in care of the elderly.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

28. N&B Training's quality assurance procedures continue to develop as the company grows but are not yet fully developed. The company makes use of a computer software system provided by Surrey TEC and is planning to use it to monitor trainees' progress. There are systems to ensure regular assessment of trainees and there are internal and external verification procedures in place.

GOOD PRACTICE

New paperwork has been devised for each NVQ unit in early years care and education and care. This outlines the unit requirements, shows integration of key skills and identifies potential sources of evidence through a series of tasks for trainees to undertake to support their learning.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no clearly documented quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ insufficient programme evaluation

29. An action plan suggested ways in which the organisation is working to improve the quality assurance arrangements. N&B Training re-graded this area in its second self-assessment report and identified strengths which were found by inspectors to be more appropriate to the management of training. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good use of target setting to manage performance
- ◆ improved assessment planning
- ◆ effective evaluation provided by review process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance systems
- ◆ ineffective programme review system

30. The company mission statement outlines the company aim of providing high-quality training services, and staff make this a key goal in their work with trainees. The company's policy on quality states a commitment to obtaining feedback from those who use its services. It has developed some procedures and guidelines for training and assessment, and provides examples of completed documents to help staff with the implementation of these procedures. It does not outline the company's quality assurance systems and processes, nor detail how these will be used to support the continuous development of the company and enhance the trainees' experience.

31. The company has actively sought the views of trainees through an annual questionnaire. The data collected is analysed and has led to improvements such as the development of a new assessment process, giving trainees a complete overview of each unit and fully integrating key skills. Trainees are encouraged to develop their evidence portfolio by use of a task-sheet approach. Feedback from trainees about this is very positive and the company expects it to speed up trainees' NVQ achievement, although it is too soon for this to be measured.

32. Off-the-job training is evaluated through responses to questionnaires. These are analysed by the trainer and summarised on an evaluation review sheet that recommends action to improve training sessions. As a result, there have been changes to the structure and content of training. The company intends to use a system of programme review team meetings in each occupational area to gain feedback from users and key agencies to improve the training programmes. The views of the TECs and careers service will also be sought. This approach has been tried and not been successful and attendance at the meetings has been poor. The company is now exploring alternative methods.

33. There is a peer observation and review process whereby company staff observe one another's working practices. Feedback from this process is given to assessors, internal verifiers and trainers, but is not fully recorded.

34. The company has analysed the destination data of those trainees who completed programmes. Analysis of early leavers has shown that the main reason is pregnancy and the company is working to support these trainees in completion of their awards after the birth of their babies. The company is meeting all its contractual obligations, and has written action plans to ensure compliance with TEC requirements.

35. The first self-assessment report was developed by two members of staff, who were the only employees of the company at the time. They found the process of self-assessment a useful form of quality assurance. The second self-assessment



report was produced in April 2000. Not all staff were involved in the production of the report. The self-assessment report did not clearly identify the organisation's strengths and weaknesses.