



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 2000

# Hospitality Plus (UK) PLC

## SUMMARY

Hospitality Plus (UK) PLC provides training in four occupational areas, with a particular emphasis on its good hospitality training. The other areas of training, which it provides satisfactorily, are business administration, retailing and customer service, and leisure, sport and travel. All trainees benefit from having good work placements and well-qualified and occupationally experienced staff. Many trainees are employed by large national organisations which also offer the trainees additional, in-house training to supplement the training being given by Hospitality Plus (UK) PLC. Staff and trainees have a good awareness of equal opportunities. Trainees' individual learning needs are attended sensitively, although individual training plans are not always used to record this or other training activities. Hospitality Plus places a high value on its staff, and a training and development plan for staff is clearly linked to its business plan. It tackled self-assessment rigorously and has clearly written procedures for quality assurance.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Hospitality	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ outstanding teamwork across all areas
- ♦ highly qualified and experienced staff
- ♦ good work-based training in retailing and customer service and hospitality
- ♦ highly motivated trainees
- ♦ frequent and effective contact with trainees
- ♦ high retention rates on most programmes
- ♦ good awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees
- ♦ many initiatives to promote equal opportunities
- ♦ flexible arrangements to meet trainees and employers' needs

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ♦ inadequate key skills training
- ♦ slow progress by some trainees
- ♦ lack of reliable data

## INTRODUCTION

1. Hospitality Plus (UK) PLC (Hospitality Plus) was founded in 1993 by its current chief executive under the name The Hospitality and Catering Training Partnership Ltd. The company started out by specialising in hospitality and catering training, and changed its name to Hospitality Plus (UK) PLC in 1998 to reflect the additional occupational areas and wider range of training which it now offers. At the end of 1993, the company contracted with two training and enterprise councils (TECs), and had just over 100 trainees on hospitality programmes. Between 1993 and 1998, the company expanded rapidly to become one of the largest national training providers in the country. It now operates from 42 area offices in the following locations: Bradley Stoke, Baldock, Huntingdon, Peterborough, Nantwich, Derby, Bournemouth, Chelmsford, Cirencester, Waterlooville, Hanley Swan, Watford, Sittingbourne, Chorley, Bolton, Oldham, Ipstock, London (Brune Street and Rayners Lane), Croydon, Liverpool, Norwich, Northampton, Tyne and Wear, Middlesbrough, Nottingham, Oxford, Telford, Stafford, Ipswich, Farnham, Hove, Reading, York, Batley, Llandudno, Rugby, Birmingham and Dudley. The company also has a distribution depot in Bury St Edmunds, which deals with the company's publications, an office in High Wycombe, which administers claims to the awarding bodies for accreditation, and at Hove in East Sussex, where it has its head office. Hospitality Plus has a board of directors made up of the executive officer, two operational directors and a finance director. There are also two non-executive directors. A team of six team coaches reports to the operational directors. There are 34 area managers, responsible for the 42 area offices, and 118 area training organisers, who give training and carry out assessment. Team coaches are responsible for training and development nationally of staff.

2. Hospitality Plus contracts with 43 TECs. These are AZTEC, the TEC for the London Boroughs of Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth, Barnsley and Doncaster TEC, Birmingham and Solihull TEC, Bolton and Bury Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE), Bradford and District TEC, Business Link Central and Southern, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE), Dorset TEC, Dudley TEC, ELTEC East Lancashire TEC, Essex TEC, FOCUS Central London, Greater Nottingham TEC, Hampshire TEC, Heart of England TEC, Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCTE, Hertfordshire TEC, Humberside TEC, Leeds TEC, Leicestershire TEC, Manchester TEC, Merseyside TEC, Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Partnership, North and Mid Cheshire TEC, North West London TEC, North Yorkshire TEC, Northamptonshire CCTE, Northumberland TEC, Shropshire CCTE, South London TEC and Business Link, Somerset TEC, South and East Cheshire TEC, Southern Derbyshire CCTE, Staffordshire TEC, Suffolk TEC, Surrey TEC, Sussex Enterprise, South East Wales TEC, Tees Valley TEC, Thames Valley Enterprise, the Learning and Business Link Company, Wakefield TEC, and Wigan Borough Partnership. For the purpose of inspection, SOLOTEC was the co-ordinating TEC. The company receives funding through the European Social Fund (ESF), and also

operates commercial courses for private organisations. Hospitality Plus has 265 full-time staff, 164 of whom are directly involved in training, and also employs specialist consultants for specific areas such as bakery, finance and pensions, and staff training. Work-based training is provided for 4,233 TEC-funded trainees within the occupational areas of business administration, retailing and customer service, leisure, sport and travel, and hospitality. Of these, 2,344 are advanced modern apprentices, 1,615 are foundation modern apprentices, and 274 are following other work-based programmes for young people.

3. As a national organisation, Hospitality Plus serves communities with widely varying school achievement rates. The proportion of pupils leaving school with five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above ranges from some of the lowest proportions in the country to some of the highest. For example, Manchester has a proportion of school leavers with five or more GCSEs at grade C and above of 30.2 per cent, Liverpool 32.4 per cent (with 23.6 per cent in the Borough of Knowsley), and Nottingham 28.7 per cent. This compares to areas such as Cheshire with 54.5 per cent, North Yorkshire with 56.8 per cent, Surrey with 56.6 per cent, and Bath and North East Somerset with 54.7 per cent. The national average achievement for England in 1999 was 47.9 per cent. The proportions in the London boroughs range from 27.4 per cent and 27.8 per cent in Islington and Hackney respectively, to 60.1 per cent and 57 per cent in Sutton and Kingston-upon-Thames.

4. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups also varies widely between the areas where the company has area offices. This ranges from 1.4 per cent of people of working age in the Southwest and Northeast, to as low as 0.6 per cent and 0.5 per cent in Somerset and Northumberland respectively to 20.2 per cent in London, with 37.6 per cent in some of northwest London. This compares to the national average of 6.2 per cent.

5. The unemployment rates in the areas which Hospitality Plus serves are equally varied. The unemployment rate in the Southeast is 1.8 per cent of people of working age, and in the Northeast it is 6.2 per cent. This compares to the national average of 3.4 per cent for September 2000. Towns and cities within these areas can also vary. In the Southeast, the unemployment rate is 0.6 per cent in Winchester and Woking, and 7.9 per cent in Thanet. In the Northeast, it is 3.3 per cent in Durham and 10.4 per cent in South Tyneside.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The company's first self-assessment was part of a pilot for the Training Standards Council (TSC) in 1998 using the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE) draft framework. The project focused on self-assessment at the company's Suffolk area office. Hospitality Plus has been undertaking annual self-assessment in all area offices since this time. For inspection, the senior management team, which included the company's quality assurance manager, compiled the report for the company as a whole from individual area offices' self-assessment reports. A draft report was produced in June 2000, with the final report completed in August 2000. Feedback from trainees, employers, external verifiers, and internal and external auditors, was used in the self-assessment process. Staff in each area office contributed to their own reports, and they used the process successfully to help them identify areas needing improvement. The co-ordinating TEC helped in the process of producing the final report. The company's report was clearly written and easy to follow, and reflected the strengths and weaknesses which were found to be common to most area offices. Each area office has produced its own action plan from their individual reports, and the company has used these as a basis for the action plan for the company overall. Hospitality Plus accurately graded the four occupational areas inspected and management of training. Inspectors awarded higher grades than those given in the self-assessment report for equal opportunities and quality assurance, and awarded a lower grade than that given by Hospitality Plus for trainee support.

7. A team of 21 inspectors spent a total of 185 days at Hospitality Plus during September 2000. They visited 39 of the company's 42 offices. All offices visited were directly involved in training. Inspectors interviewed 506 trainees, visited 148 work placements, and interviewed 134 workplace supervisors and employers' staff. They also conducted 243 interviews with Hospitality Plus's staff and observed 30 assessments and 76 sessions of on- and off-the-job training. A range of the company's documents were examined, which included TEC contracts and audits, external verification reports, agreements with employers, policies and procedures, data on retention and achievement, publicity material, staff's curricula vitae, and minutes of meetings. Documents directly relating to training were also examined by inspectors at individual area offices and on visits to trainees in the workplace. These included documents relating to internal verification, trainees' files, and portfolios of evidence. The grades awarded for the training sessions observed are shown in the following table.

### Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		2	2	1		5
Retailing & customer service	2	5	3			10
Leisure, sport & travel	1	3	3			7
Hospitality	5	64	15			84
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>106</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 3

8. There are 37 trainees undertaking accounting training in six of Hospitality Plus's areas. There are 35 advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4, one foundation modern apprentice, and one trainee on other work-based training for young people. The trainees are employed in their work placements before they start the training programme. At the start of their training, they have an initial assessment of basic skills and key skills and of their preferred learning styles. The results of this are then used to draw up an individual training plan for the trainee. There is an induction in the workplace which takes about three hours. This covers equal opportunities, health and safety in the workplace, TEC paperwork and an introduction to the NVQ framework. The training is run as supported distance learning. Accounts trainees have individual tuition packs and work through these at their own pace. For those trainees taking NVQs at levels 2 and 3 there is also an annual programme of off-the-job training days. Training days are available to some of the trainees taking level 4, but work responsibilities make it difficult for them to attend. There are a variety of work placements, which provide a wide range of learning opportunities. These include chartered accountants' offices, hotel accounting departments, and industrial accounting companies. There are three members of staff involved in assessing trainees' work and internally verifying the qualifications. Of these, one has the experience and qualifications to assess NVQs at level 2, one to assess and verify NVQs at levels 2 and 3, and one to assess and verify NVQs at all levels. A subcontractor is used for the internal verification for NVQs at level 4. There is no meeting of all the assessors and internal verifiers. The internal verifier meets the assessors individually, but these meetings are not minuted. Almost all assessment is in the workplace. The assessor visits trainees at least once each month. The visits are for progress reviews and assessments. Assessment is by workplace observation, examination of product evidence and verbal questioning. These NVQs have been offered for the past three years. In that time, 48 trainees have been registered with the awarding body, with 12 achieving NVQs at level 2 and seven achieving NVQs at level 3. Three trainees have also completed their key skills qualification. The retention rate over the past three years has been 80 per cent. Because of the normal

timescale of the qualification, no trainee has yet fully completed an NVQ at level 4. However, of the six trainees who have moved onto this level, four have had units accredited by the awarding body. Three have achieved all the targets on their individual training plans.

9. There are also 22 administration trainees, of whom 12 are advanced modern apprentices, nine are foundation modern apprentices, and one is on other work-based training for young people. They are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Three of the modern apprentices are employed by Hospitality Plus, either as administrators in the office, or as assessors. Others are working in hotels in administrative roles. The assessors for administration are all assessors for other national vocational qualifications, such as in customer service or reception, as well as administration. Internal verifiers are also multi skilled. There is no off-the-job training specific to administration trainees. External employers offer training for trainees in their job roles. Hospitality Plus encourages the modern apprentices it employs itself to develop their skills and qualifications, particularly as assessors.

10. No modern apprentices in administration started on the programme before 1998-99. Of the nine who started that year, and the six who have started in 1999-2000, one has left early with no qualifications, and one has left with an NVQ at level 3. One has achieved all the targets on the individual training plan. Of the 12 national trainees who have started in 1999-2000 and the two preceding years, two have achieved all the targets on their individual training plans, one has left early with no qualifications, and the remaining nine are still in training. The trainee on the other work-based training programme is still in training.

11. The self-assessment report identifies six strengths and seven weaknesses, many of which were considered by inspectors to be more appropriate to the generic areas. Some of the strengths were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified, and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good use of work-based evidence and assessment
- ◆ individualised and flexible learning programmes
- ◆ supportive and involved employers
- ◆ good match between job roles and NVQ training

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient off-the-job training
- ◆ slow progress towards NVQs by some trainees
- ◆ insufficient detail in recording of set targets
- ◆ poor resources for some aspects of administration training

12. There is very good use of work-based evidence in the trainees' portfolios. They are encouraged to collect evidence from the start of their training programme, which is unusual in accounting training programmes. Assessors help trainees to match their evidence to the NVQ requirements. Sometimes this help is too directed, and trainees fail to understand the way in which their work meets the requirements of their qualifications. When evidence cannot be gathered by this method, simulation exercises are used to create evidence in accounts. The simulations are not managed in accordance with the strict guidelines of the awarding body. Accounts trainees undertake these exercises at home or work without supervision when they should be completed under controlled or simulated workplace conditions, with time constraints and restricted access to reference sources. There are no simulations for administration. The internal verification for accounting is a rigorous procedure. The internal verifier visits trainees and assessors at least once at every level of the NVQ, and portfolios are examined. The internal verifier records any divergence from the standards. However, there is no evidence that any corrective actions have been completed and agreed by the internal verifier. Internal verification for administration is planned according to a similar protocol, but some observations of assessments have been cancelled and replacement visits have not yet been organised.

13. Training is undertaken on a one-to-one basis with trainees. If an accounts trainee is struggling with an open-learning pack, then the trainee contacts the assessor. Individual coaching sessions are then arranged. One trainee had started the NVQ at level 2 with another training provider. After eight months, the trainee had made no progress. Within 20 months of moving to Hospitality Plus, the trainee had completed NVQs at levels 2 and 3, covered the necessary key skills and achieved units towards his NVQ at level 4. Another trainee had taken 20 months to complete just one level of an NVQ owing to personal circumstances. The individualised learning ensures that the trainees' needs are met and that they can progress within the qualifications at their own pace. The trainers/assessors are experienced in the occupational area, and have a good knowledge of the qualification, and so they are able to provide trainees with support and guidance if they need help with any of the work in the distance-learning books they are using.

14. Employers are enthusiastic about their trainees' development. Accounts trainees' employers offer study days, block-release study time before external testing, and a range of internal and external training courses. They have a system of mentoring trainees in the workplace. The employers of the administration trainees are also enthusiastic and supportive, and offer training appropriate to their trainees' needs at work. Some trainees have been given opportunities by employers to set up new systems at work to enable them to collect evidence of tasks they would not otherwise do. Some employers have experienced a great benefit from these new systems.

15. Modern apprentices have an appropriate level of responsibility in their job roles and, in some cases, already have their work-based assessors' qualification so that they can conduct observations on junior members of staff working towards NVQs. Several are already in supervisory positions. Assessors rigorously match



the trainees' job roles to the requirements of the NVQ at the beginning of each NVQ the trainee is undertaking. Accounts trainees can meet most of the evidence requirements of their qualifications within their job roles. In both accounting and administration, trainees are progressing through the levels of their qualifications in tandem with their progression and promotion in the workplace.

16. There is little off-the-job training for either administration or accounts trainees. Accounts trainees are offered day-release workshops on specific subjects, but higher-level trainees are often unable to attend because of the pressures of their job roles. There are no structured, planned or timetabled training activities for administration trainees. These trainees are entirely reliant on the training offered by their employers, and on advice given by their assessors. This advice is generally confined to the need to generate appropriate evidence, and does not develop trainees' understanding of the administrator's overall role. Any additional qualifications which are offered are either different NVQs, or unrelated to the administration NVQ. There is no training offered in keyboard or word-processing skills, for example, and no access to specific qualifications in these areas. However, many of the trainees are offered training in basic food hygiene, and some in first aid or health and safety, depending on their job roles.

17. Trainees' progress and completion of their modern apprenticeship and other training in both accounts and administration is slow. The failure to plan and integrate key skills assessment into the NVQ programme means that trainees are often assessed for these after finishing their NVQs. For many of the accounts trainees, overall completion is further delayed by the requirement of the advanced modern apprenticeship in accounts to include units from the NVQ at level 4, which some find difficult given the restrictions of their job roles.

18. There are few resources for administration trainees. They have to provide their own textbooks. They do not have portfolios provided by Hospitality Plus with guidance for evidence collection and for interpretation of the language used within NVQ programmes, as other trainees do. They do not have written questions to develop and test their knowledge in their occupational area. Some assessors have adapted written questions from other qualifications, but there are no questions relating to the units which are specific to administration.

19. There is poor recording of some parts of the training process. The progress reviews are not always recorded in depth. Targets and action plans lack detail and timescales. Although trainees are questioned during the assessment process, neither the questions nor the answers are recorded. This makes the verification of the trainees' theoretical knowledge difficult. Assessment decisions are not recorded clearly. If the assessor thinks more evidence is required, there is often no record of what this evidence is or what criteria it needs to match. Assessment is not a distinct activity, and in many cases it runs concurrently with reviews of the trainees' progress in the workplace, and coaching to meet shortfalls in knowledge. For accounts trainees, achievement of units is not always signed off in the trainees' copies of the awarding body's paperwork. Administration modern apprentices and national trainees are required to achieve extra certificated qualifications to

complete their frameworks, which are chosen according to employers' needs. Most trainees are working towards additional qualifications. However, there has been no negotiation with employers to choose appropriate extra units or qualifications. In one area office, trainees' individual training plans make no mention of these qualifications.

## Retailing & customer service

## Grade 3

20. Hospitality Plus offers NVQs in retailing and customer service in 31 out of its 42 areas. There are 387 trainees in this occupational area. Of these, 372 are training in customer service and 212 of these are advanced modern apprentices, 134 are foundation modern apprentices and 26 are following other work-based training programmes for young people in customer service. In retailing, there are 15 trainees, of whom nine are advanced modern apprentices and six are foundation modern apprentices. Most retail trainees are based in Kent. All the trainees are employed and came to Hospitality Plus either through their employers or through personal recommendation. Trainees are employed in a variety of companies, most of which are connected to the hospitality industry. The employers range from prestigious hotels in central London and famous private clubs to leisure centres and gyms. Seventeen per cent of Hospitality Plus's advanced modern apprentices complete their training, compared with a national average of 14 per cent for this occupational area. For foundation modern apprentices, 47 per cent of those with Hospitality Plus achieve their NVQs at level 2, and 49 per cent of trainees on other work-based training programmes achieve their NVQs at level 2. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices in 1999-2000 was 73 per cent, compared with 76 per cent for the two preceding years. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices in 1999-2000 was 74 per cent compared with 73 per cent in the preceding year. The retention rate for those on other work-based training in 1999-2000 81.5 per cent compared with 82 per cent, 78 per cent, and 75 per cent in 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 respectively. The self-assessment report identified four strengths and six weaknesses. Many of the weaknesses were not found by inspectors, who identified different strengths and one additional weakness. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent on-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements matched to trainees' career aspirations
- ◆ highly motivated trainees

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor recording of some assessments
- ◆ insufficient evidence in some portfolios for NVQs at level 2
- ◆ inadequate internal verification in some area offices

**POOR PRACTICE**

*In three training centres, trainees are not registered with the awarding body until almost halfway through their programmes. This excludes the trainees from the protection of the appeals procedure if they disagree with assessment decisions, and also from the scrutiny of external verification. Trainees who leave the programme early cannot claim accreditation of NVQ units.*

21. There is excellent on-the-job coaching and training. Assessors provide good one-to-one coaching in the workplace, at times to suit trainees, which is individually tailored to trainees' learning needs. The times of the visits include weekends, early mornings and late nights to reflect both trainees' shifts and commercial pressures. Trainees fully participate in training sessions and contribute to discussions. The sessions help trainees to interpret the NVQ requirements, helping them to learn the basic theoretical knowledge for their NVQs and also cover current commercial practice. Trainees also receive occupational training for their job roles from their line managers and their companies' trainers. Several have achieved promotions in their jobs during training. Their job roles are compatible with their NVQ training requirements. Training from their employers therefore meets the knowledge and understanding requirements of the NVQ. Hospitality Plus also provides additional equipment to help trainees, such as laptop computers, which are taken into the workplace by assessors to provide training in information technology skills. Hospitality Plus has created clear support material to help trainees both understand and contribute to their learning programmes. In addition, trainees are given word searches and quizzes which add fun to their training. The training is vibrant and responsive to trainees' learning styles and working environments. Trainers/assessors in all the area offices demonstrate a high degree of occupational awareness and knowledge of the industry. In some area offices, key skills have been carefully integrated into trainees' NVQ training.

22. Trainees are mainly employed in the hospitality industry, although other employers include a call centre, a manufacturer and an estate agent. Every trainee works in an appropriate environment for their NVQ and their career aspirations. This means that there is plenty of naturally occurring evidence which trainees can use to demonstrate their competence. Employers provide a good working environment for them.

23. All employers are very supportive of the training process and anxious to help with individual trainees' progression. Trainees are very enthusiastic about both their workplaces and their training. They are valued and have good and productive working relationships with their line managers and assessors. In some cases, trainees had discussed their NVQs with other employees and encouraged them to join the programme. Employers continue to use Hospitality Plus to train their staff largely because of the trainees' feedback.

24. In some area offices, assessment is poorly recorded. Worked-based assessors have little or no knowledge of the use of product evidence. Some records of observations by assessors lack detail and do not identify the particular NVQ criteria and standards being assessed. At one area office, an assessor is qualified to assess only performance evidence, and has yet to achieve the full assessors' award. This limits some trainees' opportunities for assessment. New paperwork has been piloted in some occupational areas and now introduced in this area to record detailed observations of assessments. This is not used within all area offices. In one instance, an assessor did not understand the framework for the customer

service modern apprenticeship and incorrectly insisted on the trainee doing the NVQ at level 2 as well as level 3. Many portfolios, especially those for NVQs at level 2, are muddled and difficult to follow. They contain a narrow range of evidence. There is a lack of cross-referencing in portfolios to allow competence in one aspect to be used as evidence for competence in another. This means that trainees have to duplicate evidence, which can slow their progress.

25. Internal verification is inadequate in some areas. There is an inconsistent application of internal verification between the area offices. In some areas, portfolios are not internally verified until they have been completed. At one office, the assessors are relatively new to their jobs and need guidance and support from the internal verifier on an ongoing basis, which they are not yet receiving. Internal verification is not always correctly recorded, and not operated to follow a structured sampling plan.

### Leisure, sport & travel

### Grade 3

26. Hospitality Plus provides foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in sport and recreation from 14 of its area offices. There are currently 63 advanced modern apprentices, 31 foundation modern apprentices and 10 trainees following other work-based training programmes. Trainees are working towards NVQs at level 3 in operations and development and NVQs at level 2 in operational services and coaching, teaching and instructing in the context of exercise and fitness. Trainees are able to obtain additional awards such as to be a pool lifeguard, first aid at work, basic health and safety, information technology, and to be a gym instructor. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Most trainees are employed before they enrol with Hospitality Plus, although some are referred to Hospitality Plus by the careers service and are found employment at leisure centres, private gyms and fitness clubs in hotels.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*The Ipswich office has developed a sports programme leading to a foundation modern apprenticeship with local leisure centres. The young people recruited onto this programme have had difficulty finding employment in the industry because of their lack of qualifications and experience. The leisure centres give guaranteed employment for the length of the programme. Of the 12 trainees who have undertaken this programme during the past three years, six have been given permanent employment, and three of these have since gained a promotion.*

27. Each area office is autonomous and assessors work within their own area, visiting trainees in their workplaces at regular intervals. Some of the area offices have their own internal verifiers while others do not. All the assessors and verifiers have occupational experience. None of the training staff have gained key skills practitioners' awards. The retention rate is satisfactory and achievement rates have varied over the past three years, with some offices performing better than others. Nationally, achievement of modern apprenticeships in this occupational area has increased. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were also found by inspectors. However, they identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good support by employers at all stages
- ◆ clear short-term target setting
- ◆ good use of well-produced logbooks for level 2 NVQ

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ slow progress by some trainees
- ◆ inappropriate programmes for some trainees

28. Assessors visit trainees regularly, usually every four to six weeks, but this can be more frequent if necessary. They respond to the shift patterns of the trainees and visit outside normal office hours. Most visits follow an established pattern, which consists of reviewing the previously agreed action plan, evaluating evidence collected, and discussing progress or problems. All trainees agree short-term targets during the progress review to be completed before the next visit. They know what has to be produced for the next meeting and what evidence should be collected. The targets are broken down into manageable amounts to ensure that trainees are clear about what is required of them. Some assessors have Dictaphones to enable them to record discussions, or to take statements of competence for trainees who are having difficulty presenting their evidence in a written form.

29. Trainees are enthusiastic about the support they receive from their assessors. Assessors motivate trainees and encourage them to overcome domestic or workplace difficulties and disappointments. Most of those completing NVQs at level 2 are eager to be considered for training towards the NVQ at level 3. Workplace supervisors have good working relationships with assessors and find that the trainees become more mature in their attitudes to work, responsible and self-confident during their training programmes.

30. The assessors carry out a detailed induction with trainees on a one-to-one basis. This reinforces the induction conducted at the area office and ensures that trainees understand equal opportunities, appeals and health and safety. All employers offer good work placements which provide trainees with ample opportunity to gain experience in a wide range of activities. Employers are fully involved in all stages of the trainees' programmes and receive regular feedback from the assessors. However, few provide witness testimonies of work carried out by the trainees to be used as evidence of competence by trainees. Most employers allow trainees to work on their NVQ portfolios during their working day and support them in this. Where necessary, the employers allow trainees to experience areas of work which are outside of their areas of responsibility, such as reception duties. This assists trainees in the completion of their NVQs by creating more opportunities for them to collect evidence. In most areas, all stages in the programme are internally verified, including the monitoring of assessments by the co-ordinating internal verifier in Suffolk. The co-ordinating internal verifier tries to monitor assessment in all areas at some point during the year. Internal verification records are detailed, relevant and clear. Internal verifiers sometimes telephone to give guidance and support to assessors across the country. There is a lack of work-based assessors. Most assessors have a basic qualification but some do not have a full qualification, which restricts the range of evidence which they can assess for trainees. The assessment teams for sport and recreation are limited to one person in most area offices, which allows no cover for sickness or other

leave. An assessment record is given to trainees taking NVQs at level 2. It gives some explanation about the NVQ requirements, and is used by trainees to record their practical work and their answers to questions testing theoretical knowledge.

31. There has been slow progress by some trainees. Many trainees have been on their programmes for a year but have had only one or two assessments of their work. Many trainees have completed only one or two units of their NVQs. Hospitality Plus offers trainees no of-the-job training or resource materials, which means that trainees are not supported to complete key skills units or to learn theoretical knowledge for their NVQ. In one area, workshops have recently been introduced in which assessors and the reviewer are available for the trainee to gain advice and support with the completion of key skills work packs or the compiling of their portfolios. There has been an increase in the work and units completed in this area.

32. Some trainees are on inappropriate programmes. For example, the advanced modern apprenticeship programme requires the trainee to work in a supervisory position in order to be able to collect evidence to complete their NVQs at level 3. The ability or opportunity to work at this level is not always confirmed at the initial assessment stage. Some trainees are not able to progress to the sport and recreation NVQ at level 3 on completion of their NVQs at level 2 because their job roles do not contain tasks relevant to the NVQ at level 3, and so they are put on to a customer service NVQ at level 2 until they change or expand their job roles. This delays the completion of their advanced modern apprenticeship. There has been no initial assessment until recently of trainees' basic skills.

33. There are some missed opportunities for assessment. There has been insufficient use of observation of trainees' performance in the workplace. In some cases, trainees have had to repeat work for assessment purposes using simulation instead of using events they have dealt with in their day-to-day work. Most evidence has been in the form of completed logbooks which contain the trainees written answers to set questions and accounts of their work, supported by a small amount of product evidence from the workplace. Most employers give regular staff training in normal operating procedures and emergency action plans. These often include simulations of dealing with accidents, emergencies and dissatisfied customers. This training is not linked to trainees' assessment or collection of evidence. This fails to make best use of evidence from routine activities which could form the basis of the NVQ at level 2 and substantial parts of the NVQ at level 3. There is little accreditation of trainees' prior learning and experience. Several trainees hold qualifications in emergency first aid and life-saving. These are disregarded. In most cases, trainees have other qualifications, which could be used to support their current awards, including some trainees who have already acquired key skills.



## Hospitality

## Grade 2

34. Hospitality Plus offers hospitality training across a broad range of activities. It offers programmes in craft baking leading to bakery production operations and bakery service NVQs at levels 1 and 2. It also offers NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in food preparation and cooking, preparing and serving food, food and drink service, bar service, hospitality service, quick service, housekeeping, and reception. For NVQs at level 3, training is given for accommodation supervision, front office supervision, kitchen supervision, on-licensed premises supervision, restaurant supervision, patisserie and confectionery, kitchen and larder, food service advanced craft, and drink service advanced craft. The company has 14 trainees on craft baking advanced modern apprenticeships, and 1,999 advanced modern apprentices working towards other hospitality NVQs. There are 28 foundation modern apprentices taking craft baking, and 1,406 foundation modern apprentices working towards other hospitality NVQs. Three other trainees are studying for NVQs in craft baking at level 2, and 233 trainees are taking NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in hospitality on other work-based training programmes.

35. Hospitality training is undertaken from all 42 area offices. All offices provide off-the-job training, mostly on the site of the office. Those who cannot offer this facility on site use other local facilities. Most trainees are assessed in the workplace, some by work-based assessors, and the rest by the company's staff. The company's staff carry out internal verification at regular intervals. Many of the larger employers undertake their own in-house training with trainees. This is taken into account on the trainees' individual training plans. Trainees are visited in the workplace every three to four weeks in most cases. In some areas, such as Middlesbrough and Gateshead, visits are more frequent, and trainees are often visited every one or two weeks. Trainees' progress is reviewed at each visit.

36. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified that the company had good retention rates across most programmes within hospitality. This was identified as a weakness in the company's report. Inspectors identified one additional strength, relating to good off-the-job training, and one additional weakness, relating to poor recording of observations. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the company's self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high retention rates
- ◆ good, individual training in the workplace
- ◆ excellent use of external competitions and links with professional bodies
- ◆ high standard of portfolios
- ◆ good use of effective and varied training materials
- ◆ good off-the-job training in many areas
- ◆ wide range of evidence collected

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress by some trainees
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ poor recording of some observations

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*One area office has established strong links with local employers who allow Hospitality Plus's staff to have free, good-quality facilities to use to run training sessions and workshops for all local trainees.*

37. Hospitality Plus has good retention rates across all programmes in hospitality. For the advanced modern apprenticeship, the retention rate was 66 per cent in 1997-98, 67 per cent in 1998-99, and 60 per cent in 1999-2000. From the start of the present contractual year, 84 per cent of those who started are still on their programmes. On the foundation modern apprenticeship programmes, the retention rate was 62 per cent in 1997-98, 74 per cent in 1998-99, and 69 per cent in 1999-2000. Of those who started this year, 70 per cent are still on their programmes. For trainees on other work-based training programmes, the retention rate was 70 per cent in 1997-98, 63.5 per cent in 1998-99, and 63 per cent in 1999-2000. Of the current year's intake of 162 trainees, only 12 trainees have left early. However, most of those who leave early do so in the first six to eight weeks of the programmes. Most of those who leave the programmes after this time leave with some NVQ units accredited. The retention rate in central London is poor. The hospitality industry in the central London area is particularly prone to a high turnover of staff, and the company has recognised this. Particular attention is now being paid to ensuring that trainees are placed on the correct programme at an appropriate level.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Hospitality Plus has a small number of trainees who are over the age to receive funding from the TEC. The company offers free training for these trainees if they are in establishments which have other trainees, who are already being visited by training officers.*

38. Trainees receive good one-to-one training in the workplace. This is well planned at most area offices, with clear short-term targets set for trainees at each progress review. Trainees and their workplace supervisors have a clear understanding of what training is needed before the reviewer's next visit. All trainees are in good work placements with supportive employers. Most trainees have good opportunities to achieve the full range of skills required to meet the requirements of their qualifications. Where gaps are identified in the skills available to be learned at work, appropriate arrangements are made for trainees to learn these elsewhere. For example, those of Hospitality Plus's staff who are occupationally experienced often give additional training to trainees who have difficulty covering all the skills required during their normal working day. Some trainees complete additional training programmes, such as in first aid, health and safety, and customer service, as well as some extra NVQ units. Additional qualifications are agreed on at the initial assessment, and are dependent upon the trainees' ability and the requirements of their jobs.

39. Hospitality Plus encourages trainees to participate in local and national competitions, exhibitions and projects. In one area, two trainees were nominated for the local TEC's trainee-of-the-year awards. A trainee from the Northwich area, who is completing an NVQ at level 3 in food preparation and cooking (kitchen and larder), has won a place in a national skills competition taking place this year. The Worcestershire area office's staff encourage trainees to participate in a project which is linked to the local education authority. This brings together schools and industry to foster vocational links for 16 to 19 year olds. A trainee from this area has also won a national award and a local award from the chamber of commerce



for young people who overcome specific difficulties to achieve. Another trainee from this region won the semi-final of the national trainee of the year award in 1999, while one trainee was runner-up in a national competition for chefs and the winner of a prize for speciality culinary skills. All advanced modern apprentices working in supervisory positions who progress to their NVQs at level 3 are given free student membership of the industry's professional body. This helps to encourage and motivate trainees to achieve their NVQs at level 2 and also helps to broaden their career opportunities as it gives them good access to information about the industry.

40. Trainees' portfolios are generally of a high standard. They are encouraged to collect work-based evidence, and some trainees are given disposable cameras to record work they have done. Trainees' work is carefully cross-referenced in their portfolios. The trainers/assessors often cross-reference trainees' work for them, although trainees do understand how the work in their portfolios relates to particular units of the NVQ. Trainees are also encouraged to collect witness testimonies where appropriate. Trainees also have access to audio recorders, camcorders, and laptop computers which the trainers/assessors use in the workplace with trainees or at the area offices. Most area offices have workbooks, videos and good handouts for trainees to use. Trainers/assessors often take magazines and books for trainees to borrow in the workplace, and trainees can also use these when they come into the offices for off-the-job training. The company has produced excellent workbooks to help trainees understand the theoretical aspects of the NVQs. Most offices ensure that trainees are given pens and other stationery to help them with their training, and trainees are often able to photocopy the company's materials in the area offices if this facility is not available to them at their place of work.

41. Off-the-job training facilities vary between area offices. Most offices are equipped to offer supplementary training in theory and to run short courses such as the basic and advanced food hygiene course, health and safety courses, key skills workshops, and programmes to support work-based assessors. Some offices, such as the Oxford area office, have flexible schemes of events running throughout the year for practical skills training. These include training for those taking NVQs at level 3 in kitchen and larder. The manager at the Oxford area office employs a local head chef to train young people in complex craft skills if they are unable to achieve the full range of skills in their own place of work. He also arranges local visits for trainees to butchers and other hotels and restaurants. Most offices have started to use key skills learner guides with trainees to help explain what sort of evidence can be used as key skills evidence from the workplace. Some area offices, such as in Cambridge and Kent, are more advanced than others at integrating key skills into the programmes. Most areas have only recently started to integrate key skills, and some staff have now achieved the key skills practitioners' award. Most trainees who have been on the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes for some time have to collect evidence for key skills at the end of their programmes. This has led to slow progress and completion of the apprenticeship framework for these trainees.

42. Where trainees are in small establishments, or where there are no work-based assessors, their progress is sometimes slowed by the missed opportunities for assessments through observation of naturally occurring work-based skills. This slows some trainees' progress. Where trainees are assessed in the workplace, some assessments are poorly recorded. It is not always clear from assessment records where the observations have been made. This practice is inconsistent across the area offices, and some area offices do record observations clearly.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

43. Overall responsibility for the implementation and development of the equal opportunities policy lies with the board of directors. Operational responsibility lies with the operations director, who regularly communicates with the equal opportunities steering group. One of the team coaches has responsibility nationally for giving information to all the other offices about equal opportunities issues. There is an equal opportunities strategy, which is passed down to staff from board level and the steering group through nominated area team members. The company has undergone a comprehensive review of its equal opportunities strategy and, earlier this year, brought in a specialist consultant to carry out an equal opportunities audit of systems and procedures. A second consultant is working with the organisation for 12 months to offer advice and guidance. A steering group was formed in March 2000. Area offices collate statistics on staff and trainees in relation to equal opportunities for those who have applied to be recruited and those who have actually started at the end of each TEC contractual period, and also quarterly. These are analysed and are submitted to the head office quarterly for central analysis. Results are discussed both locally and nationally during team meetings.

44. Each office is responsible for collecting local labour market information in relation to equal opportunities and for comparing the profile of its trainees against these figures. Each office is working towards the completion of a separate equal opportunities action plan. Staff receive a company handbook during their induction, which includes statements relating to equal opportunities. The policy is up to date with current practice. All employees are entitled to take 10 days' paid paternity leave. Trainees are given information relating to equal opportunities during their induction. Evaluation questionnaires issued to trainees to gather their feedback ask them if they were informed about equal opportunities and if they understood this. The system for dealing with complaints is part of the management's monitoring and inspection procedure and also part of the service failures procedure. Complaints are recorded and dealt with locally, and details are forwarded to the head office. Audits have been carried out in all the area offices' premises using a standard form to identify any problems with access for people with mobility difficulties. Action plans have been produced to address these problems. In some cases, actions have not yet been taken as the properties are

rented. Hospitality Plus has forwarded details to the owners for action. Alternative arrangements for accessing training have been made in some offices, where the identified problem cannot be corrected immediately.

45. Since the self-assessment report was written, many actions have already been taken to rectify the identified weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Several area offices use calendars which show multicultural and religious events and important dates. These were introduced to help raise staff's awareness of dates important to others, and to assist staff and trainees when planning holidays.*

- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees
- ◆ effective promotion of equality of opportunity throughout the company
- ◆ strong lead on development from national steering group
- ◆ good staff training in equal opportunities

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies and practices
- ◆ no reference to equal opportunities in marketing materials

46. Trainees have a good awareness of equal opportunities issues. During their induction, trainees are issued with a guide to their training programmes including information relating to the company's equal opportunities policy, the grievance and appeals procedure, the name of the person responsible for equal opportunities in their area office and a reference to the intervention the TEC can make on their behalf if trainees are not satisfied with actions taken by Hospitality Plus. Many of the trainees have also been given additional information recently, covering legislation, harassment and bullying, and some have been given written case studies as examples. Some offices have given trainees leaflets with information relating to equal opportunities in a simplified format.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Hospitality Plus has worked with the national training body for hospitality and another training provider to identify common training needs within certain cultural groups. For example, it has run training sessions in food hygiene in East London specifically for one cultural group to address an identified need. A further series of programmes is scheduled for the future.*

47. The company has given equal opportunities a high profile since the external audit was carried out in March 2000, and has promoted equal opportunities throughout its offices. An external consultant is working with Hospitality Plus for one year to offer guidance and support. Hospitality Plus has appointed one of its team coaches to have responsibility for equal opportunities throughout the company, and she regularly meets with the consultant. Hospitality Plus is working to ensure an understanding of equal opportunities issues at all levels within the company. Each area office has a nominated person responsible for equal opportunities. Training workshops are run for the representative, who then shares this information with all other staff in the area offices. The information includes the details of recent legislation and case studies to generate discussion. Each area office has an equal opportunities support pack, which includes relevant information on legislation. All members of staff have access to this at each area office.

48. The action plan for equal opportunities is updated regularly and the company

has already reached the sixth version. Each area office has a copy of this, in addition to its own local action plan. Progress against the action plans is regularly monitored. As a result of the external audit, a steering group was formed in March 2000 with responsibility for equal opportunities across the company. This consists of staff from all the levels within the organisation, including a director, and it meets quarterly. The group is responsible for organising staff's training and disseminating current information. Workshops have been organised for the area offices' representatives and these have been evaluated. Feedback shows these were found to be useful and more are planned. The group is guided by an external consultant.

49. Staff receive good training on a range of issues relating to equal opportunities. During their induction, they are given a staff handbook which includes references to equal opportunities. All staff have access to equal opportunities information through the company's intranet, which is constantly updated. Written information is also sent to the area offices on a weekly basis and includes any relevant details. The equal opportunities representatives ensure that all other staff share this information. Many staff in the area offices attend courses run by external companies or the locals TECs on cultural awareness, disability awareness, dyslexia, and equal opportunities issues. Some staff are learning sign language, and some offices have representatives on local training providers' equal opportunities groups. Staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment reports and of the actions being carried out.

50. The system of monitoring and reinforcing equal opportunities with employers is not fully effective. When employers are first contacted, they are asked if they have an equal opportunities policy, and if they do not they are given a copy of Hospitality Plus's policy. The agreement signed by employers when they take on trainees contains a clause referring to equal opportunities. After this, there very little is done to check whether the employer is complying with legislation. Most employers are not questioned about equal opportunities after the initial meeting. Trainees' progress reviews are rarely used to monitor equal opportunities issues. These weaknesses have been identified by Hospitality Plus and there are plans for an employers' handbook to be produced which will refer to equal opportunities.

51. Each area office is responsible for taking action to increase the number of trainees from under-represented groups, including people from minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and men or women in some occupational areas. The area offices have different targets, which relate to the balance within their local communities. Some area offices have begun to work with local TECs and local organisations or support groups to target their efforts. However, this activity only started recently and, although a few area offices have seen an increase in the numbers of applications from under-represented groups, the results have not yet been fully effective in increasing the numbers in training. The numbers of trainees from different groups within the community are not proportionate to the local TECs' figures for the wider communities or within industry. The current breakdown of staff shows that men, minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are poorly represented. Hospitality Plus has recognised this weakness

and has plans to increase the number of applications it receives for staff posts from under-represented groups. Some area offices have been unable to obtain statistical information for their areas and so have been unable to make comparisons.

52. The marketing materials used by Hospitality Plus do not contain any reference to equal opportunities. Marketing materials do, however, display images of under-represented groups such as people from minority ethnic groups, and show a balance of age and gender among trainees and staff. The promotional material does not, however, give any written indication of the priority Hospitality Plus places on equal opportunities.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

53. The support of trainees is another high priority for Hospitality Plus, from board level through to staff in the area offices. Potential trainees join the programmes in two ways. Employed trainees are visited by a training organiser at their place of work. Training organisers meet with trainees and employers to explain the benefits of training. Unemployed trainees are recruited onto the programmes through the careers service. Initial interviews are held at local careers offices by staff from Hospitality Plus. Some area offices advise unemployed trainees of vacancies with the many employers and workplaces Hospitality Plus contracts with. Whether employed or unemployed, a training organiser with occupational knowledge and experience gives applicants advice on training and programmes. Before beginning training, all trainees have an initial assessment, which identifies their abilities in key skills and their learning styles. When a trainee begins a programme, there is an induction meeting. This is carried out at the trainee's workplace. The induction includes the completion of all necessary paperwork, and awareness raising or reinforcing issues such as health and safety and equality of opportunity. Individual training plans are devised for each trainee. How trainees work towards their qualifications is determined by the results of the initial assessment, and these results also determine the frequency of the training organisers/assessors' visits. Visits can be as frequent as weekly and are never less frequent than at eight-weekly intervals. At each visit, a written record of the review is completed. Feedback from trainees on how they feel about their programmes is collected monthly, and staff at head office conduct telephone interviews with a sample of trainees to establish their views. The results of this feedback are collated and analysed. All trainees are supported by their training organisers. Staff in some area offices are qualified to support trainees with additional learning needs. Some area offices make use of support from specialist external agencies. The strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report were also found by inspectors. Inspectors found one additional strength and one additional weakness, and awarded the same grade as that given by Hospitality Plus.

#### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ frequent and effective contact with trainees
- ◆ flexible arrangements to meet trainees and employers' requirements

- ◆ good variety of methods to support trainees' individual learning needs
- ◆ good achievement of additional qualifications

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*One trainee received additional help from his trainer/assessor to prepare for an interview for a new job. The trainer gave assistance in preparing overhead transparencies for a presentation, and also helped the trainee with practice interviews and presentation skills. This increased the trainee's confidence and gained the trainee promotion.*

**WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ poor involvement of some employers at progress reviews
- ◆ unsystematic initial assessment
- ◆ inconsistent use of accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ ineffective use of some individual training plans

54. There is a comprehensive collection of marketing leaflets and literature, which gives potential trainees and employers accurate and detailed advice about what Hospitality Plus can offer them. The information is often passed on to them by the training organisers and assessors, who all have good occupational knowledge and experience. In some area offices, there are good links with the careers service, which refers many potential trainees to Hospitality Plus. Some referrals from the careers service do not prove to be suitable, as no consideration has been given to the high level of physical and practical ability needed to begin training in, for example, hospitality. Sometimes there is insufficient information exchanged between the careers service and Hospitality Plus for potential trainees to fully understand the requirements of the programmes. Potential trainees who are employed are visited at their place of work at least twice before beginning a programme. These multiple visits are designed to stagger the information given to trainees and to allow them time to consider their options thoroughly before committing themselves to a training programme. Induction to the programme is mainly given on a one-to-one basis by the training organiser. Recent evaluation of the induction has shown that trainees fail to recall many of the details given to them at this time. Consequently, trainees are now given additional training further into their programmes to reinforce those areas they do not recall.

55. Trainees benefit from the frequent contact between themselves and their training organisers. Each training organiser is responsible for all aspects of the training programme, including recruitment, initial assessment, NVQ assessment and reviewing trainees' progress. Throughout Hospitality Plus, there are good working relationships between trainees and training organisers. The frequency of trainees' visits is determined by many factors, such as their learning style, pastoral needs, time on programme, pressure of work and seasonal fluctuations of work within their industries. This consideration of the trainees' workplace circumstances helps to develop effective working relationships with employers.

56. The written record of each progress-review visit is put to a variety of uses, such as for monitoring short-term action-planning, targets for evidence collection and trainees' progress towards their overall NVQs. The review of progress concentrates on achievement towards the NVQ, and it does not encompass the wider issues of progress towards the overall apprenticeship framework. The information entered on the progress-review forms is often detailed but refers only to NVQ units and elements. Discussion with the employers on trainees' progress



in the workplace is often informal and not recorded. Employers do support training, but they are not always able to make time to take part in progress reviews and often do not sign progress-review documents.

57. Flexible arrangements are made by Hospitality Plus's staff to match trainees' working arrangements. They conduct observational assessments when trainees work during evenings and weekends or when trainees are receiving early morning deliveries. Off-the-job training sessions for groups of trainees are often held during weekends, sometimes on a Sunday morning, which is traditionally a quiet time in the hospitality industry. Not all trainees have easily accessible transport to and from training venues, and so training organisers often collect and return trainees to either their homes or workplaces. A variety of resources, including digital and disposable cameras, audio recorders and video cameras are available to trainees to help them collect a diverse range of evidence. The Nottingham area office has a database of details about trainees, including their dates of birth. Trainees in this area all receive birthday, get-well and appropriate celebration cards, and even Easter eggs. This is designed to make trainees feel valued by the company and stimulate their commitment. Trainees' achievements are celebrated by ceremonies to present them with their certificates.

58. Each area office is responsible for supporting its trainees. The specialist support given to trainees varies across the areas. When additional training needs of trainees are identified, they receive additional specialist support either from appropriately qualified staff from Hospitality Plus or through external agencies contacted by Hospitality Plus. Many trainees with additional learning needs are supported by their trainers/assessors. More frequent visits are made to support these trainees. Trainees contact their training organisers if they have any concerns or problems. Trainees have been helped through many different types of problems, including illness, homelessness and personal issues. One training organiser was even chosen as a birthing partner by a trainee.

59. A variety of methods of support are used to support trainees' individual needs. NVQ standards have been translated into French at one office to help French-speaking trainees, and other area offices have organised verbal examinations for trainees with literacy difficulties. Trainees with hearing impairments are supported at all assessments by specialist signers. A learning bus is supplied by the local TEC in one area. Trainees with additional learning needs are able to access additional learning support from the staff on the bus, particularly in information technology, as the bus is fitted with several up-to-date computers.

60. However, trainees who have been identified as having basic skills support needs are not sufficiently supported. Trainees with basic skills support needs are visited more frequently so that staff can support them in their learning at work. However, they are not given help to address the basic skills need itself. There is no overarching organisational strategy or procedure to ensure all special and individual learning needs are catered for.

61. Six months ago, a new initial assessment pack was introduced. The purpose of the pack is to establish the ability level and learning style of the trainee. The self-analysis questionnaire is designed to identify the preferred learning style of trainees. There is also a section for employers to complete. This initial assessment pack is an effective tool for identifying learning styles, which gives an accurate reflection of trainees' learning styles. The results help the training organisers to prepare plans of work to suit the trainees' learning styles. For example, where a trainee has identified boredom as being a problem with learning, the training organiser will set the trainee many short-term diverse targets so the trainee has a variety of tasks to work on at one time.

62. Initial assessment is not applied systematically throughout the organisation. Some sections of the initial assessment pack remain uncompleted by trainees in some areas, but in other areas the pack is used to good effect. All training organisers are responsible for the initial assessment of their own trainees. The results are interpreted by the training organisers. Some staff are more competent and confident than others about using the pack and interpreting the results. In the initial assessment pack, there are some exercises designed to assess trainees' ability in key skills at level 2. This is the only criterion used to measure the results of the initial assessment. There is no defined level of achievement which triggers a referral to a more systematic form of assessment of either basic or key skills abilities.

63. There is inconsistent accreditation of prior learning and experience. There is good accreditation of prior learning where trainees have achieved general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs), and these are accredited against key skills units in most cases. Other trainees have to repeat work towards key skills. In the main occupational area, hospitality, the accreditation of prior learning is more rigorously applied. In the other occupational areas, there is little or no accreditation of prior learning and experience. Accounts trainees with GNVQs or NVQs at level 2 in information technology do not have this recognised.

64. Often there are discussions between training organisers, trainees and employers regarding how training, work duties and tasks will be undertaken and planned, but this is rarely recorded in writing. Individual training plans are not used as a record of these discussions. There is an inconsistency in the way the individual training plans are used. Some are updated regularly and reflect trainees' current progress and achievements. Others are not updated. The on-the-job training and work activities are not often recorded on the individual training plans.

65. Trainees achieve a selection of additional qualifications complementary to their occupational area. Many trainees gain more than one NVQ at level 2. Trainees taking NVQs in customer service also gain them in administration, and sport and leisure trainees also gain NVQs in customer service. Some hospitality trainees gain more than one NVQ, while others gain optional units in addition to



their qualification framework. Customer service trainees also gain the basic food hygiene certificate, and many trainees take a first aid course.

## Management of training

## Grade 2

66. Hospitality Plus has a board of directors made up of the executive officer, two operational directors and a finance director. There are also two non-executive directors. There are 42 area offices, covering 43 TEC regions. The company is preparing its managers to work towards self-managing status over the next three years. Six team coaches act as consultants and mentors to self-managed teams. For those teams remaining under the control of Hospitality Plus's head office, the team coaches mentor area managers to help them to improve. At the time of the inspection, one area office had achieved total self-managing status and several others were preparing to achieve autonomy before the end of the year 2000. Each team coach reports monthly to an operational director and supports several area office teams. All managers and area office teams are supported by the support services team at the head office. This team has responsibility for quality and accounts management, finance, marketing and product development, information technology support, design, specialist consultancy and administrative support. Hospitality Plus was re-accredited with the Investors in People Standard in 1998, after first gaining this in 1995. Inspectors did not find many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report as some were statements of fact rather than strengths. Some action had been taken to address the identified weaknesses before the inspection. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ outstanding teamwork
- ◆ effective internal and external communications
- ◆ comprehensive staff-development programme linked to business plan
- ◆ highly qualified and occupationally experienced training staff

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little integration of key skills in most area offices
- ◆ lack of reliable data
- ◆ poor ratio of staff to trainees in some area offices

67. Hospitality Plus relies heavily on good teamwork and networking across the organisation. Local area office teams meet frequently to discuss emerging issues. Area managers attend a leaders' learning forum each month to discuss issues and share good practice. Good team relationships have become stronger during the development of new systems and procedures. All team members are encouraged to

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*Hospitality Plus's staff are encouraged to keep their occupational expertise up to date by undertaking paid sabbaticals, if their appraisal highlights this as a training need. One trainer/assessor from the Kent area office has recently spent two days working in the hospitality industry, and had planned a further two days later in the year.*

have an input into discussions, including those about the area office's performance compared with the company's targets and the average rates for training providers. The company has experienced a period of rapid growth and in some areas there have been considerable numbers of changes in staffing. Despite this, morale is generally high and team members have worked hard to ensure that trainees experience as little disruption as possible. Teams are all involved in the recruitment of new staff. Interviewees are invited to team meetings, and also invited out on visits to trainees with a team member before being offered employment.

68. Area managers are supported by the team coaches. They meet at least once a month. The long-term aim is to support managers into self-managing status. Some area office teams are not yet included in the preparations for self-management. This change in working practice is being made slowly and systematically across the area offices, a few at a time. The team coaches discuss the performance of the area office team, in the context of the company's financial turnover, feedback from employers and trainees, and organisational targets. This is repeated each month to achieve improvements. Team coaches also use meetings to motivate and encourage their teams. Managers submit reports to their team's operations director, including comments on the team's progress in implementing the area office's action plan on health and safety, equal opportunities, self-assessment and staff training and development. Team coaches and operations directors meet monthly. Managers and coaches are able to show measurable improvements in teams' performances since the beginning of the current financial year.

69. There are many innovative methods used to motivate staff. The company has a directory of in-house occupational experts it can call on for advice and guidance. Team-building exercises are encouraged and financed by the company. These range from bowling events to cycling and orienteering. The Nottingham area office team has been sent on a trip to New York as a reward for exceeding its targets. Area managers and team coaches have access to external consultants and mentors to develop their own individual job roles and skills.

70. The company maintains good communication with all parties in the training process. For example, there are breakfast meetings with some employers to suit employers' working times, and much communication by e-mail, mobile telephone, letter and memorandum. All staff are encouraged to contact colleagues in other area office teams and new staff are prompted to introduce themselves to the managing director by telephone or e-mail.

71. Hospitality Plus uses its intranet as a good communication and management tool. This is used to keep all staff informed of news and new procedures, and also to gather statistics and data which are used when considering management decisions. News and information are circulated weekly using the intranet and are also kept on file in each area office as a hard copy.

72. New staff are recruited for their occupational expertise and qualifications, which are matched against a specific job description. Staff are selected especially

to complement the area office team through having appropriate qualifications. Hospitality Plus especially values qualifications in advanced food hygiene, bakery and up-to-date health and safety certificates.

73. Once recruited, new staff receive a clear and detailed staff handbook, which contains the company's mission statement and information about the move towards self-managed teams. It also outlines all the employees' benefit schemes, roles and responsibilities and the disciplinary and grievance procedures. All staff have a comprehensive induction over their first three months. This includes shadowing other members of staff in the area offices. They have regular meetings with an area manager, who sets targets for them and identifies their development needs. These are incorporated into the area office's staff-development and training plan, and also into the company's business and training plan. Individuals are encouraged to develop their own abilities and to keep up to date with standards in the industry. Most key staff are working towards training and development NVQs at levels 3 or 4 as appropriate to the individual and their job role. One operations director is working towards a master's qualification in business administration. New staff are trained as trainers and assessors, if they do not already hold these qualifications. Many staff are qualified to degree level and have worked for many years within their occupational area.

74. There is a thorough staff-appraisal system, operating quarterly. Individuals assess their own performance before meeting with their managers and, wherever possible, set their own targets and have an input into group targets. There is an action plan to ensure that each area team has at least one trained key skills practitioner. Progress towards the development and implementation of key skills varies across the company. Most area offices now have trained key skills practitioners. In several area offices, key skills have been fully integrated into occupational training since April 2000, but in others there is no integration at all. An administration trainee was given an accounts logbook for use in developing her key skills. She was confused and thought this must relate to the accounts NVQ and was put off relating key skills to her own NVQ. Several area offices run key skills workshops for trainees and staff. In the Kent area office, all trainees are given a good key skills learning guide to use. These trainees are progressing well, and so the guide has been shared with one other area office.

75. The company has set up a computerised management-information system which can be accessed by all area offices, and data are now added to this system directly from each area office. This system is too new to evaluate its effectiveness. Previously, all data were gathered manually and were not easily accessible or available to use as a reliable analysis of yearly performance.

76. With the company's changes and growth over recent months, some trainers, assessors and internal verifiers have been given responsibility for large numbers of trainees. Recruitment is ongoing, but some staff are currently stretched. Many of these staff have an average of 40 to 45 trainees to work with at any one time. This is particularly the case for the newly qualified assessors and internal verifiers in some area offices. For example, one newly qualified assessor has 60 trainees to

work with until the area office recruits more staff. Within the occupational area of sports and recreation, the internal verifier has responsibility for a very large number of trainees and also works across several area offices and regions. This means that the internal verifier is not able to make many visits to each trainee and area office.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 2

77. Hospitality Plus focuses on continuous improvement for its mission statement. Hospitality Plus successfully achieved the ISO 9002 quality standard in 1995 and was re-accredited in May 1998. It was first accredited as an Investor in People in 1995 and was re-accredited in September 1998. Audits by awarding bodies and internal verifiers are good. Audits by the TECs also show area offices to be performing at least satisfactorily. The company involves staff in quality assurance procedures to maintain an agreed standard for its customers. Its key quality objectives cover quality in the recruitment and development of staff, in identification of trainees' learning needs, in management, in contractual monitoring and compliance and in responding to and acting on feedback from trainees and employers. The chief executive officer has overall responsibility for the implementation of quality assurance procedures throughout the company. The quality assurance manager reports to one of the two operational directors and is responsible for developing the quality assurance system and ensuring that the ISO 9002 quality standard's requirements are maintained. She has specific responsibility for ensuring all documents used are up to date, for internal quality audits, and for recording instances of non-compliance and complaints. One of the six senior staff who act as team coaches has responsibility for advising on and promoting quality assurance across the company, with particular emphasis on internal and external verification. The quality assurance administrator maintains the quality assurance system, including the quality assurance manual of policies and procedures, and all the company's documents, forms and work instructions. These were revised in September 1999. The self-assessment report identified as strengths the comprehensive quality assurance system, the availability on the intranet of up-to-date procedures and documents, the use of audits to maintain compliance with procedures, the measurement and continuous improvement of achievements and the setting and monitoring of measurable targets. Inspectors also found most of these strengths and found additional strengths. Four of the five weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were also found by inspectors. An additional weakness, concerning the failure to follow complaints procedures, was found by inspectors. Inspectors gave a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clearly written and understood quality assurance procedures
- ◆ comprehensive internal verification arrangements
- ◆ good analysis and use of trainees and employers' feedback
- ◆ rigorous self-assessment

## WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inconsistent use of quality assurance procedures across area offices

78. All staff are involved in the continuous improvement of the company's practices. All managers take part in monthly workshops in which they exchange ideas on improving training, and undertake personal and group development supported by an outside facilitator. This approach is used to manage the constant process of change as the company expands and moves to simpler and more flexible forms of organisation, such as self-managed teams. Hospitality Plus has a flat, flexible staffing structure which facilitates fast and effective communication and decision making. Six experienced team coaches act as catalysts for improvement and change by supporting and mentoring all area managers and visiting teams throughout the country. Area office team managers have direct access to whoever is best able to advise or assist them, whether this be their own team coach, another coach with relevant expertise, one of the two operational directors or other support staff. All employees are encouraged to introduce improvements in a wide range of ways. For example, staff have the ability to change a procedure or document and update it swiftly through the quality assurance system. Weekly meetings of teams allow discussions on ways of improving performance and overcoming difficulties. There are prizes for good ideas and recognition in the weekly newsletter put onto the intranet. Self-assessment reports and resulting action plans are produced by area office teams and their implementation of the action plans is monitored. An externally designed model is used by all teams to assess their performance against four measures: customer satisfaction, organisational performance such as achieving targets for developing staff, operational performance such as achieving the TECs' targets, and financial turnover. Area office teams develop improvement measures to help them to achieve good performance against all four measures. This helps to ensure that the quality of training is given as much importance as achieving financial targets. The four measures for each office are carefully related to the overall company's objectives. This approach is starting to improve the consistency of training for its contracts with the 43 TECs.

79. The ISO 9002 quality assurance system was rewritten in 1999. Its focus was moved to concentrate on the quality of the end product, of training, instead of concentrating on procedural matters and recording methods. All forms and procedures are placed on the intranet and are accessed easily by staff. The quality assurance administrator makes suggested changes herself very rapidly, and changes which have to be referred for approval to the quality assurance manager or external agencies are also handled swiftly. Area training organisers complete paperwork on site when carrying out assessments and reviews and use the forms for action-planning with trainees and to give feedback to workplace supervisors. Internal auditors identify any non-compliance with procedures. They use this information to propose improvements in procedures, including eliminating form-filling wherever this will improve the effectiveness of training. Staff's induction concentrates on the proper use of procedures and documents. Existing staff are retained and have regular refresher courses. Staff understand the importance of

monitoring and auditing. The new quality assurance systems are thorough and allow fast and flexible responses to issues arising. The quality assurance manager promotes the benefits of complying with new practices arising from internal and external audits in order to achieve the agreed standards of training.

80. The company has reviewed and improved its approach to all aspects of verification recently. Some area offices were not visited by external verifiers for long periods. The corporate quality assurance system did not work as effectively as anticipated. The company's own system of monitoring its verification procedures found internal verification practices to be inconsistent across area offices. Discussions with the awarding body resulted in a more comprehensive and better focused plan of visits by external verifiers. The company chose a single team coach to be the principal internal verifier to co-ordinate verification across the company. The monitoring of internal verification has been strengthened and standardised with the aim of developing a rapid method of ensuring consistent internal verification throughout the company. Each area office has internal verification monitored twice each year, once by the principal internal verifier, and more visits are made if necessary. These monitoring visits are also designed to be supportive. The new report form for monitoring internal verification has an objective, standardised scoring system enabling effective action-planning, and comparisons to be made between areas. Any area office given the lowest grade in the scoring system is suspended from carrying out assessment and internal verification. Most area officers operate well-planned and rigorous internal verification using newly improved forms to record results. Team coaches meet regularly to discuss improvements to assessment and verification systems. The effectiveness of the sampling plan used for internal verification, which was introduced in November 1999, was reviewed within six months. The system was redesigned to comply with the awarding bodies' requirements.

81. All area office teams conduct three-monthly telephone surveys of a sample of 20 per cent of all trainees not previously contacted, as well as telephone surveys of a sample of their employers. The results are analysed within area office teams and on a company-wide basis. They are used when preparing action plans to improve training and then resolve problems. For example, analysis of trainees' responses for the June and August survey shows that trainees understand assessment but have less awareness about their training. Further analysis identified that trainees did not know when assessors were training them rather than assessing them, although they were clear about the purpose of off-the-job training. Hospitality Plus is working to address these identified issues. Trainees who leave their programmes early are included in surveys despite the difficulties in contacting them. Regular surveys of employers produce valuable information on their involvement in their staff's training, including their financial commitment and the types of training that they choose. Area office teams act promptly to follow up any indications that employers are unhappy with the service they receive from Hospitality Plus.

82. The self-assessment process is thorough and involves all staff. Each area office completes its own self-assessment and produces a report and action plan to a standard framework. The company's self-assessment report was compiled from an



analysis of all the area offices' reports. The company has a comprehensive understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses. In instances where inspectors gave higher grades than those given in the self-assessment report, this was in response to seeing evidence to show that effective action had been taken already to rectify weaknesses. Area managers use their own self-assessment reports as a basis for planning and managing their part of the business. Their weekly or fortnightly meetings with all their staff focus on achievement of business targets, and their action plans are updated and changed as necessary. Area offices operate their planning and performance management in a consistent way throughout the company. Staff understand performance targets. Performance against action plans is displayed on office walls, and sometimes individuals' contributions are highlighted. The self-assessment report is an integrated part of quality assurance systems.

83. The self-assessment report did identify that procedures are not always followed similarly in all area offices. The quality assurance manager and team coaches are already taking action to address the instances of non-compliance. There are still some instances of non-compliance, such as in some procedures used by assessors and internal verifiers. The monitoring visits are beginning to address these. The new form for initial assessment is also being used in widely differing ways. Sometimes the form is not completed fully. In other cases, the form is completed but the results are not used to develop an individual training plan. The company regularly shares good practice. A variety of meetings facilitate this, and the intranet is also used. Some area offices have developed good practice in areas such as key skills. The materials being developed by different area offices are being shared to make improvements to identified weaknesses relating to key skills training.

84. Hospitality Plus has written procedures for dealing with complaints. Failure to comply with these procedures was identified in an external audit of its ISO 9000 quality standards in May 2000. Some area offices were not recording complaints in the specified way, and they did not report all complaints to the quality assurance manager. No analysis is made of complaints. This means that emerging trends in trainees or employers' dissatisfaction with the services provided by the company are not identified. There is no evidence of a high number of complaints being received, but the lack of comprehensive records precludes any certainty about their incidence. Area managers take prompt and effective action on any complaints but do not always record their actions. Some trainees who have been unhappy in their workplaces have been found alternative workplaces, if their problems cannot be resolved in the first workplace. The reasons for trainees moving workplaces are not always recorded. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report, and the quality assurance manager is rectifying it.