



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 2000

Cambridge City Council Employment Foundation Scheme

SUMMARY

Cambridge City Council Employment Foundation Scheme provides satisfactory training in foundation for work to a wide range of trainees and clients. Trainees and clients have the choice of learning a good range of occupational skills, but the trainees and clients' achievement and retention rates are poor. Cambridge City Council Employment Foundation Scheme's equal opportunities policy does not cover work-based training but its staff have a good awareness of equality of opportunity. Additional learning support is well-integrated into the training process. The induction process is inadequate. Business planning is good but it is not supported by the use of relevant data. Quality assurance systems do not monitor the equality of training or specifically address work-based training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly flexible training programmes
- ◆ good ratio of trainees to trainers
- ◆ wide-ranging monitoring of equality of opportunity
- ◆ good teaching of basic skills
- ◆ effective business plan

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention rates
- ◆ no equal opportunities policy for work-based training
- ◆ poor induction process
- ◆ too few qualified trainers
- ◆ no quality assurance policy to address work-based training

INTRODUCTION

1. Cambridge City Council Employment Foundation Scheme (EFS) was established in 1986 as a direct response to the closure of the community programme. It is situated within the city council's service depot close to Cambridge's city centre and within 10 minutes' walk of both the main railway station and the main bus terminal. During 1999-2000, 76 per cent of trainees and clients came from the city of Cambridge and 24 per cent from the city's travel-to-work area. The company contracts with Central and South Cambridgeshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Business Link Limited for work-based learning for adults and through the TEC for the New Deal options of full-time education and training, environment task force and voluntary sector. The organisation has had a direct contract with the TEC since July 1998. Since April 2000 it has had a contract to provide the Life Skills option for the Learning Gateway. EFS works in partnership with another training provider and manages that provider's basic employability programmes in the area of business administration. There are 22 members of staff, of whom 17 are full time and five are part time. They are employed by the city council. Training takes place at EFS's training centre. At the time of inspection there were 60 trainees and clients. Five clients were on programmes not within the scope of the Training Standards Council's (TSC) inspection. There were 18 trainees on the basic employability programme for work-based learning for adults. Eleven clients were on the New Deal full-time education and training option, five clients were on the environment task force option and four clients were on the voluntary sector option. There were 17 trainees following the Life Skills option of the 'Learning Gateway'.

2. Cambridge is a small but economically buoyant city, with a population of approximately 110,000. The city is an administrative centre for local and central government. The presence of Cambridge University has influenced patterns of commercial development within the city. Many firms are at the leading edge of technological, medical and telecommunications research. Sixty-seven per cent of the labour force is employed in the service industry. Currently, 3.5 per cent are employed in industries related to construction of property and this proportion is anticipated to increase considerably within the next 10 years. There is also a thriving tourist industry attracting over 3.5 million visitors a year. Forty-five per cent of firms indicate that vacancies within craft and related occupations are hard to fill. Unemployment in Cambridge is 3.5 per cent, with unemployment among men significantly higher than unemployment among women. The 1991 census indicates that 5.9 per cent of the residents of the city are from minority ethnic groups. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers in Cambridgeshire achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 52.79 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 1999 fewer than 3 per cent of school leavers in Cambridge entered work-based training. However, this figure excludes those on modern apprenticeships. Approximately 15 per cent of school leavers went directly into employment.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. EFS has been working on the production of a self-assessment report for three years. A self-assessment report submitted to TSC in May 2000 was complex and did not truly reflect the occupational area within which the organisation works. A second self-assessment report, produced in June 2000, placed the activities of the organisation more appropriately under foundation for work. Three of the company's senior staff produced the second self-assessment report. Trainees, clients and work-placement providers were not consulted. The second self-assessment report gave a lower grade for the occupational area than did the first. Inspectors awarded a higher grade. A lower grade was awarded for quality assurance than that given in the second self-assessment report.

4. A team of four inspectors spent 12 days at EFS in July 2000. They met 30 trainees and clients. They interviewed 25 people, including EFS's staff, members of the city council and staff from external agencies. They visited 10 work placements and projects. Inspectors met three work-placement providers. They examined a range of evidence including external verifiers' reports, trainees' portfolios and EFS's records. They observed six sessions of training. The grades awarded are shown in the table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work		2	3	1		6
Total		2	3	1		6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Foundation for work

Grade 3

5. EFS offers a range of training for adults and young people. Many of the trainees and clients face significant barriers to employment as a result of personal or social disadvantage. Training in the occupational areas of construction, horticulture, retailing and business administration is given within the foundation for work programme. All trainees and clients are unemployed at the time they join the programme. Trainees can work towards both milestones and accreditation of units including key skills and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1 and occasionally level 2. Training and assessment take place in a training centre within a city council depot. In addition, trainees and clients carry out real construction and horticultural tasks as part of a community projects team in the city of Cambridge. Project supervisors have NVQs in the relevant occupational

areas. There are four internal verifiers. Some trainees and clients are offered work-experience placements as part of their training plan. Employers offering placements include a dance studio, a bicycle shop and a children's nursery. There are three basic skills tutors who have just completed a basic skills qualification. There is one training supervisor in horticulture who has an NVQ level 2 in amenity horticulture (decorative) and four training supervisors who have other qualifications in horticulture. There is one senior trainer in carpentry and six training supervisors, who all have either NVQs at level 1 or are working towards NVQs at level 2 in a construction subject. There are two senior staff who are qualified trainers. The inspection team agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and awarded a grade higher than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly flexible training programmes
- ◆ good incentive schemes
- ◆ good trainer-to-trainee ratio
- ◆ realistic work projects

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate training areas
- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ poor retention rates
- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment

6. EFS provides training which is highly responsive and flexible to individual trainees and clients' needs. Trainees and clients are able to influence their own training and appreciate the opportunity to do so. Individual programmes are discussed between trainer and trainee or client and designed to reflect each person's interests, skills and changing circumstances. These changes are not always recorded on the trainees or clients' individual training plans. Good opportunities are available for trainees to transfer between the different subject areas of training. All trainees and clients undertake an initial period of training at the training centre before working on community projects. After this initial period, those in training typically spend four days each week working on projects or in work placements, and one day at the training centre.

7. The Learning Gateway trainees value an incentive programme aimed at increasing participation and motivation. Trainees are offered driving lessons, horse riding lessons and other training outside contractual agreements if their attendance is satisfactory. Trainees are required to attend for a minimum of 16 hours each week. One training plan has, as an agreed action, the finding of a suitable placement involving motor vehicle mechanics and the taking of, driving lessons. This trainee was placed in the spare parts department of a local garage, and

progression opportunities were identified through a main car dealer's training programme.

8. There is a good ratio of staff to trainees and clients. This is generally one member of staff to six trainees or clients in the training centre. Training staff are assisted by learning assistants and volunteers. If a trainee or client has numeracy and literacy needs, individual teaching is given. In carpentry and joinery and in painting and decorating trainees and clients often receive individual tuition and an instructor is never teaching more than five people. Supervision on the horticultural placements is good. Trainees and clients work alongside a trained supervisor who is in charge of no more than two trainees or clients.

9. Vocational training is good. Most of the vocational training takes place as part of community projects. EFS now carries out garden maintenance on behalf of the city council for those people receiving benefits. This provides good training in decorative horticulture and hard landscaping. Projects include the establishment and maintenance of gardens for a refugees' hostel and for a home for those with severe mobility difficulties. Activities undertaken by project teams include decorating for pensioners, fitting of locks and gates, and the care of gardens and amenity centres. Trainees and clients taking part in community projects wear the same type of clothing as the city council's employees. Trainees and clients value the feeling that they are part of the city council. Good standards of work are achieved by carpentry and joinery and painting and decorating trainees and clients.

10. Although the training programmes are highly individual, trainees and clients work together on the projects. Training in basic skills, key skills and personal and life skills is always available and given in a sensitive way. Jobsearch skills are an integral part of a New Deal client's programme. One training session focused on the preparation of curricula vitae. The trainer ensured that clients were actively involved in the session. Trainers effectively used clients' personal experiences to develop the training. Appropriate resources were used to reinforce the training session. There were no schemes of work to support the training session.

11. The area used for training in basic skills is cramped and inadequate. Access to the area is through a classroom and a small group-training area. There is constant disturbance and distraction from boiler and plant machinery noise as well as from vehicle noise outside. Canteen and toilet facilities are shared by trainees, clients and city council employees. These facilities are in the main depot buildings and are some distance from the training centre.

12. Achievement rates for all the programmes are poor. In 1999-2000 75 per cent of the work-based learning for adult trainees left early without any qualifications. Only one went into employment. Thirteen per cent of the trainees completed their individual training plans. Fourteen per cent of adults went from work-based training into employment. In the Learning Gateway programme 15 per cent of this year's trainees have left early without any qualifications. Insufficient use is made of NVQ unit accreditation as part of individual training plans.

13. Retention rates on all programmes are poor. Figures for the New Deal since the start of the programme in April 1998 show that 64 per cent of clients left the environment task force option early without employment or completing their individual training plans. Seventeen per cent left for employment but did not complete their individual training plans. Across all the New Deal options since April 1998, only four clients have left for employment having completed their individual training plan. In the New Deal option of full-time education and training 54 per cent left early without employment or completing an individual training plan. There have been only two clients in the voluntary sector option. One left for employment but did not complete his individual training plan, the other left early without employment but having completed his individual training plan. A number of clients have participated in other training schemes, some repeating aspects of the New Deal. One trainee has started five different programmes with EFS.

14. Although training is given through work-based projects, little use is made of assessment by workplace supervisors and no feedback is asked from those people who benefit from the projects. Work experience is poorly planned. Some trainees are unaware of plans regarding progress, despite concerns being raised during regular individual reviews.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

15. EFS works to the key aims of the city council's current economic policy statement, one of which is to promote opportunity and social cohesion within the city of Cambridge. The EFS has an equal opportunities policy covering discrimination on the grounds of disability, race and gender. The policy meets the contractual requirements of the TEC and the Employment Service. The person responsible for equal opportunities is EFS's scheme manager. Equality of opportunity is covered at all inductions. Trainees and clients are given an equal opportunities statement of values, which aims to sum up the equal opportunities policy in a simple statement of intent. Trainees and clients can see the full policy on the equal opportunities notice board, which is placed between the main entrance to the training centre and the training rooms. There is a lift at the training centre for trainees and clients with mobility difficulties. There is a complaints and grievance procedure. EFS monitors staff, clients, and trainees according to gender, ethnicity and disability. The 1991 census indicated that 5.9 per cent of Cambridge's residents are from a minority ethnic group. Seven of EFS's 22 staff are from a minority ethnic group, two are dyslexic, nine have a disability or health difficulty, and their ages range from 21 to 66. Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and found additional strengths in the good staff awareness of equal opportunities and strong links with local community groups. Inspectors agreed with the two identified weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found an additional weakness in that equal opportunities policies do not meet the needs of work-based training. Inspectors awarded the

same grade as that given by the organisation.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good staff awareness of equal opportunities
- ◆ wide-ranging monitoring of equality of opportunity
- ◆ strong links with local community groups

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no equal opportunities policy to address work-based training
- ◆ poor reinforcement of equal opportunities
- ◆ no promotion of equal opportunities on marketing materials

16. EFS provides good training in equal opportunities for its staff. All staff have a good understanding of the city council's objective to promote equality of opportunity to disaffected groups within Cambridge. All new staff take part in an induction programme which includes consideration of equal opportunities issues. In addition, all staff must, within two years of starting their employment, attend three additional training programmes. These include an introduction to equal opportunities, an introduction to racial equality, and an introduction to disability awareness. EFS's staff have undertaken other training offered by the city council such as training in awareness of deafness, dealing with harassment, mental health awareness and visual impairment awareness. Staff are issued with a code of conduct on how to behave when representing the city council. All codes of conduct include a statement that employees must treat everyone equally.

17. Equal opportunities is monitored at various levels. There is a corporate equal opportunities action plan. A planning department action plan for equal opportunities includes objectives for EFS. Equality of opportunity is monitored annually by the city council's community development and leisure committee. This committee recommends how the equal opportunities objectives should be met. The scheme manager is responsible for providing an annual report on EFS's performance. Monitoring has taken place annually for the last three years. Trends have been identified and positive action taken to address imbalances. In 1995-96, there were no women on any of the programmes offered by EFS. Recruitment literature actively seeking women applicants was placed with the Employment Service and careers service. For 1999-2000, there have been 39 women trainees and clients out of a total of 193. Aspects of equal opportunities are monitored on a more frequent basis within EFS at internal meetings. Equal opportunities is an agenda item at all EFS's staff meetings and at all trainees' welfare committees. An equal opportunities committee has just been formed. Internal monitoring has identified some issues. For example, it was noted at staff meetings that there was no policy to cover bullying and harassment. A policy has now been developed.

18. Complaints and grievance procedures are published and circulated to all trainees and clients. Complaints are logged in a complaints file or in trainees and clients' files. The scheme manager is responsible for dealing with all complaints received. Trainees and clients know that they have the right to appeal against any decision made by the scheme manager. EFS does not receive many complaints, but when any are received, prompt action is taken. Resolving complaints involves the trainee or client, EFS's staff, and if appropriate, the work-placement provider. Staff record the outcomes of any complaints.

19. EFS has formed strong links with local community groups and agencies. Projects have been undertaken in partnership with community groups, specifically aimed at targeting minority ethnic groups. There are partnership arrangements with a refugees' group, an Asian women's group and a minority ethnic forum. Funding has been obtained to support a programme for ex-offenders, in partnership with the probation service.

20. EFS follows the city council's equal opportunities policies. The finance and general committee formally approved the city council's racial equality policy in 1996. The city council's disability equality policy was approved in 1997. There have been no annual reviews of these policies since then. The policies make no reference to the specific needs of work-based training. Employers' agreements briefly mention the responsibility of employers to ensure equality of opportunity for trainees and clients. There is no arrangement to make the city council's equal opportunities policies available to employers. Employers' performance in providing equality of opportunity for trainees and clients is not monitored. Trainees and clients' understanding of what is meant by equality of opportunity is not assessed or checked by means of any exercise or questionnaire. After induction, there is no reinforcement of equal opportunities during training. Equal opportunities is not discussed during the review process.

21. Marketing materials do not state that EFS is an equal opportunities employer and do not always promote equality of opportunity. Marketing materials and course information sheets are available only in English.

Trainee support

Grade 3

22. EFS provides training for individuals who have a wide variety of social difficulties. These include addiction, homelessness, behavioural or emotional difficulties, mental illness and criminal records. Trainees and clients are referred from either the Employment Service or the careers service. Marketing material is sent to the local Employment Service and to careers offices. Many of the trainees and clients have been out of employment for long periods of time. Initial assessment is undertaken by the Employment Service and the careers service and the results are passed on to EFS. Initial interviews are often held within five days of a referral. The level and range of support required by this group is considerably

above that required on most training programmes. Trainees and clients are given advice when they leave programmes. The inspection team agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by EFS.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective liaison with community support agencies
- ◆ good outreach support
- ◆ good teaching of basic skills

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor induction process
- ◆ poor monitoring of basic skills provision
- ◆ inadequate use of pre-entry information to develop individual training plans

23. Trainers have good awareness and understanding of the wide variety of difficulties which trainees and clients have. Training has been given to all staff, particularly with regard to equal opportunities and disability awareness. Trainees and clients receive good pastoral support and counselling. This is particularly effective with regard to personal and social difficulties. Trainees and clients benefit from the personal support which they are given. Good links have been developed with external agencies to assist trainees and clients with housing and financial issues and to provide counselling and assertiveness training. Referrals are made to a range of voluntary agencies which offer specialised support. Trainees and clients, and in some cases former trainees, can drop into the training centre at any time to receive guidance on matters which might be of concern to them. Careers officers and the New Deal personal advisers visit the training centre every two months. They carry out reviews with trainees and clients. There is insufficient co-ordination between these reviews and those that EFS's staff undertake. Selected staff become mentors to trainees and clients. The mentors help trainees and clients to maintain and build self-confidence while they are on their learning programme. Trainees and clients are involved in deciding which members of staff they feel are appropriate to mentor them.

24. EFS works effectively with referring agencies to ensure that potential trainees and clients feel confident enough to join the training programmes. Staff arrange to meet trainees and clients in their homes, or at community centres, hostels, careers offices or job centres. Entry interviews are undertaken by two staff, both of whom have relevant qualifications in advice and guidance. EFS has achieved a nationally recognised quality mark for its basic skills support for trainees. Formal assessment of wordpower, numberpower and key skills is made once a trainee or client has put

together a portfolio of evidence. Individual support is offered in the training centre to those who have serious literacy difficulties.

25. Basic skills support is offered through an open-learning workshop. Trainers work effectively with individuals to link key skills to vocational areas. Trainees and clients follow individual programmes of learning, many linked to their own experience and interests. The ratio of staff to trainees and clients within this area is good. Additional learning support is available from basic skills assistants and volunteers. Adequate resources are available to support all the areas of teaching. Basic English language skills are also taught to a group of trainees with communication difficulties. Basic skills staff work closely with community project teams to develop appropriate learning materials. Assessments of trainees and clients' competence in basic skills are not made. Induction is offered to new trainees and clients every Monday morning. All trainees and clients attend a common induction. They are given an induction pack made up of training agreements and information on health and safety, equal opportunities and other relevant matters. There is insufficient participation by trainees and clients during induction. Materials used for the induction are poor and contain punctuation and spelling errors. Aspects of the induction process are not reinforced with trainees or clients.

26. Information from pre-entry assessment and interviews is not always used to develop individual training plans. One young person whose pre-entry notes clearly indicated that he was subject to a driving ban was offered driving lessons as part of an incentive scheme.

Management of training

Grade 3

27. The scheme manager of EFS reports directly to the city council's assistant director of environment and planning. They meet every fortnight. There is a management board which meets on a 12-weekly cycle. The board members are key personnel within the planning and environment, city services and financial departments of the city council. EFS reports to the city council's community development and leisure committee once a year. The city council has the Investors in People award. Staff meetings are held fortnightly and individual subject teams hold weekly meetings. The organisation has, since April 2000, subcontracted training in information technology and business administration to another training provider. The self-assessment report was accurate in identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective business plan
- ◆ good use of corporate structure

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate database for monitoring performance
- ◆ inadequate number of qualified trainers

28. EFS produces a detailed business plan every year, written by the scheme manager. Clear objectives are stated for work-based training, the services supplied to disadvantaged communities, value for money, partnerships within the Cambridge area and continued accreditation as an assessment centre. The plan contains details of current performance and achievement and which of the previous year's aims have been met. It is published as a brochure and distributed to organisations associated with EFS. All partners have a good understanding of the contents and the actions needed to achieve the objectives. It is written in plain English. Photographs of trainees and clients participating in various projects promote the activities of EFS.

29. EFS has effective associations with other departments within the city council, several of which are used to provide work experience for trainees and clients. EFS is well supported by the legal services, financial services, planning information and personal services departments. EFS has the support of city council members, which resulted in the organisation moving to better premises in 1997. It also allows funds for staff development within EFS. All staff have to meet mandatory training requirements within the first two years of employment. The training includes basic health and safety, equal opportunities, disability awareness and corporate induction. The city council's achievement of the Investors in People award has improved the staff appraisal system. Staff are now appraised annually with an interim review every six months. This has raised the profile and esteem of staff who were previously graded as manual workers in the city council. Seventy-five per cent of EFS's staff were in this category. EFS follows the council's strict procedures for staff recruitment. These are clearly laid out in detailed guidelines and ensure equality of opportunity in the recruitment process.

30. EFS is unable to provide accurate and current data for the training programmes. There is no system by which trainees and clients' achievement and retention rates are monitored. Although details of staff training are kept on individual's files there are no data kept centrally on what training has taken place. Managers are frustrated by the lack of information on training. EFS's collection of data meets the requirements of the Employment Service and the TEC.

31. There are only two qualified trainers within the organisation. There is no plan to develop the skills of other staff to ensure that they can meet the diverse needs of trainees and clients.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

32. EFS has no quality assurance manager. EFS's staff carry out all training and assessment. Assessors and verifiers share expertise. At the time of the inspection a new quality monitoring programme was being set up and EFS had begun to operate the city council's 'best value programme'. The self-assessment process showed a good deal of reflection, leading to a review of several systems within the training programme. The process has provided a stimulus for improvement. Inspectors considered that many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice. The inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTH

- ◆ achievement of basic skills quality mark

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no quality assurance policy for work-based training
- ◆ no monitoring of the quality of training
- ◆ no evaluation of trainees and clients' feedback

33. EFS has achieved a nationally recognised quality mark for its basic skills training. This award is appropriate to the work of EFS and the needs of its trainees and clients. Some of the procedures which support the achievement of the award are effective and well used, although they are too narrow in scope. When shortcomings are identified, they are promptly addressed. Trainees and clients have frequent opportunities to express their views during their training, in an informal way. There is good, open communication between EFS's staff and the trainees and clients.

34. EFS has no quality assurance policy of its own and follows the policy of the city council. The city council's policy does not cover work-based training. This has led to EFS having no overall framework of measures by which to monitor and improve the quality of its work. Individual elements of quality assurance exist but they are not well co-ordinated. Some procedures are set out in detail but are not followed by all staff. Quality is judged solely by the numbers of people successfully completing programmes or obtaining jobs. Staff do not have a clear understanding of the purpose of quality assurance. External verifiers' reports are regarded as reflecting the quality of training provision. There is no system in place which can be relied upon to ensure a consistent service. Nor is there one to ensure that the quality of training is gradually improving. Action, when taken, is informal rather than systematic. Some specific actions have been taken to address identified weaknesses, but these actions are unstructured. Information and statistics relating to trainees and clients' achievements and destinations on leaving the programmes



are gathered only to meet TEC requirements. Quality procedures to assure the quality of the subcontractor's training are in the early stages of development.

35. Targets are not set to encourage trainees and clients to make progress and complete programmes. Most trainees and clients are monitored through systems which record only the achievement of complete units of training. Many monitoring systems do not show precisely what stage individual trainees and clients have reached on their programmes. Data are being collected about trainees and clients but no use is made of these data as a means to effect continuous improvement. There is some systematic analysis of information about those who leave programmes. Much of the quality of training is dependent upon the initiative of individual members of staff. There are examples of trainees and clients using handouts which contain spelling mistakes and poor levels of written English. Trainees and clients' reviews are systematic and regular but are often superficial, with little of value to help improve the quality of trainees' training. Trainees are asked to evaluate their training by means of questionnaires. The results are summarised but not evaluated or acted upon.