



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 1999

REINSPECTION JULY 2000

# Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd

## SUMMARY

Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd provides satisfactory training in business administration. At the first inspection, training in care was unsatisfactory. There has been satisfactory development of the training programme since then, although some trainees are making slow progress. Support for trainees is satisfactory and there are many examples of targeted, individualised care. The company actively promotes equality of opportunity and helps many disadvantaged young people to fulfil their potential. Clear quality assurance procedures centred around self-assessment have been developed. Effective action planning is resulting in improvements.

**As a result of the reinspection of Nuneaton Training Centre, the original published report text for health, care and public services and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes references to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report which have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Health, care & public services	4
Foundation for work	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ wide range of good-quality placements
- ♦ outstanding pastoral care
- ♦ good progress-tracking systems in business administration
- ♦ good progression rates in foundation for work
- ♦ recruitment policy guarantees unconditional access to all programmes
- ♦ good integration of equal opportunities into staff development
- ♦ well-structured off-the-job training in care
- ♦ effective action planning
- ♦ good linking of quality assurance arrangements to self-assessment
- ♦ good use of evaluated data to make improvements



### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ lack of co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ some ineffective off-the-job training
- ◆ no effective or comprehensive reviews
- ◆ no setting of improvement targets
- ◆ poor implementation of some company procedures
- ◆ slow progress of some care trainees

## INTRODUCTION

1. Nuneaton Training Centre Ltd (NTC) was established in 1981 as a result of concerns expressed by the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) regarding the increasing rate of youth unemployment in the area, particularly among the less able. The CVS, in conjunction with the then Manpower Services Commission, agreed to sponsor a project to specifically focus on this client group. To this end NTC was established to provide training for the young people of Nuneaton, focusing on those who have become disengaged from learning and have challenging behaviour.

2. NTC has a general manager, eight full-time and one part-time members of staff. NTC provides training for young people under the age of 25 through work-based training for young people. It contracts with Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE). At the time of the first inspection, there were 59 young people in government-funded training. This comprised 44 in work-based training, which included national trainees, and 15 in career choice, a programme offering work sampling. At the time of the reinspection there were 63 young people on government-funded programmes, including 42 in work-based training and 21 on the career choice programme.

3. NTC offers national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 and 2 in business administration, care for the elderly, information technology, retailing and customer service and distributive operations. It also provides wordpower and numberpower qualifications. All off-the-job training is given at the training centre in Nuneaton. There are currently 30 work-placement employers who are based in Warwickshire, the West Midlands and Leicestershire. Where possible, trainees are placed with employers, with the aim of them acquiring permanent employment or achieving at least employed status during their training phase.

4. Nuneaton has an economically active population of some 58,000. The rate of unemployment at the time of the first inspection was 3.5 per cent compared with the national figure of 5.2 per cent. The national rate had fallen to 3.5 per cent by June 2000, while the rate for the Nuneaton and Bedworth area stood at 3.9 per cent. Figures for school leavers indicate that in 1998, one in five opted to take a job with training, rather than remaining at school or college to gain qualifications, the third successive increase in as many years.

5. Nuneaton is a market town, which covers a wide area and incorporates a large number of outlying villages whose inhabitants use the town as a focal point for seeking employment as well as socialising. The population is spread out over the area and public transport links are poor, limiting the type of work areas which trainees can pursue. There has been a decline in the motor, engineering and mining industries and an increase in warehousing owing to the links with the motorway systems as well as the availability of cheap, vacant land. The decline in industries looking for unskilled workers, as well as an increase in the number of young people who are not ready for any kind of work, are contributing factors towards



the placement of trainees in their chosen vocational areas. Minority ethnic groups make up 3.8 per cent of the local population.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. All staff are encouraged to participate in and contribute to the self-assessment process. Awareness-raising workshops were held, supported by the CCTE. Feedback was sought from employers, both verbally by NTC's staff, and formally by means of a questionnaire. Trainees' views were also obtained which contributed to the formulation of the strengths and weaknesses outlined in the original self-assessment report.

7. Following the inspection in May 1999, all staff worked together to produce a detailed action plan. Quality assurance procedures were rewritten to incorporate the self-assessment process. All staff were involved in the preparation of a new self-assessment report, which included evidence from surveys of trainees, employers and subcontractors to support judgements.

8. The first inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, who spent a total of 15 days with NTC. They observed training sessions and trainees' reviews and assessments, looked at trainees' portfolios and interviewed appropriate personnel across the organisations involved in the training. Thirty-seven trainees were interviewed both in their workplaces as well as in the training centre. Twelve employers and eight workplace supervisors were interviewed. Nineteen discussions were held with NTC's staff, one interview took place with an associate internal verifier and one with a member of staff from the careers service. Six observations of training and assessments were carried out, four of which were graded. Supplementary evidence such as trainees and employers' files, staff records, and training materials were inspected.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration			1			1
Retailing & customer service			1			1
Health, care & public services			1			1
Foundation for work	1					1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

9. A team of two inspectors, who spent a total of six days at NTC during July 2000, carried out the reinspection. They visited nine work placements and had discussions with nine workplace supervisors. Thirteen trainees and seven of NTC's staff were interviewed. The newly developed procedures manual, trainees' files and records, portfolios, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures for NTC's staff and subcontractors and evidence to support the action plan were all examined. One instruction session in care was observed and awarded a grade 2.

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 3

10. There are 13 young people in training, of whom 10 are on business administration programmes and three are on information technology programmes. NVQs are offered at levels 1 and 2. Of the 13 trainees, seven are employed status the remaining six are in placements. Five of the trainees are working towards national traineeships and the remaining trainees are all on other work-based training programmes. The majority of trainees attend the training centre for three hours each week for off-the-job training. Trainees without a placement attend the training centre for five days a week. Placements are provided in a diverse range of private companies. One trainee has special learning needs and is also working towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Staff are appropriately qualified as assessors, internal verifiers and teachers. Recruitment is continual and achievement levels are consistent with national averages: 66 NVQs per 100 leavers, 77 per cent of trainees gain jobs and over 40 per cent leave the programme early. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses to those identified through self-assessment. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that identified through self-assessment.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ training focused and personalised to meet individual needs
- ◆ high-quality placements
- ◆ high levels of occupational competence displayed by some trainees
- ◆ good progress tracking systems

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ poor programme knowledge displayed by some trainees
- ◆ lack of integration of on- and off-the-job training

11. The majority of trainees attend NTC's training centre for three hours each week to gain the background knowledge for their NVQ and to develop their portfolios. Trainees are all provided with good training and support during these sessions. Trainees with special learning needs or who require additional assistance are provided with additional support and offered individual training to enhance their learning. This focused approach to training includes scheduling one-to-one training sessions and the development of individualised training programmes. Individual training builds on the trainee's experience in the workplace, promotes the development of general life and occupational skills such as handling money and contributes to the achievement of the trainee's qualification. Trainees have a good range of learning opportunities.

12. NTC has developed a good network of placements in a diverse range of business settings. It selects placement providers who have a commitment to

supporting training and who are committed to providing trainees with a safe working environment. Placement providers and trainees agree on arrangements for them to work on their portfolios during working hours. Workplace supervisors and NTC's staff work together effectively to ensure the welfare of trainees. Placements provide opportunities for trainees to obtain evidence for all aspects of the qualification they are working towards and many provide good-quality on-the-job training to trainees. NTC ensures that there is a good match between the trainee's aptitudes and interests and the type of work environment available within the placement.

13. Many trainees receive effective on-the-job training and a few trainees also have access to employer-sponsored off-the-job training opportunities. Many trainees quickly develop occupational competencies and are encouraged by the placement providers to demonstrate initiative and to work with the minimum appropriate level of supervision. A number of trainees have been able to demonstrate sufficient occupational competence and potential for placement providers to promote them to more responsible positions while still working towards their qualifications. NTC's assessors visit the workplace weekly to carry out assessment. Trainees understand what is required of them and workplace supervisors are familiar with the NVQ assessment criteria. However, they are not included in reviews.

14. NTC has well-developed systems to track the progress of trainees' assessments. The tracking system is displayed in the training room and trainees can effectively monitor their own achievement and progress towards their qualifications. The tracking systems also identify the training received by each trainee and ensures that, as trainees can start their programme at any time in the year, they complete all the required theoretical elements for the programme that they are following. NTC's staff have a detailed knowledge of each trainee which together with the use of the tracking system, enables them to provide additional learning support in a structured and planned manner allowing discretion for those trainees who need more support than others.

15. There are no work-based assessors and, therefore, opportunities for naturally occurring assessment are not fully exploited. Some trainees' progress through the NVQ, and with portfolio-building, is delayed. Workplace supervisors have little knowledge and understanding of the structure and content of NVQs. They are not able to offer fully informed support to trainees to help them identify evidence of their competence in the workplace. NTC's assessors have no structured approach to the use of witness testimony.

16. Many trainees have a poor understanding of their programmes and the requirements of the awards towards which they are working, even though they all receive information at induction about the nature, structure and requirements of their programmes. This lack of understanding affects their ability to identify all the opportunities to gather evidence for assessment and prevents them from playing an active role in the planning of assessment activities. Key skills are taught as an integral part of their programme, but some trainees following the national traineeship framework do not understand that there is a requirement for them to



demonstrate competence in key skills as an integral part of their training programme. In addition, NTC has not effectively integrated the assessment of key skills into the assessment of trainees' NVQs. NTC does not have an effective and systematic approach to integrating assessment activities with the training provided in the workplace. Opportunities to accredit prior learning are missed and delay trainees' progress.

### **Retailing & customer service**

### **Grade 3**

17. NTC has 16 trainees in retailing; eight trainees are working towards NVQ level 1 distributive operations and two trainees are working towards NVQ level 2 distribution & warehousing. All are working in small companies or outlets. In addition to the vocational qualifications, the majority of distributive operations trainees have gained the prevocational qualifications wordpower and numberpower. Six trainees working towards NVQ level 2 fork-truck operations also take the fork-truck basic training course, usually referred to as fork-lift truck licence, and are all working for one large employer. The majority of trainees have been referred to NTC by the careers service because they have special circumstances. The self-assessment report did not accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses in this area and inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by NTC.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high quality of portfolios by level 1 trainees
- ◆ good role models in past-trainees
- ◆ good rates of achievement

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no schedule for off-the-job training
- ◆ some trainees fail to achieve their potential

18. A number of trainees are placed with employers who have dealt with NTC over many years. Most trainees are working with employees who are themselves past-NTC trainees. A few of them have achieved promotion or positions with greater responsibility after training. The effect on the trainees of having positive role models is that vocational competence is valued and a positive training environment is provided within the workplace.

19. Most trainees take pride in their portfolios and have a good understanding of how it fits together, particularly the level 1 trainees. They are encouraged to have ownership of their portfolios which they build up with minimum levels of supervision.

20. The fork-truck trainees are all with one large employer. They are visited on a regular basis by NTC for review meetings. All training and assessment for fork-

truck training is subcontracted to a private company. Training includes a five-day off-the-job course which covers the basic fork-truck training. It includes the test for the fork-lift truck licence, which is the qualification accepted industry-wide. All other training and assessment for the NVQ programme is done in the workplace and is of a good standard with high achievement rates for both qualifications and jobs gained. Of the 27 trainees from the 1998-99 intake, ten trainees (37 per cent) are still in training, five trainees (18.5 per cent) achieved NVQ level 2, four trainees (14.8 per cent) achieved wordpower and numberpower and eight trainees (29.6 per cent) left with no qualifications.

21. The majority of the trainees on distribution programmes attend the centre for one and a half hours a week. This time is used for them to work individually on their portfolios. Some classroom activities are also done during this time. Health and safety and other induction topics are covered during week one and then expanded on during the off-the-job training period. The trainees do not have a set schedule for their time in the centre and do not know until they arrive each week whether they will be doing their own work on their portfolios or a set piece of class tuition. Records are kept of who attends, but there is no system to ensure that trainees who miss classroom sessions cover the missed work.

22. Some trainees in need of additional learning support and a slower pace of learning do not always receive the attention required to enable them to succeed. Some of these trainees do not achieve their full potential. Some trainees spend up to nine months on wordpower and numberpower qualifications before starting their NVQ. Some trainees are placed on programmes at inappropriate levels, becoming very demotivated as a result. For example, a trainee who already has a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) is on a level 1 programme and is making very slow progress, i.e. three units at level 1 in a 12 month period.

23. Working relationships between NTC and placement providers are cordial, but they are not used to fully utilise the training and assessment opportunities which occur naturally in the workplace. Insufficient use is made of witness testimonies by workplace supervisors for portfolio-building that trainees are competent in the workplace. Most employers do not know what topics are covered in their trainees' off-the-job training sessions.

24. Resources are adequate. The training room at NTC is equipped with whiteboard, computers, TV and video, with a selection of training materials and it is light and airy. However, it is only one section of a large room which is screened off and subject to interruptions because of people using other parts of the room. Staff are well motivated and are well qualified to be trainers, assessors and internal verifiers, but not all are occupationally experienced.

### **Health, care & public services (care)**

### **Grade 3**

25. There are seven trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 in care and one working towards an NVQ level 1 in hospitality. One trainee left the programme

before completing his training plan to take up employment abroad. The care trainees are employed and work in supervised placements in two nursing homes and two residential homes for elderly people. The hospitality trainee works in a residential home for elderly people. All the trainees are on a work-based training for young people programme. Training sessions take place on one half day each fortnight at the company's training centre. All assessment takes place in the workplace. The staff consists of one care trainer who assesses trainees in the workplace and one internal verifier. Both are occupationally experienced.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor off-the-job training
- ◆ poor assessment plans
- ◆ external verifiers recommendations not acted on
- ◆ poor integration of equal opportunities training into care standards
- ◆ some workplaces using out-of-date NVQ standards in care

26. The weaknesses identified in the first inspection have been addressed. The company is continuing to make improvements to address other weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the company in its new self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good programme development
- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training
- ◆ good matching of training and assessment plans to trainees' circumstances

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor retention rates
- ◆ slow progress of some trainees

27. Strong commitment from the trainer and the internal verifier has resulted in good working relationships between employers and NTC. The NTC trainer visits each workplace at least every two weeks. All the workplace supervisors and trainees have a copy of the years programme of training sessions. This keeps staff in the workplace informed of the practical skills which trainees need to practise at work and enables them to structure the duty rotas to allow trainees to attend off-the-job training. Trainees attend off-the-job training in the morning before a late shift at work so that their days off are not spent in the training centre. Trainees are encouraged to identify any topics they may wish to revise before submitting their portfolios for verification. Each workplace has purchased at least one textbook for trainees' use when at work. Trainees also seek out information from their colleagues and from senior carers. They join in training sessions at work which are provided by drug companies and nursing staff.

28. The first inspection revealed that, in some workplaces, staff were using out-of-date NVQ care standards. The NTC internal verifier has visited each workplace to introduce and explain the current standards and these are now used effectively in all the workplaces. Monthly assessors and verifiers' meetings to standardise practice are well attended. Assessors who are not able to attend receive a copy of the minutes and are contacted by the internal verifier to clarify arrangements for assessment.

29. During the first inspection, off-the-job training was poor. As a result of restructuring within the company, an experienced member of staff is now responsible for the care and hospitality training. Visits to the workplace by the NTC assessor are well recorded and the links between off-the-job training and trainees' workplace activities are reinforced. Posters, publications and information relating to the care industry are displayed in the training centre and referred to during training sessions. During a training session relating to practice in the workplace, trainees took part in a lively debate and received comprehensive, good-quality handouts. Lessons are well planned and include time for portfolio building. Trainees are asked to evaluate each training session. NTC has created an attractive rest area where trainees can relax and take refreshments between training sessions.

30. At the time of the previous inspection, assessments were poorly planned. New approaches to assessment planning have been introduced and are working well. Some trainees have commitments which prevent them from attending training at the company's premises. The trainer arranges a convenient time and place for them to meet and discuss how they will complete each unit. The trainees complete distance-learning packages to provide evidence of background knowledge and understanding. Some are given additional support in setting out their evidence and this is also provided at times convenient to the trainees. The fortnightly sessions at the training centre are used to plan observations and assessments in the workplace at times which minimise disruption. Assessments are carefully planned. The trainee and trainer both have a copy of the assessment plan, and the trainer ensures that the workplace managers also receive a copy. Workplace assessments take place at least every fortnight and are matched to trainees' needs and abilities. New trainees demonstrate their competence in carrying out simple activities. More experienced trainees are observed over a longer period performing more complex tasks. Trainees who have previously completed relevant training, for example, in first aid or food handling, have these achievements accredited to them, which reduces the time needed to complete the award. Two trainees who started NVQ programmes in December 1999 are on target to complete their programmes in August 2000. Charts recording trainees' progress and achievements are prominently displayed on the wall of the training room. This celebration of achievement reinforces trainees' commitment to completing the award. There is good use of cross-referencing of evidence of competence. When appropriate, evidence from optional units is cross-referenced to mandatory units. In this way, trainees gather evidence which is relevant to several elements of the NVQ as their practice is observed in the workplace.

31. Good reviews of trainees' progress take place at three-monthly intervals. The

trainee, trainer, supervisor and manager are present. The trainees' attitude to work, punctuality and achievements are recorded. Clear, achievable goals are now negotiated and set. The trainer records the goals in terms which are understood by the trainee. The trainee, supervisor and NTC's staff keep copies of the review documents.

32. The previous inspection found that the NVQ unit relating to equal opportunities was not integrated with other aspects of the programme. Assessment for this unit has been altered so that trainees collect evidence from their optional units which is relevant to the equal opportunities unit. This demonstrates that the trainees use their knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities in their daily activities and contacts with their clients and colleagues.

33. Recommendations from the external verifier have been acted up on and reports from the external verifier in April 2000 indicate that training and assessment procedures are satisfactory.

34. Retention rates are poor. In 1997, four trainees started training. Three of them gained employment in the care sector but only two completed their training. In 1998, 11 trainees started training. Six left the programme without completing their training and four are still on the programme. Of the nine who joined the programme in 1999, six left without completing their training and three are still on the programme.

35. NTC is attempting to improve retention rates. The care trainer has participated in trainees' interviews to ensure that they understand what is expected of them at work. All prospective trainees have an initial assessment of their numeracy and literacy skills and those identified as needing additional support receive it from qualified and experienced NTC staff. NTC have improved the learning environment and increased the frequency of visits to the workplace. Trainees who have not been able to attend training sessions have been provided with distance-learning packs.

36. Achievement rates have been low, particularly for those trainees who needed additional numeracy and literacy support. Some trainees have been on the programme for more than three years and have not yet achieved an NVQ. The long and short-term goals set for these trainees have not been sufficiently challenging to ensure their steady progress towards the achievement of the NVQ.

## **Foundation for work**

## **Grade 3**

37. NTC offers a programme called career choice for young people between the ages of 16 and 19. It is designed for those who have not made up their mind on a career path, enabling them to sample different occupational areas. It is also aimed at young people who need significant support to enable them to enter the world of work and to help remove the barriers that prevent them from benefiting from work-based training. There are 15 trainees on the career choice programme. A key feature of the programme is the provision of work tasters covering a variety of

occupations. Trainees spend an average of four to six weeks on work experience. They can sample as many areas as they wish, depending on the availability of placements. Time spent on the programme is flexible.

38. Trainees undertake modules of the National Skills Profile. They cover five skill areas: communication, numerically, information technology, personal skills and practical skills. Its aim is to underpin key skills and provide a bridge to mainstream vocational training. NTC is about to start a self-development programme called "Breakthrough", focusing on confidence-building and personal goal-setting. Basic skills support for trainees on mainstream work-based training is provided through wordpower and numberpower qualifications.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*NTC's self-development programme for trainees is a model of good practice. It provides excellent stimulation and a variety of tools are used.*

*Trainees undergo a range of participative exercises, which not only challenge their views and perceptions but also allow them to find out as much as possible about each other in the quickest time.*

*Trainees are told the life story of someone who had many ups and downs in his life and, despite major debt, and trouble with the law was not deflected from his life's ambitions to become a successful businessman. The person was Richard Branson. The message is very powerful in the manner in which it is told and this was clearly well understood by trainees. The session had a profound motivating and uplifting effect on all the attendees of this session!*

39. The self-assessment report described some strengths and weaknesses that were confirmed following inspection, some statements were inappropriately placed and some additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors. The inspection grade is the same as that awarded by NTC.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ use of work sampling
- ◆ wide range of work placements
- ◆ good progression rates

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor internal verification practices for wordpower and numberpower
- ◆ trainees are unsure of arrangements for off-the-job training
- ◆ aim of work experience is unclear to some trainees

40. The cornerstone of the career choice programme is work sampling. It effectively exposes the trainees to the rigours of the world of work, providing a direct insight into basic work disciplines such as timekeeping, coping with new situations, getting to know work colleagues, and working in a team. Trainees benefit from trying out tasks in the work placement, helping them to decide whether they like the work and providing the opportunity to learn new skills.

41. There is no restriction on the type of work trainees can try out. Examples are horticulture, kennel work, green-keeping, sign writing and pest control. Occasionally, placements are hard to find, but staff make concerted efforts to find work of the trainee's choice. In this regard the centre continues to broaden the opportunities available to young people and widen their horizons.

42. Many trainees entering this programme are de-motivated, disaffected and have learning difficulties or behavioural problems. The organisation actively strives to remove barriers, so that trainees can progress to their next step. Progression is the main measure of success. Seventy-eight per cent of trainees who leave career choice progress to work-based training, further education or a job.



#### POOR PRACTICE

*This is an example of poor monitoring of health and safety procedures and policies. During a visit to a builder's merchant it was ascertained that the trainee had had an accident the day before when some planks of wood fell on the bridge of his nose. The accident was not recorded in the accident book and had not been reported to NTC. On further investigation, records at NTC showed that the employer's public liability policy had also lapsed. This had been identified by NTC at the last health and safety visit but had not been followed up.*

43. Internal verification of wordpower and numberpower is inadequate and insufficient. There is one internal verifier, who is also the assessor. The work of this assessor has not been verified for more than two and a half years. It was agreed with the awarding bodies that the external verifier would provide a back-up role for internal verification to meet the shortfall, but this support has not materialised. There have been no visits by the external verifier since November 1997. There are no completed internal verifier records, detailing information such as the arrangement of assessment provision, the tracking of trainees' progress and no evidence that assessments have been effectively reviewed, monitored and feedback given to the assessors. At present, feedback is given orally. A form has been designed to record some of this information but it has yet to be used.

44. Arrangements for trainees to attend off-the-job training are detailed in the individual training plan. However, most of trainees are unaware of when they should attend and what they will do at the centre. Some trainees find the work at the centre unstimulating and irrelevant.

45. Some of the placements are considered as work trials, after which the employer assesses the trainee for suitability. Sometimes this is not made clear to trainees who are often under the impression that they are trying out the work as a taster and are unaware of the employer's expectations. Trainees have little idea of the duration or proposed outcome of the placement.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

46. NTC has an equal opportunities policy which is regularly reviewed and updated. Procedures for selection and assessment guarantee trainees equality of opportunities. From January to December 1998, NTC exceeded the targets set by the CCTE for participation by minority ethnic trainees and those with disabilities. Of the 63 trainees who started, 30 were men and 33 women. Thirteen had identified themselves as having disabilities. Two trainees were from minority ethnic groups. In the same period, all the minority ethnic trainees and seven from the preceding period achieved a qualification.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective procedures ensure rapid response to complaints
- ◆ effective promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities with employers
- ◆ equal opportunities are integrated into staff development
- ◆ recruitment policy guarantees unconditional access to training

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees are unaware of equal opportunities
- ◆ not all marketing leaflets convey clear commitment to equal opportunities

47. Trainees based at the training centre have a detailed induction, which involves discussions as well as watching videos which cover a range of issues including racism and sexism. For some employed trainees, induction is not given at the training centre but in their workplace. Induction in the workplace is short and does not give the broad range of information that centre-based trainees have. Despite this, some trainees understand the basic principles in relation to equal opportunities.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*The staff at NTC regularly challenge their own and each other's understanding of equal opportunities, as part of their development. A staff development programme exists which regularly looks at all aspects of legislation and the application within NTC.*

48. Staff are committed to the principle and application of equal opportunities for all trainees. Employers and subcontractors sign a contract with NTC, which contains a statement on equal opportunities. There is regular monitoring of employers' compliance and, where it is felt necessary, training is delivered to ensure employer's understanding of practice and policy.

49. NTC has an effective complaints procedure. Action is taken to support trainees with issues such as harassment, abuse, victimisation or dissatisfaction with placement. NTC takes swift action to deal with these issues. A policy and procedure also exists for inappropriate behaviour from trainees. All trainees are aware of this policy. Detailed records are kept of all complaints dealt with, and the counselling given. Some trainees based in work placements have a poor awareness of equal opportunities.

50. There is good access to the centre which occupies the ground floor. The training centre's recruitment system ensures unconditional entry for all applicants. Promotional materials consist of leaflets and fliers. NTC also places advertisements in magazines, journals, newsletters and newspapers. These documents do not, however, have an equal opportunities statement; a recent advertisement to recruit further trainees also made this omission. Nevertheless, some of these documents are being translated into Asian languages to widen participation on all programmes.

**Trainee support****Grade 3**

51. All prospective trainees are given an initial interview, followed by an in-depth interview. An application form is completed, normally by the trainee, unless they experience difficulties, in which case, they get help from staff. The form details personal information, prior achievements, choice of career path, strengths weaknesses, likes and dislikes. The information is used to help build a picture of the trainees' abilities and needs. When trainees start their course, they receive an induction, lasting between ninety minutes and half a day. It covers health and safety awareness, rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities, hours of work and a range of documents are completed. This information is then reinforced at a later stage. The majority of trainees undergo an initial assessment using the Basic Skills Agency's assessment test for reading, writing and maths. This determines



the trainee's level of basic skills. Other tests are administered as necessary.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Some trainees repeatedly display unacceptably bad behaviour. NTC positively and actively challenges this. The trainee's behaviour is logged in a non-conformance report and actions for improved standards of behaviour agreed with the trainee. Each time a trainee behaves badly it is recorded. Failure to improve after repeated warnings may result in the trainee's removal from the programme. The non-conformance report is a valuable and powerful tool to point out to trainees that bad behaviour will not be tolerated and to encourage and reward improved behaviour.*

52. Trainees' review of progress takes place on a regular basis, as a minimum, once every three months. The careers service interviews trainees every four to six weeks to provide careers guidance. If trainees are still unemployed in the last six months of their programme, they receive job-search training including help to write speculative letters to employers, drafting a curriculum vitae, and support with interview techniques.

53. Some of the strengths detailed in the self-assessment report were confirmed following inspection but additional weaknesses were identified. The text in the self-assessment report was repetitious and unclear. The inspection grade given is lower than that stated in the self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ outstanding pastoral support
- ◆ extensive links with specialist agencies
- ◆ effective careers guidance and counselling

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of consistency in initial assessment
- ◆ little use of accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ some ineffective induction
- ◆ ineffective reviews
- ◆ no use of individual training plans as working documents

54. Trainees are referred to NTC by the relevant agencies because of the high levels of support the young people receive. There is frequent contact with trainees on work placements, both by phone and visiting. Trainees also enjoy the support given by the workplace supervisors and employers. Sometimes the contact by NTC is made daily. Contact can occur out-of-hours when necessary. There is a quick response to any problems experienced by the trainees.

55. NTC is in regular contact with many outside agencies and organisations, such as the chamber of commerce, the job centre, the careers service. Close liaison with organisations like ADAS, the drugs advisory service, ROSSA, the rape counselling service, and the local health centre underpins and enhances the support network which has been built up for the trainees. The centre has recently enlisted the services of a local solicitor who makes regular visits to the centre, giving talks to trainees outlining their legal rights. Trainees can obtain, on an individual basis, free advice on benefits, housing issues and legal aid.

56. Trainees on the career choice programme often face major stumbling blocks in the quest for achieving their ambitions. Moreover, being unsure about their career

choice only adds to their problems. The staff at the centre and the careers service work effectively as a team to actively assist the trainees in working through any difficult decisions and help to reinforce or change career direction.

57. Most trainees are subject to initial assessment, they are not always informed of or understand the results. Employed trainees in the main miss out on initial assessment and the resultant benefits. Trainees do not have a clear understanding of ways in which the results from an assessment can help to identify the level of NVQ they are working towards, and what additional help they will need to ensure their potential is reached. Decisions made to select appropriate materials and to conduct an assessment are well intentioned but inconsistent. These decisions lack consideration of the need to establish what is being assessed, why it needs to be assessed, or what are the most appropriate materials for the assessment. There is no process for feeding back results to the trainee, and little consideration of how additional needs will be identified and how the results will inform the individual training plan.

58. The individual training plan is used purely as an audit and administration document and does not reflect any detail in terms of a learning plan that both trainees and staff can use to monitor progress effectively.

59. There is no one at NTC qualified to assess the accreditation of prior learning, leading to missed opportunities to capture attainment and achievement. Only the trainees who undertake NTC's in-house programmes benefit in any way from the recognition of previous achievement.

60. The induction is concentrated into the first morning of starting on the programme. Trainees must absorb a lot of information in a very short amount of time. As a result, trainees have little recollection of the information given, with the exception of health and safety awareness. There is no check made on the trainees' understanding of the information given out and no monitoring of the effectiveness of induction. In some cases, information can be reinforced at a later stage, but this is patchy and inconsistent.

61. Trainees are not always aware of the employer's involvement in reviewing their progress. Reviews do not inform the individual training plan and do not always effectively identify progress made and targets for future progress. They do not identify the additional support needs and resources required for the trainee to effectively progress to the next stage. Trainees are not fully engaged in the review process. There is too much emphasis on reviewing personal development and not enough emphasis on discussing what trainees are learning in relation to skills and knowledge gained, what problems they have encountered, what remedial work, if any, needs to be covered.

## Management of training

## Grade 3

62. The general manager of NTC reports to a board of six directors, who are

volunteers drawn from the local community. Their role is to oversee the overall running of the organisation. The general day-to-day operation is the responsibility of the general manager and his team; nevertheless, all financial decisions are discussed prior to endorsement by the board. The board meets every two months and more frequently if necessary. The chair of the board attends the training centre every Monday to sign cheques as well as to see the management team and staff. The management team comprises the general manager and the assistant manager, four teams report directly to them, the NVQ training, career choice, quality and administration teams. At the time of inspection, there were ten staff working at the centre and a freelance internal verifier was being used for the care programme. NTC is a recognised Investor in People.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good process for business planning and target-setting
- ◆ fluid communication throughout the organisation
- ◆ good supportive teamwork

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ few procedures directly related to training and assessment
- ◆ inconsistent integration of on- and off-the-job training

63. A personal business advisor allocated to NTC by the CCTE supported the development of a three-year business plan. NTC reviewed the business using a range of tools which enabled it to review the organisation from an external perspective with regard to capabilities, competencies and direction. All staff were involved in carrying out a review for each of their programmes. The outcomes of the analysis then formed the basis for establishing a set of 10 key objectives for the organisation. This strategic plan covers the period from April 1999 to May 2002. It is monitored and reviewed formally, by NTC's Investors in People sub-committee, which comprises three directors, the management team and two staff. To complement this three-year plan there is an annual plan, which contains detailed targets for each programme, and these are then translated into individual targets for each assessor and tutor.

64. NTC maintains the communication advantages of a small organisation, reinforced by a more structured set of weekly and monthly meetings. The general manager along with the staff review the progress towards the annual plan at monthly and three monthly meetings, this information then feeds into the formal report presented to the trustees. The basis for reviewing and setting individual targets are one-to-one meetings, six-monthly interim and annual appraisals as well as at weekly staff meetings at which each individual trainee is discussed. Action points are then developed, staff take responsibility to act upon them and they are then reviewed at the next weeks meeting.

65. The management-information system is held on a computer system. This system is used by NTC for claims and to generate lists of trainees. A manual

system is used for career choice trainees. The reporting function on the system is not used however. Instead, information is re-entered into spreadsheets to generate graphs of starters and leavers per month. These graphs show monthly trends and are used to assist in business planning and profiles for CCTE contracts. This information is used to give staff clear targets which they report against each month and develop action plans to address issues. The data are not analysed to establish reasons for leavers and no actions are identified. Inspectors found the accuracy of the data to be satisfactory.

66. There is active support to both develop individuals to meet the changing needs of the organisation as well as the continual demands of each trainee. Continuous professional development is supported financially as well as with time off. Several staff have benefited from this by attendance at seminar events to exchange best practice and update knowledge. A large proportion of the staff have gained assessor qualifications and trainer awards through NTC. There is also guidance and support for individual members of staff from colleagues as well as management to support them in their day-to-day roles.

67. NTC has developed a set of procedures, which are contained within the policies and procedures manual. All staff are aware of these and are actively involved in ensuring that the contents are current and updated. However, these procedures do not cover the entire scope of the organisations' activities. Staff do not have a consistent process for application of procedures relating to training and assessment, therefore a range of differing systems were seen as well as differing understandings of requirements.

68. NTC does not subcontract any training or assessment to external organisations, the exception being fork-truck training and assessment. Employer placements offer, in most cases the opportunity to gain workplace experience. All subcontractors sign a service level agreement, and employers have a good understanding of their role in supporting the trainee in gaining their workplace experience as well as a qualification and, in some cases, employment. However, the links between on- and off-the-job training vary in strength among occupational areas. In care, they are generally good, but in business administration, retailing and customer service they are weak. There is no overall strategy for how on- and off-the-job training should be integrated or taught.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

69. NTC meets several external quality standards including those of the TEC. The company's arrangements for assuring the quality of its training programmes and other activities are set out in a quality assurance manual. The company undertakes an annual audit of the extent to which its quality assurance arrangements have been complied with. Following the first inspection, NTC developed more detailed and comprehensive quality assurance procedures. These took into account the framework for self-assessment in *Raising the Standard*. A detailed action plan was prepared which addresses all the weaknesses identified in the inspection report. The general manager was absent for a great deal of the time following inspection and the assistant manager took responsibility for developing the new quality

assurance arrangements and implementing the action plan. All staff have access to a copy of the updated procedures manual and all play a part in auditing compliance with the procedures. Staff are also involved in systematically reviewing the procedures using the process of self-assessment.

The main weaknesses identified at the first inspection were:

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance system
- ◆ failure of quality assurance systems to ensure consistent quality of training
- ◆ no systematic analysis of data
- ◆ internal verification in some areas does not meet awarding body requirements

70. All the weaknesses identified in the first inspection report have been addressed. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses to those in the new self-assessment report but awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective action planning
- ◆ good linking of quality assurance arrangements to self-assessment
- ◆ good use of evaluated data to make improvements

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no setting of improvement targets
- ◆ poor implementation of some company procedures

71. Since the first inspection, new quality assurance policies and procedures have been developed. They are understood by staff, all of whom took part in their development and implementation. There is clear evidence that the new arrangements are leading to improvements in performance. For example, staff now have a better understanding of the importance of key skills in training programmes. Staff are working towards key skills awards at level 3 and have developed arrangements for assessing trainees' key skills. This has resulted in four times the number of young people completing the national traineeship programme during 1999-2000. Each procedure in the quality assurance system is reviewed annually. Each member of staff is allocated an area of training, assessment or management to review. They each draw up an action plan which is discussed at staff meetings to ensure all staff understand and can implement the necessary actions. The assistant manager oversees the whole process.

72. Performance data are now collected systematically. Training, assessment, trainees' reviews, subcontractors and work placements are all evaluated. Questionnaires are distributed to trainees at several stages in their programmes. Their responses are collected, analysed and used in the development of action plans. In the business administration occupational area, evaluation activities,

questionnaires and interviews with employers and trainees revealed general dissatisfaction with the length of time being taken to achieve the NVQ. The internal verifier examined all trainees' portfolios and raised further concerns. An action plan for the occupational area was drawn up. Assessors retook their assessor qualifications. The internal verifier set weekly targets. The assistant manager monitored the implementation of the action plan. Recent evaluations are showing greater satisfaction among trainees and employers. All tutors and assessors are observed regularly conducting training and assessments. They are given feedback on how to improve their performance. This process is linked to staff development and to the evaluation of training. The data from all the evaluation activities has been analysed to identify common themes and messages. These have been summarised into three major areas of concern: low retention rates; low achievement rates; and insufficient involvement of subcontractors and employers in the training process. Detailed action plans have been developed to address these concerns. However, the plans do not have sufficiently precise improvement targets, milestones, or success criteria.

73. Staff meetings to standardise procedures have resulted in the sharing of good practice across all occupational areas. The assistant manager keeps staff well informed of changes in policies and procedures. Procedures for assessment and internal verification have been amended since the first inspection. Internal verifiers and assessors meet monthly to discuss the outcomes of observations and to plan responses to external verifiers' recommendations. Although all assessors and trainers have developed a useful set of standard documents for use, they are not being used consistently by all staff. For example, a document used to record the outcomes of trainees' progress reviews has not been completed for some trainees. As a result, information about progress towards completion of the NVQ was not recorded or relayed to the workplace supervisor. These review documents are also not being made available to colleges who give off-the-job training.