



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT AUGUST 2000

Philips Hair Salons

SUMMARY

Philips Hair Salons provides good training in hairdressing. The training programme is well co-ordinated. Most assessment is carried out in the workplace. Trainees' retention and achievement rates are good. Although trainees have a clear understanding of key skills, key skills training has only recently been built into the training programme. The company ensures there are no barriers to training. Staff have, however, received no training related to equal opportunities. Trainees receive good pastoral support, and they can be referred to specialist support agencies. There is an open, consultative management style. All staff are committed to the continuous improvement of training. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of quality assurance are, however, inadequate.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ effective staff action to achieve continuous improvement of training
- ◆ effectiveness of the open and consultative management style
- ◆ frequent assessment in the workplace

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no equal opportunities training for staff
- ◆ no monitoring of quality assurance
- ◆ failure to include key skills training from the outset of programmes

INTRODUCTION

1. Philips Hair Salons (PHS) is a privately owned company. It was established in 1974 as a family business consisting of four commercial salons. In 1986, the company started to offer private training. By 1996, the company was providing practical hairdressing training as a subcontractor for another local provider. PHS currently provides work-based training for Wakefield Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) through a direct contract which began in April 1999. Originally, training was carried out at the company's salon in Ossett. The training centre was moved to Wakefield city centre when the company gained its direct contract in 1999. The training centre is a small salon, which is also used for theory training. The centre includes a commercial hairdressing salon on the ground floor and a commercial beauty salon adjacent to the training salon. PHS provides training in the one occupational area of hairdressing.

2. There are eight members of staff involved in training. The contract manager takes overall responsibility for training and is supported by the training manager and a team of six trainer/assessors. The training manager works full time at the training centre. All assessors are part time. They work at the training centre for a maximum of two days and spend the remainder of the working week working within a commercial salon. All training is carried out in house, at the training centre or in the workplace. There are no subcontracting arrangements.

3. Most trainees live in the Wakefield area, which has a varied economy. It includes a thriving inner city area, and some former mining communities classified as deprived. The Wakefield district covers approximately 130 square miles. The population and employment are distributed evenly throughout the area. The proportion of the working population in professional and managerial occupations is lower than the national average, but the proportion in manual work is higher. In the past, the area was badly affected by the decline of mining and the supporting industries. Unemployment rose to levels significantly above the national average. However, in recent years this trend has been reversed. Development funding and major transport routes have attracted new businesses to the area. The TEC's economic review projects more new industries with the development of the Wakefield Europort rail link and additional rail terminal facilities. The unemployment rate, at 6.4 per cent, remains higher than the national average of 4.7 per cent. The long-term unemployment rate, at 30 per cent, continues to be high, particularly for men. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups stands at 1.6 per cent, well below the national average of 5.5 per cent. Currently, there are no trainees from minority ethnic communities. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 41.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. PHS produced its first self-assessment report in December 1999. It was written by the contract manager, without the involvement of staff, employers or trainees. The company did not fully understand the implications of the assessment process. Since writing the report, however, staff have undertaken further evaluative work and have developed a much better understanding of self-assessment. They have produced a comprehensive action plan for improving training and have rectified some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. In general, however, the self-assessment report was not helpful to inspectors in preparing for inspection. Some of the strengths stated in it were no more than normal practice. The report failed to identify many weaknesses. Many of those it did identify related to the wrong occupational or generic areas.

5. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 12 days at the company's premises during August 2000. They visited work placements, and met trainees, training staff and employers. They also studied all relevant policies, procedures and documents. Inspectors interviewed 27 trainees and all training staff. They also met with eight employers and visited 12 work placements. They observed four training sessions, two assessments and three reviews of trainees' progress. The assessments and progress reviews are included in the grade profile.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty (hairdressing)

Grade 2

6. PHS provides training in the one occupational area of hairdressing. At the time of inspection, PHS had 44 trainees following hairdressing programmes, working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. Of these, 31 were modern apprentices, 12 were national trainees and there was one New Deal client on the lone parent scheme. All modern apprentices and national trainees are employed. One trainee has been identified as needing additional learning support. There is one training centre, situated in the centre of Wakefield, above one of the company salons. Level 2 trainees spend one day a week at the training centre. Training covers both theory and practical work. Level 3 trainees attend the centre for one day each month for theory work only. Arrangements for trainees' attendance are flexible and can be changed to suit trainees. Trainees at both levels 2 and 3 spend the remainder of the week in the workplace, where they are taught practical skills and are assessed. Four placement salons belong to the company's commercial salon group. In addition 10 other salons are used as work placements. All trainees receive monthly reviews of their progress. Training and assessment take place both on and off the job. There are eight members of staff responsible for training. One member of staff works full time at the training centre. The remaining trainers and assessors work both in the centre and in the company's salons. Five

salons have assessor and verification awards, and three are working towards them. Four have a teaching certificate. Inspectors considered some of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. They found additional strengths. They agreed with the weakness, relating to the late introduction of key skills training in the training programmes, and found additional weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent assessments in the workplace
- ◆ well-co-ordinated training programme
- ◆ flexibly arranged learning programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate arrangements for obtaining feedback from trainees
- ◆ incomplete individual training plans
- ◆ late introduction of key skills into programmes

7. Trainees undertake most assessments in the workplace. All the salons within the Philips group and many of the placement salons have qualified assessors who assess the trainees regularly. Where there are no qualified assessors in a salon, trainers from the training centre visit to carry out assessments. PHS is keen to increase the amount of assessment in the workplace. It offers staff training leading to assessor qualifications, which a number of employers are currently undertaking. The salons providing work placements for trainees have a wide range of clients and offer trainees plenty of assessment opportunities.

8. The training programme is well co-ordinated. There is a comprehensive annual plan, which identifies subjects to be covered on a monthly basis. This lists the subjects taught at the training centre, complimentary practical skills to be developed in the workplace, and key skills. All salons receive a training manual, which includes this programme together with details of the assessment and review processes. Employers know which units trainees are working towards and plan practical work in the salons to coincide with the work trainees are undertaking in the training centre. Trainees know which programmes and qualifications they are following, and can explain which units they have achieved. They are fully aware of assessment procedures and arrange with their assessors when they are to be assessed. Every effort is made to link on- and off-the-job training. For instance, trainees are encouraged to enter an annual hairdressing competition as they can be assessed through this for some aspects of their NVQ in hairdressing at level 3.

9. PHS encourages its trainees to work on fee-paying clients as soon as they are competent to do so. The performance of trainees in the company's competition, and in local and national competitions, receives good coverage in the local press. When trainees successfully obtain their NVQ at level 2, the company produces

coloured photograph postcards of them, which are distributed to potential clients. Such publication of the trainees' achievements and competence helps to promote trainees as proficient hairdressers and boost their self-confidence.

10. The training salon is bright, clean and freshly decorated. It has sufficient space for the small number of trainees using it. It is equipped with appropriate teaching aids and learning resources. The ratio of trainer to trainee is no more than one to nine, which enables trainees to receive individual attention during practical sessions. Practical teaching sessions are well structured with variety of pace and activities to maintain trainees' interest. They have momentum and the trainers provide the trainees with a variety of appropriate activities to hold their interest. In some theory sessions, the trainers' methods of presenting information were dull and unimaginative, and opportunities were missed to let the trainees explore ideas and concepts through discussion. Trainees can undertake additional activities, including visits to leading hairdressing manufacturers for demonstrations and training. They are also all invited to attend hairdressing shows and conferences and social events such as bowling evenings and parties.

11. Trainees' achievement and retention rates are good, at 100 per cent. The company has held a contract with the TEC since April 1999 when 16 people started training and all are still on the programme. In August 1999, a further five trainees joined from another training provider, which had ceased to trade. All five trainees have achieved their NVQ in hairdressing at level 2 in less than 23 months. One achieved certification in key skills through accreditation of prior learning. The other four who started their training with another provider have undertaken training in key skills only since joining PHS, and have yet to complete their key skills units.

12. Trainees are able to increase the number of the days they spend at the centre each week. Attendance times can be altered to fit with school times. Trainees can, if necessary, be visited more frequently in the workplace to enable them to receive additional training. Some are visited on a weekly basis and are given help to complete outstanding assessments. In order to assist employers with the effective management of their salons, the company meets employers' requests for trainees to attend the training centre on a particular day of the week. By implementing the training programme flexibly, the company aims to help employers manage their salons effectively, and enable trainees to achieve an NVQ at level 2 within periods ranging from 14 to 18 months.

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees are able to book a range of videos, which can be taken home. This enables them to revise work at their own pace.

13. Key skills training has been introduced late in the training programme. A key skills specialist began work with the company in April 2000. Two members of the training staff are working to become qualified assessors of key skills. Trainees now have to demonstrate and use key skills in assignments. Staff have a good understanding of how the trainees can develop key skills through their occupational tasks. The key skills specialist shows staff at the training centre how evidence of trainees' competence in key skills can be gathered through observation of trainees' performance in everyday situations in the workplace. Staff in the company's salons have a full understanding of key skills but the staff in other salons do not know what they are. Trainees are aware of the key skills

requirements for their programme, but they have only recently started collecting evidence of their acquisition of key skills for assessment purposes.

14. The trainees are not asked for their views on the effectiveness or appropriateness of the training they receive. There is no use of questionnaires, nor is there a forum in which trainees evaluate training methods or suggest amendments to the programme. Trainees have ideas for improving their training but these are not being put to good use. For example trainees work in salons where many high-fashion colouring techniques are practised and they are eager to do some of this work. Training in colouring techniques, however, does not usually take place until the second year of the trainees' programme. Trainees would like the opportunity to air their views on the most appropriate sequence of the programme content.

15. Trainees' individual training plans are incomplete. The TEC requires answers to a health questionnaire to be included in the training plans with the aim of ensuring that trainees with an identified health problem are sent to an appropriate work placement where their welfare can be monitored. The questionnaire in some individual training plans has not been answered and the company has no means of knowing whether the trainees concerned have health problems which need to be monitored. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out according to schedule but a record of decisions taken during the reviews is not entered on the requisite forms which form part of the individual training plan.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

16. PHS has an equal opportunities policy, which meets contractual requirements and the requirements of current legislation. There are also written grievance, complaints and policies for trainees. Copies of the policies are given to all trainees at induction. The company also includes a copy of these policies in the salon placement manual, which is distributed to all salons participating in the training scheme. Employers are not given guidance on how to use the manual. There are no trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. One of the 44 trainees is male. Six per cent of trainees have been identified as having disabilities. The training team consists of one man and seven women, none of whom is from a minority ethnic group. The company collects equal opportunities data on trainees in compliance with its contract with the TEC. Inspectors agreed with both the weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report, which reflect the slow progress the company has made in implementing measures to ensure the promotion of equal opportunities. They considered that the one strength cited in the self-assessment report related to an isolated example of good practice which took place before the introduction of the equal opportunities policy. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ no barriers for disadvantaged trainees
- ◆ effective action to counter harassment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no equal opportunities training for staff
- ◆ no analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ unclear policy and statements on equal opportunities

17. PHS made considerable progress in developing measures to ensure that trainees who are disadvantaged are provided with the necessary support and practical help to succeed. PHS has made contact with relevant external organisations in order to increase their recruitment of trainees from disadvantaged groups. The company creates individual programmes for trainees to meet their particular needs. While the current training salon is not accessible for people with physical disabilities, the company has alternative accommodation available on the ground floor which can be used for practical and theoretical training.

18. Trainees know whom to contact if they are suffering harassment or have any complaints. Trainees have made complaints when they have felt that their peers have harassed them. Training staff have taken appropriate action in dealing with these complaints and sometimes this has resulted in formal disciplinary action. In other cases, the problems have been settled by agreement between trainees, but with trainers ensuring fair treatment and monitoring the subsequent behaviour of all parties. In each case, the problem has been satisfactorily resolved and has not recurred. All trainees involved in the incidents are still on the training scheme and are making good progress. There is, however, no written procedure for recording informal disciplinary actions.

19. The company has developed a set of policies and documents relating to equal opportunities policies in line with the TEC's requirements. The policies, however, do not refer to equal opportunities legislation. The policies provide little information on how they are to be implemented. They contain little guidance on action trainees should take if they are harassed or wish to raise a complaint. The trainees say they know whom to contact if they have any problems because they remember the names given to them during their induction, and they are confident that they can rely on their trainers to provide help and advice. Policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities are not presented in language which is easy for the trainees to understand. There are no arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness of the policies. The company is not always consistent in its promotion of equal opportunities. For example, a recently produced promotional leaflet contains a written commitment to equal opportunities but all the photographs in it depict female hairdressers, none of whom is from a minority ethnic group. The company plans to amend the leaflet. The company also produces

other marketing materials, however, which include examples of male hairdressers. The company sponsors sports events and teams including a local football team of girls under 14.

20. Although all staff support equality of opportunity, they do not have a thorough understanding of the equal opportunities policy and the broader issues involved. Staff and employers receive a copy of the equal opportunities policy. However the company does not provide training for either its own staff or employers in the placement salons on the policy and its implications. Staff have little knowledge of equal opportunities legislation. Although they are aware of issues relating to gender and ethnicity they are less well informed about other equal opportunities issues. Equality of opportunity is not a regular agenda item at staff meetings. Few employers have familiarised themselves with the policy, and many are consequently unaware of their responsibilities towards trainees in relation to equal opportunities. There is no monitoring of employers' compliance with the company's policy on equal opportunities. Trainees' knowledge of equal opportunities is basic. Although they are introduced to the concept of equality of opportunity at induction, it is not dealt with in a way which makes it important or memorable, nor is their understanding of it strengthened during the programme.

21. The company collects data on the age, gender and ethnicity of trainees as required by its contract with the TEC. The company does not analyse the data to assist it in making changes to the training programme. PHS has few male trainees. There are currently no trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. The company does not use the collected data as a basis for setting targets for recruitment. The company acknowledges deficiencies in its performance in relation to the upholding and promotion of equal opportunities. Through the implementation of its recent action plan for improvements, the company is taking action to widen recruitment to its training programmes.

Trainee support

Grade 2

21. The company uses a range of methods for recruiting trainees. Trainees are recruited through the company directly, or through other employers or the careers service. The training provider and the placement provider interview all applicants. The company organises a two-day induction programme at its training salon following the peak recruitment period in June each year. Trainees recruited at other times of the year receive a short one-to-one induction from a member of the company's staff. Trainees have a trial period of varying length with the employing salon before signing the employment contract and training plan. The induction includes an assessment of basic skills and aptitude, and the outcomes of this assessment are used to determine whether the trainee is placed on the national traineeship or the modern apprenticeship scheme. A member of the company's staff usually visits trainees at least monthly in their placement salon to review progress and to identify any specific needs they may have. These monthly visits from company staff to trainees and the weekly training sessions in the salon provide the main opportunities for trainees to receive pastoral support. It is usually

GOOD PRACTICE

In 1999, it recruited a trainee with considerable hearing difficulties and have made effective arrangements for her to work as a trainee stylist. The trainee and her family have been consulted regularly and have been able to devise effective ways for her to communicate successfully with clients in the salon. She has developed considerable confidence in working with clients. The training provider has purchased a special telephone to enable her to undertake the full range of reception duties. Trainees who lack self-esteem are placed in a salon where they can receive help and support, increase their self-confidence, and improve their interpersonal skills.

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees with children have been able to arrange their working hours around their childcare arrangements. For example, a New Deal trainee on the Lone Parent pilot, attends the training salon two days each week so that she can obtain her NVQ at level 2 within the 12 months she is on the New Deal.

both the trainees' intention and the company's plan, that trainees should continue working with the company after they complete their training. Of the two strengths cited in the self-assessment report, inspectors agreed with one, relating to the effectiveness of communications. They considered the other strength to be no more than normal practice. The two weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report were not relevant to trainee support. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective recruitment practices
- ◆ comprehensive induction
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ effective and regular reviews of trainees' progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic arrangements to meet trainees' additional learning support needs
- ◆ poor recording of trainee support

22. There is a range of effective methods for recruitment to the company's training programmes. The company's staff routinely visit schools career conventions and collect the names and addresses of all pupils who express an interest in hairdressing. The information is stored on a database and all pupils in their last year of compulsory schooling are sent an application form. All respondents are contacted and invited to an interview, at which they are also required to complete a more detailed application form. The company uses this information to match successful applicants to suitable salons. Trainees then spend a trial period at the salon before beginning training. This enables the trainees to find out whether the training programme meets their needs and it helps the employers to determine whether the trainees are suitable for the training programme. At the end of the trial period, trainers have sufficient information on trainees to ensure that the individual training plan reflects the abilities of the individual. Irrespective of the means of their recruitment, all applicants go through the same thorough interview and selection process.

23. All trainees are provided with an induction pack of written materials, which is also issued to their employers and salon supervisors. This covers all aspects of the programme including policies on equal opportunities and health and safety. Trainees are made aware of the importance of health and safety at all stages of the training programme. The induction programme covers the structure of NVQs, and the content and the nature of the training scheme, as well as group activities to help trainees work together as a team. During their induction, trainees are given a test in spelling and numeracy and an assessment of their aptitude for basic salon work. Trainees enjoy the stimulating induction programme and it arouses their enthusiasm for the training scheme. The company evaluates the induction by

asking trainees to answer a questionnaire. The trainees' responses to this are taken into account when the company plans improvements. For example, trainees said they were unhappy about the four-week gap between the end of the induction and the start of the training programme. The company plans to reduce this gap next year.

24. Trainees have their needs for personal support and additional help with training identified during their monthly progress reviews. Employers are involved in these reviews. Trainees who need additional help with theory work or require further assessments, are visited more frequently than once a month, and usually as often as they wish. The company makes contact with a variety of support agencies to assist trainees in resolving difficulties with childcare, domestic commitments and accommodation. They refer trainees with specific problems to specialist support agencies. Special counselling is available to trainees who become pregnant. They make special arrangements to enable trainees with children to have a flexible work schedule to fit in with their childcare commitments. Trainees who receive such additional support usually receive progress reviews more frequently than once a month in order that these may also cover the effectiveness of the support provided. Trainees who receive support are appreciative of it and say it has enabled them to remain on their training programme.

25. Trainees' prior achievements are not systematically assessed. Some trainees have had their prior attainments in key skills recognised. However, there is no accreditation of prior learning in hairdressing, even though many trainees have previous experience, from working in a salon on a Saturday for example, or have been transferred from other providers. One trainee had achieved an NVQ in hairdressing at level 1 at school but this was not taken into account in the trainee's individual learning plan.

26. All trainees receive a monthly progress review with the training manager at their place at work. The training manager and salon supervisor offer written comments on the progress trainees have achieved since the last review. The trainees are set clear, detailed, short-term targets for the next area of work they will undertake, and these also relate to the appropriate NVQ unit. The targets have to be attained before the next review and they spur the trainees on to make progress and succeed. Some trainees have been encouraged to achieve the NVQ at level 2 in a much shorter time than originally specified in their training plan. The records of the reviews detail any particular problems the trainees have and the action the training provider has taken to resolve them. For example, such action has led to the transfer of the trainee to another salon when such a move was thought to be in the trainee's best interests. The salon supervisor takes part in the progress reviews once every three months.

27. In theory, trainees take the initial assessment tests during induction in order that the company may identify their needs for additional learning support. To date, however, no trainees with additional needs have been identified. Furthermore, there are no systematic arrangements to enable needs identified during induction, or the training programme to be addressed. The company is aware that there are local agencies which may be able to provide support but has yet to make contact

with them. The company's staff have not determined how this support could be provided as an integral part of the training programme. Portfolios include trainees' written work but spelling errors are not corrected. There is no process for identifying specific problems with trainees' written work which emerge during the programme, or for helping trainees to resolve these.

28. There are many instances of effective practice in providing trainees with pastoral support, but these are not recorded. Information about the needs of these trainees is communicated informally by word of mouth, and the company has no systematic means of finding out whether these needs are met effectively. The training provider has made contact with agencies which are able to help trainees with personal problems but keeps no record of its dealings with these agencies or of the type of support they provide. Trainees are not provided with any information about support agencies, should they wish to make direct contact with one.

Management of training

Grade 3

29. PHS operates four commercial hairdressing salons in the Wakefield area. The training centre is run as a separate company and is situated above the Wakefield salon. The company is led by the managing director supported by the group-training manager and contract manager. There is also an assistant training manager, a team of trainers and a training liaison officer. The group-training manager is responsible for the planning and operation of the training programmes and also for liaison with the salon placements. The contract manager is responsible for negotiating the contract with the TEC. The contract manager and the group-training manager monitor the company's compliance with the contract. The company is in the second year of contracting with the Wakefield TEC for work-based training. Initially, the contract was for those trainees employed by PHS but, in the current contract year, the contract has been modified to include trainees employed in other local salons. Consequently, the company has undergone substantial growth and there have been various, recent operational changes, notably to the staffing and working practices of the team. The self-assessment report provides some factual information about the management structure and some company activities. Inspectors did not agree with the description of some of the company's processes, such as that relating to staff appraisal. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report. One of the weaknesses the company identified was a quality assurance issue. Inspectors found two additional weaknesses. They agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective open and consultative management style
- ◆ many good opportunities for staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unsatisfactory staff recruitment and induction procedures
- ◆ unstructured team meetings

30. The group-training manager and contract manager lead a team of six trainers, and this includes a training liaison officer. The assistant training manager and two of the trainers work part time in the training centre and the remainder of the time as operatives in the company's commercial salons. Lines of communication in the organisation are clear. The management is open and consultative and encourages team members to pool their diverse skills and knowledge. They contribute new ideas for operational planning, and discuss issues relating to training. The two managers work closely as a team and meet formally on a monthly basis. Their meetings are minuted and cover issues ranging from strategic planning to operational procedures and staffing. There are, in addition, many informal meetings between managers and the trainers, which are not recorded.

31. A second tier of team meetings involves the trainers and work-based assessors, who meet less frequently. They each work on different days in the salons, often on different shifts, and there is difficulty in arranging meetings on days and times that are suitable to everyone. Members of teams have little opportunity to share best practice, evaluate training and plan improvements. Meetings usually lack structure. There are no standing agenda items such as performance targets and recruitment. Meetings focus on giving information rather than operational planning. Action points are not identified in the minutes. The team meetings are led by the training manager, who is also the internal verification co-ordinator. At these meetings, there is frequent discussion about the assessment process, feedback from observation of training, and the findings of the reports of internal and external verifiers. The meetings are occasionally used to disseminate policy decisions made by management. Minutes are circulated to those assessors who cannot attend the meetings. Assessors who cannot attend meetings are brought up-to-date by the training manager when she visits the salons in her role as internal verifier.

32. Team members each have new job descriptions. These are comprehensive and reflect the guidelines in *Raising The Standard*. For instance, the job descriptions cover responsibilities for supporting trainees, monitoring equal opportunities practice, training, assessment and trainees' achievements. Reference is also made in the descriptions to the responsibility to comply with the company's quality assurance procedures. Staff fully understand their roles within the organisation. Each team member takes responsibility for a number of trainees and this is proportionate to the number of days that they work in the training centre. There is a financial incentive scheme for trainers. The level of the financial reward trainers receive is determined by the proportion of their trainees who obtain qualifications.

33. There are many opportunities for staff development. There is an appraisal scheme for staff in the company's commercial salon and this covers some of the trainers. The appraisal process is used as a means of identifying the training needs of staff, but not necessarily those of staff who are trainers. However, all the

trainers are undertaking some form of training with the aim of improving training and assessment. For instance, a member of staff is undertaking teacher training, partly funded by PHS. Another has recently become a qualified internal verifier. Two members of staff are working towards the key skills practitioner award. All staff are encouraged to keep their hairdressing and business management skills updated by participating in a programme provided by a major hairdressing product manufacturer. PHS provides training and continuous support for its work-based assessors. It is currently identifying staff in its growing number of new salon placements who can be trained as work-based assessors.

34. There are no formal arrangements for the recruitment and induction of new staff. Following the increase in trainee numbers in this second TEC contract, there has been some re-organisation of roles and responsibilities of staff. Additional staff have been deployed in the training centre. All trainers have previously been PHS employees in the commercial salons with the exception of one. Staff receive no formal induction into their new roles. They are not fully aware of the newly introduced policies and procedures relating to the training process or of the detail of the action plans rectifying weaknesses identified through the self-assessment process.

35. The company has long-established working relationships with the PHS salons, as the training manager is also the salon group-training manager. Priority is given to co-ordinating the training provided in the centre with that provided in the salons and to improving the assessment process. The training manager is in regular contact with the new salons and is establishing effective working relationships with them. The company works closely with external agencies, such as the careers services, employment services, schools and voluntary agencies.

36. The contract manager takes responsibility for ensuring that sufficient numbers of trainees are recruited onto the programmes and that the trainees' achievement targets are being met. Data are maintained on new trainees, trainee's achievements and leavers. These data are shared with the training team and are taken into account in the company's strategic planning.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

37. The training manager and contract manager take responsibility for the management of quality assurance. Team meetings are used to disseminate information about quality assurance procedures and to address issues related to the quality of training. A quality assurance manual and a range of quality assurance procedures have recently been devised, covering most aspects of the training process. At the time of inspection, some quality assurance arrangements were still being developed. The trainees themselves provide some evaluation of the training process, including in particular, their induction. The company is subject to regular external audits by the awarding bodies and Wakefield TEC. The contract manager wrote the self-assessment report at the end of 1999. Staff and employers did not contribute to it. Since then, action plans have been introduced that have addressed

some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors considered that the single strength cited in the self-assessment report related to practice which was no more than contractual compliance. The weakness relating to health and safety procedures has been rectified. Inspectors agreed with the two other weaknesses and found two additional strengths. They agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective management action to achieve continuous improvement
- ◆ effective and comprehensive internal verification process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete quality assurance procedures
- ◆ no monitoring of quality assurance

38. Managers are committed to achieving the continuous improvement of training. The self-assessment report provides some information about the hairdressing services offered. It does not fully describe the measures taken to establish a quality assurance system. Some weaknesses in hairdressing training are identified in the self-assessment report. In the months after the self-assessment report had been written, managers found further weaknesses and they produced an action plan. This specifies the action to be taken to rectify several key weaknesses, how progress towards implementing the action will be measured, and the dates by which targets must be reached. Action has been prioritised in terms of urgency. For example, the introduction of procedures to ensure co-ordination of training at the centre with training in the new placement salons is to coincide with the start of training for new trainees. This action plan has been implemented successfully and many of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been rectified by the time of the inspection. One weakness cited in the self-assessment report was the failure to consult staff when the self-assessment report was written. Staff are now involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the action plan drawn up to rectify the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

39. The quality assurance manual was produced without consultation with staff. It gives details of each quality assurance procedure and specifies the responsibilities of key staff for quality assurance. The manual, however, does not cover some important aspects of the training process, such as assessment and internal verification. The company is addressing this weakness through implementation of the action plan which accompanies the self-assessment report.

40. The quality assurance procedures are incomplete and are still being developed. As yet, there are no arrangements for the systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of the quality assurance system. An opportunity for staff development was missed when managers failed to consult staff over the devising of quality assurance procedures. Staff need guidance on ways of evaluating

training. The company does not gather the views of staff or employers about the training programmes. The only feedback collected systematically from trainees relates to the induction programme. The training manager monitors the quality of training both on and off the job but does so infrequently. The company has no systematic arrangements to ensure that training is monitored regularly and systematically. There are no procedures for interviewing trainees on completion of the programme to gather suggestions from them on ways of improving the training programme. Many additional quality assurance procedures are being gradually developed but there is no forum for staff to discuss them. Issues related to quality assurance are not included as a standard agenda item at team meetings.

41. The internal verification system is well established. It has been recently improved and updated to comply with the requirements of awarding bodies. There is forward planning of the internal verification of assessments and the practices of assessors are monitored. The internal verification process is co-ordinated well and covers both practical and theory work. Internal verifiers sample assessment across the full range of NVQ units, all candidates' portfolios, and the work of all assessors at both the training centre and the salons. Internal verifiers monitor assessors' performance through observation and they keep a record of their findings. The internal verification co-ordinator provides assessors with written and oral feedback on their work and they find this positive and constructive. Assessor performance is monitored by observation and recorded. Both written and verbal feedback is provided by the internal verifier co-ordinator and is positive, constructive and developmental. Key issues relating to assessment practice are raised at the meetings of assessors.

42. The self-assessment report briefly describes the company's organisation and background. It contains statements of strengths and weaknesses. Some of the strengths were no more than contractual compliance. Staff did not fully understand the self-assessment process or the purpose of quality assurance as a method of evaluating the effectiveness of training. Inspectors found many weaknesses not identified in the self-assessment report. They did not find the self-inspection report helpful to them when planning the inspection. The action plan for rectifying weaknesses was not made available to inspectors prior to the inspection.