



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

REINSPECTION DECEMBER 2000

Security Industry
Training Organisation
National Training
Programmes

SUMMARY

Security Industry Training Organisation National Training Programmes provides satisfactory training for the security industry for a rapidly growing number of trainees. Training in the workplace is effective and a high proportion of trainees remain on the programme. Some college training is of a poor quality. Equal opportunities are well understood by trainees. There is some promotion of the programmes to women but the current trainees are almost all men. Pastoral support from employers is excellent. Support arrangements are satisfactory, but progress reviews are weak and are not used to set targets for trainees. Management of training is satisfactory, with effective communication among all parties. At the time of the first inspection, quality assurance arrangements were unsatisfactory, with inadequate monitoring of the standard of training, and no involvement of employers and subcontracting colleges in the self-assessment process. Improvements have since been made and reviews are now focused on trainees' progress with qualifications. Assessments are more frequent and better planned. Good practice is shared and data are analysed and used to make improvements. The organisation now adequately monitors the quality of the training it provides. Key stakeholders are still not fully involved with the self-assessment process.

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Training Organisation National Training Programmes, the original published report text for quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training in the workplace
- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ highly effective support given by employers
- ◆ good communication among organisations involved with training



- ◆ effective sharing of good practice
- ◆ effective monitoring of training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ immature systems for monitoring and evaluating equal opportunities
- ◆ no written complaints procedure
- ◆ weak progress review practice
- ◆ inadequate management systems to monitor trainees' progress
- ◆ insufficient involvement by college staff, trainees and employers in self-assessment process



INTRODUCTION

1. Security Industry Training Organisation Limited (SITO) is the approved national training organisation for the security industry. Since its inception in 1991, it has developed vocational and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) to meet the needs of the security industry. Currently, SITO, in partnership with City & Guilds, is the awarding body for NVQs in security systems, manned services and locksmiths in England. Jointly with the Transport Committee for London, SITO is the awarding body for NVQs in the secure parking sector.

2. SITO has three discrete roles. As a national training organisation it is responsible for the development of occupational standards, and is jointly responsible, with City & Guilds, for awarding the qualifications. SITO's third role is that of a training provider for government-funded work-based training programmes. This section of SITO is known as SITO National Training Programmes (SNTP). At the time of the first inspection, SNTP had established four training and employer co-operatives, in west London, the Midlands, southeast London and the Southwest, and south Wales. These co-operatives consist of employers, a SITO representative, subcontracted training providers, and trainee and training enterprise council (TEC) representatives. Since the first inspection, a fifth co-operative has been established in the Northwest.

3. SNTP is a recent development by SITO, and the government-funded training programmes have only been operating since 1997. At the time of the first inspection, SNTP had contracts with London East TEC, West London TEC, Birmingham and Solihull TEC, and Norfolk and Waveney TEC to provide training. It now only contracts with London East TEC, which is the co-ordinating TEC for this reinspection. At the time of the first inspection, SNTP had 144 trainees, of whom 115 were working towards modern apprenticeships in security system installation, and 29 were working towards national traineeships in security, safety and loss prevention. The number of trainees had grown from 11 in 1997, to 87 in 1998 and 144 in 1999. SNTP now has 146 trainees, of whom 136 are advanced modern apprentices in security system installation, and 10 are foundation modern apprentices in security manned guarding.

4. At the time of the first inspection, SITO employed 21 full-time members of staff at its Worcester head office. Three staff were directly responsible for the co-ordination and management of the work-based training programmes. Since the first inspection, SNTP has appointed three associate mentors on a part-time basis. The associate mentors' role is to work with each trainee and monitor their progress towards their qualifications by carrying out progress reviews and setting individual targets. This reinspection report is focused on SNTP's work-based training programmes, not on SITO's work as an awarding body or as a national training organisation.



5. The security system industry does not have a strong history of being committed to structured, formal training and qualifications. The modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks, along with the development of four employer co-operatives and standard rates of pay for security employees, have improved employers' involvement in training at local and national levels. These initiatives have also encouraged trainees to enter the industry as new recruits, redressing the skills shortage in this sector. The economic situation, employment rates and school leavers' qualifications vary considerably among the regions in which SNTP operates.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The national training manager and the senior advisor prepared SITO's first self-assessment report. A consultant was appointed to review the report. The nominee attended a nominees' training event and received support from the co-ordinating TEC. The report was clearly laid out and supporting evidence was cross-referenced. Additional evidence and supporting documents were made available throughout the inspection. The report provided a useful summary of how SITO has developed as a national training organisation. The report also clarified SITO's position as a training provider, managing and co-ordinating work-based training programmes through the national training programmes section of the organisation (SNTP).

7. The national training manager and the senior advisor prepared a new self-assessment report in August 2000 as part of the annual contractual requirements with London East TEC. The report was prepared by analysing data on trainees' progress, minutes and action points from SNTP's meetings, and feedback from trainees and employers. The original action plan was not updated to record the progress made since the first inspection and new targets for improvement have not been set.

8. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at SNTP for the first inspection. Twenty-nine trainees were interviewed, as were eight college tutors, 14 expert witnesses and nine managers. Sixteen employers and all four subcontracting colleges were visited. No reviews or formal assessments took place during the inspection. Portfolios, records of progress and other documents were examined. Trainees at the start, middle and end of their programme were interviewed. Four training sessions were observed and the grades awarded for these sessions are shown in the table below.

9. Reinspection was carried out by two inspectors over a total of six days during December 2000. They interviewed three employers, four subcontracted training staff and 20 trainees. Of these trainees, five had also been interviewed at the first inspection and 10 had started training since then. This sample group was chosen to enable inspectors to assess trainees' understanding of the improvements made. They interviewed three of SNTP's staff and one expert witness in the workplace. Inspectors also reviewed new quality assurance procedures, trainees' portfolios and up-to-date reports on trainees' progress towards their qualifications.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

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

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, care & public services (security)

Grade 3

10. SNTP has 144 trainees, of whom 115 are working towards security alarm systems modern apprenticeships and 29 are security guard national trainees. All the trainees are employed, recruited directly by their employers. Each employer is represented on one of four regional co-operatives set up within England and Wales. All training and assessment are subcontracted to the colleges and employers. As part of the agreement with SNTP, employers have to nominate at least one engineer or supervisor to act as a work-based expert witness, with SNTP providing training for this role. The modern apprenticeship framework requires security systems trainees to gain NVQs at levels 2 and 3 and City & Guilds 1851 award, which consists of two examinations and a written assignment. In the recently revised modern apprenticeship framework, key skills are also required at level 2 in application of number and communications and at level 1 for information technology. Successful achievement of the modern apprenticeship entitles each person to receive a Security Systems Technician award from the joint awarding bodies. Training is on the job during normal work schedules and off the job at one of four colleges. Trainees attend college on a block- or day-release basis during term times only. College training is a mixture of workshop and classroom activity. Colleges simulate the workplace for the purposes of skills development and assessment. Within a modern apprenticeship or national traineeship framework trainees take, on average, three years to achieve a level 3 NVQ, and two years to achieve NVQ level 2. SNTP subcontracts all modern apprenticeship training and assessment to four colleges, two in London, one in Bristol and one in Birmingham. The use of expert witnesses at work allows trainees' evidence of competent performance to be recorded. College assessors then assess this evidence. College assessors, as part of the requirements of the awarding body, visit the expert witnesses at work and observe the witness recording and accepting qualification evidence presented by the trainee. Retention rates on all programmes are good, and particularly high for the modern apprentices. Trainee numbers have quickly grown during the last three years starting from 11 trainees in 1997, to 144 in 1999. The self-assessment report accurately described the strong commitment to training by all parties and it also recognised weak work-based assessment. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by SNTP.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good workplace training
- ◆ good modern apprenticeship retention rates
- ◆ enthusiastic, committed trainees and expert witnesses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no regular and systematic assessment
- ◆ some unsatisfactory off-the-job training
- ◆ some poor physical resources for off-the-job training

11. The working environment for trainees is varied and provides working experience that links directly to the qualification requirements. Interest and enthusiasm for the training and qualification among trainees, expert witnesses and employers are high. The retention rate for modern apprentices is good and improving with 64 per cent of the 1997 intake and 76 per cent of the 1998 intake retained. Sixty-five per cent of the trainees who started in 1997 have achieved both the NVQ level 2 and the City & Guilds 1851 qualifications. All trainees are on target to achieve the modern apprenticeship award. Trainees are encouraged and supported by the expert witnesses and their employers. Most employers rearrange work allocation schedules to enable the trainees to gain experience in all aspects of the work to cover the complete elements or units of the NVQ.

12. The modern apprenticeship framework, established in 1995, did not require separate certification of what was then called core skills. However, the new framework introduced in March 1999 requires key skills to be certificated separately. In September 1998, SNTP introduced a key skills development programme, in conjunction with one of the colleges.

13. The nature of the security systems industry makes work-based assessment difficult. Security installers normally install equipment quickly and move on to the next job. The transitory nature of the work makes on-site assessment appointments liable to cancellation and rescheduling. Expert witnesses are not fully qualified assessors and their input to the assessment process is restricted to providing expert witness testimony while the trainee is at work. The lack of regular and systematic assessment has resulted in college assessors relying on witness testimonies, portfolio evidence and simulated activity assessments when trainees attend college. Missed opportunities for workplace assessment occur daily. Trainees' portfolio evidence varies across the regions. At best, it is good with relevant, structured evidence matched well to unit requirements. At worst, the portfolios are satisfactory but lack supporting or supplementary evidence.

POOR PRACTICE

At one college, the 240-volt electrical supply switches to training booths are accessible to trainees. The booths have no internal warning lights to show that the electrical supply is on. Trainees shout from their booths to others to turn their supply on. It is possible for the supply to be turned on in the wrong booth without the tutor's knowledge, putting trainees at risk.

14. Some college classroom tuition is unstructured or delivered at too fast a pace for trainees to gain adequate understanding. Some off-the-job training is dull and the theory sessions fail to engage trainees' attention and interest. Trainees have reported this criticism in their responses to evaluation questionnaires. Neither SNTP nor the college has dealt with the problem satisfactorily. In one college, the construction and design of the workshop practice booths prevents practice or simulation of the most common form of installation for security alarm systems. These booths are three-sided, open-topped structures made from wooden frames clad with medium-density fibreboard panels. These materials prevent trainees from

directly clipping cables to the panels. None of the booths have suspended timber floors consisting of floorboards, joists, carpets or skirting boards. The booths do not have ceilings apart from the workshop's false ceiling, which is at a distance from the top of the booth walls. This restricts the installation of wall-mounted devices and does not allow trainees to practice on plasterboard ceilings.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

15. SNTP has an equal opportunities policy which is reviewed annually to reflect policy and legislative changes. The effect of the policy is not evaluated during these reviews. Data on trainees are collected but not analysed for equal opportunities purposes. There are three trainees from minority ethnic groups, no women trainees and no trainees with disabilities currently on the programme. SNTP actively promotes its programme to these groups through advertisements and within its marketing brochures. Of the 30 expert witnesses one is from a minority ethnic group and one is a woman. All employers enter into an agreement with SNTP which includes a commitment to equal opportunities. Employers also have the opportunity of attending one of the four training co-operatives' monthly meetings where they can discuss and share good practice about equal opportunities as well as other issues concerning training and employers. All employers receive copies of the minutes and any action plans from these meetings. The self-assessment report did not account for the weak monitoring of employers' understanding of equal opportunities, and did not recognise the high levels of awareness among trainees and employers of equal opportunity. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by SNTP in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good equal opportunities awareness among trainees and employers
- ◆ regularly revised equal opportunities policies
- ◆ action to promote training to women

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped systems for monitoring and evaluating equal opportunities
- ◆ no formal complaints procedure
- ◆ no harassment policy for trainees

16. Staff, employers and trainees have a good knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities. They are aware of their rights and responsibilities and understand how the equal opportunities policy applies to them as either an

employer, employee or trainee. At induction, staff explain the written information given about equal opportunities. Employers are aware of equal opportunities and this awareness is shared with trainees, in particular when employers discuss customer services. SNTP reviews its equal opportunities policies informally. Employers have the opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have, in particular any changes they need to make, as a result of changes in legislation.

17. Systems to plan and evaluate equal opportunities are underdeveloped. Analysis and monitoring are not systematic and rely on telephone discussions and visits to employers. Discussions about equal opportunities take place during training co-operative meetings. These meetings are minuted but there are no clear guidelines to establish procedures which will inform management decisions and action plans. There are no procedures to monitor complaints or to show how complaints are satisfactorily resolved.

18. Publicity and marketing materials do not use stereotypical images and all the photographs are of genuine trainees in the industry. Equal opportunities statements feature in all promotional material. Although, traditionally, few women have been employed in this industry, SNTP is actively promoting and encouraging more women to apply for apprenticeship places. A recent campaign included a newspaper feature about a female trainee. This feature was disseminated to all employers. One of the employers has a female expert witness.

19. Trainees are aware of whom they should discuss any problems with both at college and at work, but they are not familiar with the processes used to deal with complaints. SNTP does not have a harassment policy and employers are unaware of how a trainee's claim of harassment should be dealt with.

Trainee support

Grade 3

20. Trainees are selected by their employer. The SNTP guidance to employers is that a minimum of three GCSEs at grade C or above is desirable as an entry requirement, but this is not strictly applied. Basic skills are assessed on entry by all the colleges. They use either the basic skills test for literacy and numeracy or college-devised basic skills tests. SNTP assesses the key skills entry level for all new trainees. There are three stages to the induction process. Employers and colleges each provide an induction for trainees at work and college respectively. The college induction is supplemented by additional input by SNTP's staff. SNTP issues a portfolio pack to all trainees containing the performance criteria for the qualification and assessment record forms. College tutors provide trainee support at college and support in the workplace is the responsibility of the expert witnesses. SNTP's staff run a two-day course to train expert witnesses to act as mentors in the workplace. SNTP's staff also visit trainees, either at work or in college, at least once every three months. An assessor is appointed to each trainee when they are registered for an NVQ. SNTP's staff also assist in the assessment process by acting as expert witnesses. The self-assessment report identified

effective support from employers as a strength. The report failed to identify issues related to trainees' progress reviews. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive induction procedures
- ◆ highly effective support from employers
- ◆ well-designed portfolio pack

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak and ineffective progress reviews
- ◆ underdeveloped accreditation of prior learning

GOOD PRACTICE

All trainees are given a SNTP telephone number, which they are encouraged to use if they want to discuss any issue they feel uncomfortable discussing with their employer or the college tutors.

21. Trainees have three different induction sessions. The workplace induction provides them with a broad understanding of their employment conditions, health and safety, and equal opportunities. The induction comprehensively covers health and safety as well as the roles and responsibilities of trainees. The induction explains how the training scheme works and what is required to achieve their qualification. Trainees use the telephone number given to them at induction to contact SNTP to help them resolve problems. For example, a trainee complained about having travel difficulties, which the employer did not recognise. SNTP, in conjunction with a training co-operative chairman, resolved the matter to the satisfaction of all parties. The trainees' individual training plans are satisfactory and, in most cases, they are updated as training progresses.

22. All trainees receive a well-devised NVQ portfolio pack, which contains a copy of the NVQ performance criteria and assessment records with space for trainees to write details of jobs undertaken. This has been developed by one of the co-operatives in conjunction with SNTP and is now used by all the trainees nationally. The pack helps trainees to understand the need to gather evidence as a matter of routine from the beginning of their programme. To assist trainees in the gathering of evidence at work each trainee is assigned a personal mentor. The mentor is normally the trainee's supervisor. Most mentors are trained in the duties and responsibilities of acting as expert witnesses in the assessment process. In one case the chairman of a training co-operative acts as mentor to the trainees in his company. The support provided through the mentoring arrangements encourages trainees' progression towards qualification. SNTP does not formally carry out accreditation of prior learning or achievement. However, trainees who have a level 2 NVQ in electrical installation can receive accreditation for the safety access equipment unit taken from the security qualification framework.

23. The system for reviewing trainees' progress is weak. As the trainee works

towards the qualification, the various stakeholders undertake progress reviews. This means that trainees have three periodic reviews: one from the employer, one from the college and one from SNTP. This is both confusing and inefficient. Trainees are uncertain of the purpose of each progress review. Some employers give a copy of reviews to trainees, others do not. The policy on whether a trainee should retain a copy of this progress review is not clear and there are no procedures to clarify everyone's role in the review process. None of the reviews focus on the trainees' planned progress towards the NVQ. There are no incremental targets set or dates for achieving targets. Reviews do not concentrate adequately on planning progress towards the qualification. The lack of clarity among all parties is wasteful and confusing.

Management of training

Grade 3

24. SNTP is a managing agent for training modern apprentices and national trainees. The modern apprenticeship training is managed through one of four regional co-operatives comprising a total of 45 companies in the security installation sector. There are two regional, national traineeship schemes, each involving a large employer in the security/guarding services sector. SNTP subcontracts all the training to colleges and to employers. Each training co-operative consists of a number of security companies who combine to develop their own training. Companies employing trainees are classed as members of the co-operatives. Management committees of these co-operatives are made up of representatives of SNTP, member employers, and staff from the colleges and the TEC. These committees meet formally on a two- or three-monthly basis to determine strategy and monitor the progress of the local training scheme.

25. Three full-time members of SITO's staff are assigned to the organisation's national training programme department. They are responsible for the co-ordination and implementation of the training schemes and TEC contracts across England and south Wales. The SNTP co-ordinator provides administrative support for the department and acts as secretary for the regional co-operatives. Other SNTP staff are experienced in engineering training and represent SNTP on the regional co-operatives. There are 21 staff in SITO's head office in Worcester. SITO has achieved and maintained the Investors in People Standard since 1994. SNTP's staff undertake an annual appraisal where staff development activities are discussed. The self-assessment accurately reported the strong strategic management role of the co-operative management committees. It failed to recognise weaknesses linked to the management of workplace assessments. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by SNTP in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good co-operation among organisations involved with training
- ◆ training strategy fully understood by subcontractors

- ◆ effective communication

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak management of workplace assessment strategy by SNTP
- ◆ underdeveloped SNTP systems to monitor trainees' progression
- ◆ underdeveloped contractual arrangements

26. The strategy for training and assessment was initially developed through the work of the first co-operative management group. This strategy has been developed by subsequent co-operatives. The primary aim of the co-operatives is to promote continuous improvement in the local training provision for apprentices in the security industry. The co-operative committee's meetings focus on the management of the off-the-job training at the colleges and, in some regions, the co-operatives have exerted significant influence over its quality. The regional co-operatives are at variable stages of development in their work. The most advanced co-operatives actively monitor the progress of trainees towards qualification. In some regions, this focus results in the sharing of and agreement on the weekly schemes of work to be provided by the colleges. While all parties fully understand the programmes' training strategy one region has placed too much emphasis on theory training, and not enough emphasis on practical training. The number of employers' representatives on these committees is commonly two or three but there is an open invitation to all member companies to attend. In one co-operative, covering a wide geographical area, there is a lack of active support from many companies. All member companies receive copies of the minutes of their regional co-operative committee.

27. The co-operative meetings give SNTP's staff the opportunity to explain and discuss new training policies and strategies with employers and college representatives. Contact with college staff is at tutor and management levels. These communication links with external organisations are effective and extend beyond the formal work of the committees. The three members of staff in the SNTP department share an office and internal communication is strong. SNTP carries out an annual appraisal of its staff at which time staff development activities are discussed and training identified. Staff training is linked to the organisation's role as a national training organisation rather than focused on the improved management of work-based training programmes.

28. Records of work-based assessment evidence are incomplete in some portfolios. Some hold descriptions of work undertaken but no evidence of expert witness testimony. In some cases, the expert witness signs a form against a particular competence, but without supporting evidence from the witness or the trainee. Workplace witnesses lack support and contact with SNTP's staff and with college assessors. Some trained witnesses have infrequent contact with the apprentices reducing their ability to help build up assessment evidence. SNTP's staff are aware that the workplace assessment strategy requires more effective management. There

are plans in one co-operative to include the expert witness training in the development programme for all modern apprentices so that they can act as witnesses when they achieve their qualification.

29. SNTP's database on trainees does not identify incremental progression through the NVQ programmes. Management does not systematically undertake analysis of such data to inform decisions on training. Data are used to provide the information required by TECs each month rather than as a management tool. However, some trends are identified, for example in achievement rates.

30. SNTP has service level agreements with all the subcontracted colleges. The agreements are not detailed and focus on attendance returns and financial arrangements rather than specifying the content and quality of training. They do not include performance indicators, targets or details about monitoring the quality of training. SNTP's contractual arrangement with employers does not include guidelines to employers on, for example, the importance of early initial assessment. Initial assessment is mostly undertaken in college at the beginning of an academic year. In some cases, this may be several months after the young person started employment. SNTP's staff training is not focused on improving the management of work-based training programmes.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

31. SNTP has quality assurance procedures to cover all of the main areas of its TEC-funded training contracts. These procedures are updated as required and are subject to the quality control arrangements established for ISO 9001. In its first self-assessment report, SNTP failed to identify key strengths and weaknesses, in particular the shared good practice between regions and the poor monitoring of the quality of training.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no rigorous monitoring of training
- ◆ failure to access the quality assurance outcomes of subcontractors
- ◆ lack of self-assessment involvement by key stakeholders
- ◆ self-assessment is not integral to the quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ weak target-setting and action-planning

32. At the time of the first inspection, some of SNTP's quality assurance arrangements were not fully established. For example, some subcontracted training providers did not fully understand SNTP's procedures and practices. Some quality assurance procedures had not been implemented, including monitoring arrangements to ensure that the on-the-job training was of a consistently high standard across all training sites. Subcontracting colleges and employers are now

more aware of SNTP's quality assurance arrangements. Additional data and feedback are now sought systematically from subcontracted colleges and employers. In its latest self-assessment report, SNTP gave evidence to show that improvements have been made since the first inspection. It recognises that some improvements have not been made as quickly as others. For example, communications about the equal opportunities information from employers has not improved, little analysis has been made of the information now provided by subcontractors and key stakeholders are still not fully included in self-assessment. However, the training process is now more effectively monitored. Data are now used for action-planning and for setting targets for trainees. Self-assessment is now a central feature of SNTP's quality assurance arrangements. However, it has been unsuccessful in its efforts to include colleges, employers and trainees in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by SNTP in its report for reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ regular sharing of good practice
- ◆ effective monitoring of training
- ◆ effective analysis of data to make improvements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient involvement by college staff, trainees and employers in self-assessment process
- ◆ slow progress towards some key objectives

33. SNTP has an appropriate range of quality assurance procedures to ensure that TEC contractual requirements and any corrective actions raised are routinely met. It has established procedures to monitor induction and the frequency of reviews and most are reviewed at least once a year. SNTP uses a questionnaire for trainees and employers, which covers the full range of important training and support issues. The responses are analysed and acted upon. Changes made so far have included making staff changes at one college. Another college is no longer being used as a subcontractor, owing to its poor communication and poor performance. Regular meetings of the regional co-operatives, which include representatives from employers, subcontractors and SITO, have improved communications. These meetings are used to discuss reports on trainees' progress and achievements, as well as a range of pastoral issues. In addition, the chairmen of each regional group meet to discuss regional and national progress rates and to share good practice. As a result, SNTP has developed a new standard portfolio for trainees to replace the different versions being used throughout the country. It has also developed a new system to record the workplace evidence collected by trainees. All of these documents are now being used across all regions. These improvements have helped trainees to record their work, and have helped the expert witnesses in their role as mentor/assessor.

34. SNTP now effectively monitors the quality of its training and assessment. Detailed reports are provided by subcontracted training providers and SITO about trainees' progress, attendance and punctuality. SNTP has systematically sought to improve the quality of the learning experience across all regions and in all centres. It analyses information and quickly responds to any issues raised. As a result of these arrangements, it is better able to monitor the standards of training and assessment and to influence the quality of training, both in the short term as issues arise, and through longer-term action-planning during the annual self-assessment process. Three part-time mentors have been appointed to work directly with trainees to set and monitor their qualification targets. Workplace visits are made by subcontracted training providers' staff to assess and verify the work of the expert witness: SNTP now reviews all external verifiers' reports, which are now routinely copied to SNTP directly from the awarding body. Extra support and training is now provided for the workplace expert witnesses.

35. SNTP has new subcontracting arrangements with all five colleges and training providers which clearly explain their roles and responsibilities. However, SNTP has no arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of these new subcontracting arrangements. It has gathered information from all of its subcontracting training providers, for example staff qualifications and recent staff training activities, reporting on quality monitoring from the college, external inspection reports, assessment schedules and lesson plans. This information is not complete for all subcontractors and, apart from a detailed review of external verifiers' reports, little analysis has been undertaken to guide action-planning.

36. The new portfolio pack developed by SNTP is simpler to use than the old one. It allows trainees quickly to record any workplace learning, and to negotiate assessment opportunities at work more effectively. The portfolio pack also allows the newly appointed associate mentors to monitor trainees' progress and to set appropriate action plans and targets for each trainee. The new guidance notes for the expert witness clearly explain their role and also provide them with written examples of how to record different types of work-based evidence to make future assessments more effective. The associate mentors closely monitor and revise these targets, and trainees' progression rates have improved, with over 85 per cent of the current 146 trainees on target to complete their individual training plans if they stay in training. It is too early to establish whether these new arrangements have had an impact on retention rates.

37. Because of SITO's different roles as an awarding body, a national training organisation and a training provider, SNTP's staff subcontract all assessment and internal verification to the colleges which provide the training. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the awarding body. External verification is the responsibility of the awarding body. The new subcontracting agreement between SNTP and the colleges clearly states the responsibilities of the subcontractor regarding training and assessment arrangements.



38. The first self-assessment report provided a useful overview of the role of SITO and of the training programmes. However, it lacked input from parties involved in the training process including trainees, college staff, employers and members of the four regional co-operatives. Many key strengths and weaknesses were missed. The new self-assessment report was prepared by the national training manager and the senior advisor. The report was distributed to all of the subcontracting training providers and the chairmen of the co-operative groups for comment. There was no discussion between SNTP and the colleges, trainees or their employers. Although the self-assessment process is now part of SNTP's quality assurance arrangements, trainees, employers and subcontractors are not sufficiently involved in the process.

39. Action-planning is a part of SNTP's self-assessment process. The current action plan includes dates for completion, and review dates for most of the objectives. However, the action plan prepared after the first inspection has not been updated and some of the organisation's key weaknesses, such as raising employers' awareness of equal opportunities, are still not resolved.